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American Apocalypse(s): Nuclear Imaginaries and the Reinvention of Modern America

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Elisabetta Bini, Thomas Bishop and Dario Fazzi

Introduction

Ours is indeed an age of extremity. For we live under the continual threat of two equally fearful, but seemingly opposed destinies: unremitting banality and inconceivable terror.
(Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster").

Once a month at around 7:30 am a bus departs from Las Vegas. Securing a seat on this trip takes time, with travellers often booking a place a year in advance. Before boarding, passengers are told to leave behind their cell phones, laptops, cameras, binoculars, and any recording devices they might own as they start their journey to one of the most radioactive places on earth: the Nevada Nuclear Test Site.

Setting out from the Atomic Testing Museum, just east of the famous Las Vegas strip, 40 atomic tourists sit in air-conditioned comfort as their free, government sponsored, day trip begins.[1] The bus travels north up Route 95 for around 65 miles. Looking out of the window, those well versed in the history of US weapons development programs will catch a glimpse of some important but far too easily forgotten landmarks of the nuclear arms race. When the bus hits the highway and travels past Indian Springs, tourists looking out the window will spot the "closed town" of Mercury: a once thriving community that has become a radioactive ghost town. Back in the 1960s, Mercury housed around 10,000 residents, comprised of men and women looking to make a career in the industry of nuclear weapons development (see Wood). Here, in Mercury, workers had the opportunity to move to a model suburban American town specifically built for them by the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), and raise their

families in supposed ease and comfort. Schools, restaurants, a movie theatre and bowling alley, and the famous "Atomic Motel" ensured that Mercury's main street simmered with life. Today, only a skeleton crew currently occupies the site on a temporary basis after half a century of nuclear testing has rendered the town largely uninhabitable (Wills and McCurdy 1.1).

Further north, tourists eventually arrive at the ominous gates of the Nevada Test Site itself, a space of about 1,370 square miles, larger than the state of Rhode Island (Veitch 322). Guides are there to meet the tourists and eagerly show them around a stretch of land that the United States has been aggressively blowing up for the last 70 years. From 1951 to 1992, the United States conducted 100 atmospheric tests and 828 underground tests in the Nevada Test Site (Wiener 113-14). This zone is, as one sign notes, "Ground Zero" of the arms race (see Gallagher). It was here, according to peace activist and scholar Rebecca Solnit, that the "nation routinely rehearsed the end of the world" (57).

Tourists visiting the site come face to face with the lived and imagined violence of nuclear war. From the Sedan Crater, a man-made hole 1,280 feet in diameter and 320 deep, formed in 1962 when the detonation of a 104-kiloton deceive threw 12 million tons of earth into the air, to the Frenchmen Flats, where in 1954 the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) built a model suburban home, filled it with mannequin families and then blew it up for a television audience (see McEnaney; May; Bishop). At the Nevada Test Site the nuclear imaginaries that defined the making of modern America are thrown into eerie relief. For Tom Vanderbilt the test site stands as a forgotten landscape to a war never fought (Vanderbilt 88). Scars of the arms race litter the landscape, but if you look a little closer you can spot something else: environmental regeneration. Visitors to the test site often express surprise at "how green" parts of the test site are, after recent efforts by the Department of Energy have set out to turn parts of a once desolate contaminated landscape into an ecological reserve (Liverman 4.35). For Jonathan Veitch the dilemma of America's nuclear entanglement is defined by a "surreal amalgam of secrecy, environmental devastation, scientific hubris, ideological self-righteousness, breath-taking utopian aspiration, game theory and realpolitik" (322). Perhaps then this fusion of progress and destruction, visible and invisible violence, protest

and the potential for change is best encapsulated by this ruined landscape that now functions as a tourist site (Wiener 113-14).

The purpose of this special issue of *RSAJournal* is to explore how the development of nuclear technologies shaped the culture, politics and society of the United States. Our aim has been to draw together leading scholars from a variety of disciplinary fields to offer new perspectives on how the power of the atom, its universalism and contested sustainability alike, has swayed the mindset and worldviews of generations of Americans. While the scope and interests vary, the essays that follow demonstrate the commitment of diverse scholars to unearth exactly "*how*" the mastery of nuclear technologies has shaped the contours of modern America.

Since the publication of Paul Boyer's seminal cultural history of the atomic bomb, scholars have long been interested in how the advent of the nuclear age has acted as an agent of social transformation (Boyer 136). Scholars captivated by the culture of the bomb have built theoretical frameworks aimed at understanding the nuclear age and have published truly ground-breaking studies on themes ranging from public anxiety, government policy, civil defense, literature, art, nukespeak, diplomacy, strategic culture, nuclear subjectivity, individual experience, protest and resistance, environmentalism, gender, decolonization, and civil rights (see Pritikin; Freeman; Intondi; Miyamoto; Weart; Jacobs; Oakes; Freedman; Jones; Gavin; Trachtenberg; Maddock; Connelly; Collignon; Davis). The results of this body of scholarship are undoubtedly impressive. Yet scanning through today's headlines it might appear that the contemporary relevance of this thriving debate has been put in the shade as a mere curiosity of the Cold War. Still, despite our seeming lack of current concern, once a year the science and security board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (BAS) updates its Doomsday Clock. Since 1947, the Doomsday Clock has given those with a morbid curiosity an indication of just how close scientific experts think we are to a global catastrophe. On 23 January this year the Doomsday Clock moved 20 seconds closer to the figurative midnight. Reiterating that humanity "continues to face two simultaneous existential dangers – nuclear war and climate change", the editors of the BAS informed its readers that we are only "100 seconds" from obliteration (see Mecklin).

Today, these "100 seconds" might not seem all that immediate. In a recent article for *Modern American History*, Gretchen Heefner noted that nuclear studies must "grapple with the need to both inform and agitate in a world where concerns about nuclear Armageddon are frequently crowded out by nightly news of other events" (111-12). Indeed, at the time of writing this we are contending with issues that rightly seem far more urgent, from the spreading global pandemic Covid-19, to an escalating transnational protest against police brutality, to the onset of a global economic recession. Heefner's contention that the nuclear is being "crowded out" has perhaps never seemed so prescient.

In this special issue, several of the authors take issue with Heefner's call. It will come as no surprise that one of the common themes that emerges across the essays is the truly polarizing nature of nuclear discourses. If nuclear technologies have reshuffled the very vocabulary of American politics and society writ large, how can we as academics access and engage with these nuclear imaginaries? Our issue opens with Todd A. Hanson's "Islands of The Bomb: (Re)Imagining Bikini Atoll through Archaeologies of Cold War Occupation and Destruction," which effectively deploys archaeological evidence as a window through which to examine both the US occupation of the Bikini Atoll and the continuing efforts of Marshall Island inhabitants to protect their homes. Hanson's essay is a timely consideration of the history of US nuclear testing in the Atoll which over the past years has seen a number of commercial actors – from bathing suits manufacturers, to beer companies, to children's television – use the Bikini Atoll to market their own brands. For the author, closer consideration of the archaeological evidence left behind can offer clearer insights into both the acts of nuclear imperialism conducted by the United States and the efforts by local populations to maintain and control the Atoll as a nuclear heritage site.

The issue of contesting and resisting memories of nuclear technologies is also at the heart of Misria Shaik Ali's essay "Memorializing Decommissioning: A Nuclear Culture Approach to Safety Culture." Turning to semiotics as a medium through which we can better understand nuclear techno-scientific practices, Ali's study of the Indian Point Energy Centre draws our attention to the activism that followed the decommissioning

and storage of radioactive waste. Located on the Hudson River, Indian Point has long acted as a constant, if controversial, fixture on the energy landscape of New York. Over the course of its operational lifespan, Indian Point has been the centre of a number of controversies with both residents and activists addressing the issues of the spillage and storage of toxic waste in 1993 and 1994. Ali adds to our understanding of this important site, arguing that a shift from safety culture to nuclear culture can help us to grasp the actual "meaning" of becoming irradiated and gain new insights into the recent debates about the plant's decommissioning.

Dibyadyuti Roy's "Apocalyptic Allegories: Resisting Strategic Nuclear Imaginaries through Critical Literacy" picks up this thematic thread of abstraction and dehumanizing often associated with nuclear imaginaries, and offers a careful examination of the textual elements of nuclear-activity and nuclearization in two films, *The Matrix* and *The Book of Eli.* For Roy, Western nuclear narratives often lack the intimacy we see in other cultures. Outside of the populations of the Pacific, whose encounters with the bomb have been both tragic and with an all-encompassing impact, Anglo-American nuclear imaginaries have, at times, minimized human suffering, with visions of a total global apocalypse erasing individual trauma. Yet, Roy argues that *The Matrix* and *The Book of Eli* resist this trend, and proffer a reflective, revelatory approach to the apocalypse, substituting militarism with humanism by building empathy.

In "Southern Wastelands: Alas, Babylon, The Road, and the A-Bomb in the Garden," Marco Petrelli turns towards the questions of regionality as he explores the role of the American South in nuclear culture. For Petrelli, southern literary culture provides a unique insight into how apocalyptic narratives often have to contend with the two opposing ends of the teleological spectrum. Drawing upon a pastoral tradition, Petrelli argues that southern literature has long been connected to an Edenic realm. While this connection between the South and the Garden of Eden clearly erases centuries of racial violence, trauma, and the exploitation of African American bodies, this ideal of returning to an eco-mythical ground has held sway over the southern literary imagination. What happens to this literary tradition when the Apocalypse occurs? Through a reading of Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon* (1959), and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006),

Petrelli teases out how southern literature has responded to the end of the world.

Preoccupation with the end of times also plays an important role in William M. Knoblauch's "Spaceship Earth: Representations of Life After the Apocalypse in the Nuclear Age." Tracing the evolution of nuclear narratives, Knoblauch argues how impressively resilient Cold War cultural traditions have embedded themselves across the decades into visionary dreams of space settlement. While fears of geopolitical standoffs have been somewhat replaced by growing concerns about climate change, Knoblauch makes the point that our earlier visions of an earthly Apocalypse persist. With the recent launch of Elon Musk's Space X, Knoblauch also invites us to consider how these ideas might evolve in an age of increasing corporate control over Earth's expansion into space.

Finally, in "Beyond the (Ka)Boom: Nostalgia, Gender and Moral Concerns in the Quality TV Series *Manhattan*," Sandra Becker explores how television has transformed and keeps transforming nuclear settings into familiar tropes of American popular culture. Becker praises the series for drawing attention to the mythopoetic function played by Los Alamos scientists; in so doing, *Manh(a)ttan* abstracts them from their contemporary socio-cultural milieu and elevates them to emblems of the normalization of the bomb. Against the backdrop of an imminent catastrophe, everyday life flows through gender interplays, racial dynamics, and personal interactions in a way that makes the nuclear ubiquitous and latent at the same time.

Since 16 July 1945, as military officials, government experts and scientists watched the glow of a 19-kiloton explosion in the Trinity Test Site in New Mexico, we have been living in the shadow of the atomic bomb (Fiege 601). The nuclear era impinged on us with seemingly insurmountable paradoxes: the rationalization of mass extinction; the subordination of science to politics; a structural existential anxiety. Discussions about nuclear doom not only survived the Cold War but came to pervade our contemporary consciousness in numerous ways. Taming the nuclear beast progressively became the cipher of modern statecraft, as well as of the various cultural and artistic representations of it which cathartically warned against the dire consequences of its release (Holloway 385).

As the essays of this special issue show, nuclear criticism has moved away from the simplistic reliance on a long-standing tradition of non-use of nuclear weapons – the nuclear-taboo as Nina Tannenwald calls it – in order to come to terms with the all-encompassing marks that the nuclear age has left on our modern civilization (Tannenwald 7). The strength and cogency of nuclear criticism, however, are still largely dependent on the nuclear awareness that shapes our collective imaginary. For this reason, we hope that the articles in this special section may shed some light on how our understanding of the nuclear age will – and should – continue to evolve in the years to come.

Notes

[1] The US Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration, Nevada Site Office, provides free general interest tours on a monthly basis. See <http://www.nnss.gov/pages/PublicAffairsOutreach/NNSStours.html> for further information on tours and documents related to the test site.

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Todd A. Hanson

Islands of The Bomb: (Re)Imagining Bikini Atoll through Archaeologies of Cold War Occupation and Destruction[1]

Bikini is not a beer, a bathing suit, or the home of SpongeBob SquarePants.
(The National Nuclear Commission of The Republic of the Marshall Islands)

The battle for Bikini Atoll Beer began in late 2019, although the conflict had actually been brewing since 2017 when the Manhattan Project Beer Company (MPB) of Dallas, Texas first brewed a small batch of gose beer they named Bikini Atoll. Served on tap in local bars until the initial batch was gone, the beer's borrowed name did not seem to bother MPB's customers. In fact, neither a 28 March 2019 MPB blog entry announcing a new batch of Bikini Atoll beer, nor a 5 May 2019 Instagram post picturing the new beer prompted any significant public response. That is until August, when the tiny company was suddenly engulfed in a social media firestorm by members of the global call-out culture, which accused it of being insensitive to the historic plight of the Bikinians. After a barrage of social media attacks and some pointed communications from the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) government that included the epigraph above, MPB fired their final volley in the conflict on 13 August 2019, issuing this statement on Instagram:

> Our beer named Bikini Atoll was not created to mock or trivialize the nuclear testing that took place in the Marshall Islands. Through our brand and naming, we are creating awareness of the wider impacts and implications of the United States's [sic] nuclear research programs and the pivotal moment in world history that is often forgotten. We are sharing this because we have received significant harassment and death threats. This is the only statement we will make and will take no further action in this matter. (qtd. in Lang)

Proving that the names of the world's most famous geographical places are rarely considered the exclusive possession of those who inhabit them, MPB continues to brew and sell Bikini Atoll brand beer.

As a site of American Cold War nuclear weapons testing, Bikini Atoll holds an enduring place in the global nuclear imaginary as a contested cultural icon. The roughly oval-shaped ring of twenty-three low-lying coral islands encompassing a 230 square-mile lagoon in the central Pacific Ocean found itself included in the nuclear imaginary after being used by the United States in the 1950s for atmospheric nuclear testing. Imagined thereafter as a radioactive wasteland, devoid of vegetation and uninhabitable by anything but mutated science fiction monsters, after nuclear testing ended the US planted coconut palm forests on some islands as the indigenous flora and coral regenerated itself and restored much of the Bikini's original beauty. Solidly placed in the nuclear imaginary as the birthplace of the hydrogen bomb, Bikini was both an icon of The Bomb and a physical manifestation of twentieth century nuclear imperialism.[2] As the Bikini people sought to reimagine the Atoll as another site in which indigenous people were misled and dispossessed of their ancestral home by a nuclear hegemony, their efforts were frustrated by those who misappropriated the Atoll's identity for other uses and by a continuous lack of detailed information about nuclear testing activities on the atoll. Using archaeological evidence as a basis, this essay examines for the first time publicly the physical transformation of Bikini during a dozen years of nuclear violence. By reimagining the Bikini islandscape in terms of the constructive/destructive duality of America's Cold War occupation as the islands of The Bomb, I seek to use historical archaeology to support the

ongoing Marshallese efforts to authenticate, demythologize, and safeguard their homeland in the current and future nuclear imaginary.

The notion of employing archaeology to better understand a complex belief system is not a new one. Archaeological evidence has long held the power to challenge and transform our mythologies, beliefs, and ideas about the past. The archaeology of the contemporary era, in particular, approaches the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as a period characterized by massive epistemological, ethical, philosophical, and political movements indelibly manifested in materiality. The archaeology of that materiality serves as a tool for reading the recent past in ways that can help to validate, or possibly refute, historical and anecdotal evidence.

Asserting that the archaeology of the contemporary era can also be a powerfully inclusive practice, Rachael Kiddey and Paul Graves-Brown have suggested that contemporary era archaeologies greatly benefit from the existence of living populations with whom archaeologists can work in order to augment existing historical or anecdotal knowledge (137). In collaboration with Native American communities in the American Southwest, Robert W. Preucel has shown that inclusive archaeologies can be particularly empowering for communities whose traditions or perspectives have historically been ignored, romanticized, plagiarized, or otherwise misused by hegemonic powers (20). Because the materiality manifested in the epistemological, philosophical, and political beliefs of Bikini's Cold War occupiers continues to exist on the Atoll amid the ruins and rubble of nuclear weapons testing, archaeology presents itself as a way to work with the Marshallese to more fully understand what happened on the atoll during their exile. However, before turning to the specifics of this archaeological evidence, it seems prudent to first examine how American nuclear weapons testing consigned Bikini Atoll to the global nuclear imaginary and how the Atoll has been imagined and re-imagined within that context over time.

The American Occupation

The American occupation of Bikini Atoll was unlike any other in US military history. Seized as a matter of course during World War II with no immediately compelling political or economic reasons behind its occupation, Bikini was chosen for use in nuclear testing because of its distance from large populations, an almost pristine environment, and a small indigenous population. With the impetus behind America's Cold War occupation being scientific exploitation, Bikini Atoll became part of a larger legacy of using "big science" projects to further US colonial exploitation.

America's scientific occupation of Bikini left an indelible mark upon the physical landscape of which the most obvious were blast craters, the partial destruction of two islands and the construction of more than five hundred structures over a 12-year period beginning with Operation Crossroads in 1946 and ending in 1958 with Operation Hardtack. Although many of these structures were ephemeral, existing for only weeks or months before being literally blown away in nuclear weapon tests, other more substantial reinforced concrete structures were built to survive humankind's most powerful explosions. To build what proved to be an extensive and expensive testing infrastructure, Bikini's natural foliage was bulldozed and burned. Causeways – raised roadways of coral mined from reefs – were built over the reef flats to connect multiple islands. Harbors were dug and docks and jetties were constructed, as Bikini's island landscape and seascape – its islandscape – were radically transformed over time.

America's occupation of Bikini began officially in the summer of 1952 when civil engineers and surveyors from the Los Angeles engineering and construction firm of Holmes & Narver (H&N) arrived to conduct a reconnaissance study for the United States Atomic Energy Commission (USAEC). H&N would go on to design, construct, and operate almost all of the United States' nuclear weapons testing structures at Bikini Atoll over a series of three testing campaigns designated Operations Castle, Redwing, and Hardtack. Prior to H&N's arrival, the US Navy had relocated Bikini's inhabitants in March 1946 to Rongerik Atoll in preparations for Operation Crossroads. Promised that America's use of the Atoll was temporary, the Bikinians suffered extreme hardships in their exile. These hardships have

been well documented by others (see Chambers; Kiste; Firth; Hezel; Peck; Niedenthal[3]), while the story of what happened to the Atoll itself during that exile remains all but untold.

The American occupation of Bikini Atoll was rooted in the United States' capture of the atoll in World War II. There had been no battle to win the remote ring of islands, since Imperial Japanese Army soldiers had essentially surrendered it to US military forces in April 1944 by committing suicide (Niedenthal 2). The US took control of the entirety of the Marshall Islands in 1947 under a United Nations trusteeship created as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and was responsible for the territory's civil administration until 1986, when the Marshallese withdrew from the Trust Territory by drawing up a Compact of Free Association. With the signing of the Compact, the US handed control of Bikini back to its indigenous inhabitants without informing them of the extensive physical damage nuclear testing had caused.

Although Crossroads had made comparatively minimal use of the Atoll, building a Navy recreational area and erecting a dozen camera towers, roughly five thousand H&N employees would build and operate the structures and infrastructure needed to serve the more than thirty thousand men that came to Bikini for Operations Castle, Redwing, and Hardtack. Coming from the USAEC and all branches of the military, as well as from research laboratories, universities, and corporations, the extent of these organizations' involvement in nuclear weapons testing was reflected in the myriad of structures their presence required. From massive reinforced concrete instrument bunkers to tall steel towers, the scientific work of nuclear weapons testing required an extraordinary diversity of architecture. Experimental nuclear devices were deployed at the top of steel towers. In structures dubbed "scientific stations," physicists installed instruments for measuring and recording nuclear and thermal radiation, blast pressures, wind speeds, and electromagnetic fields. Other researchers conducted biomedical studies on animals, used fallout stations to collect radioactive particles, and placed cameras in concrete blockhouses to capture millions of still and moving images of the nuclear blasts.

As the Cold War scientific mission at Bikini grew, so too did the abuse of the islandscape. Bikini would be used to test the United States' most

powerful nuclear devices with twenty-three nuclear tests generating more than 89 megatons (Mt) of explosive yields, or nearly three-quarters of the total energy yield (119 Mt) released at the Pacific Proving Grounds during the entire US atmospheric nuclear weapons testing program. When atmospheric testing ended in 1958, the US left Bikini Atoll littered with ramshackle structures, derelict vehicles and monumental concrete ruins. Although a clean-up in 1969 eliminated many of the major physical and radiological hazards on the islands of Bikini and Eneu, the Bikinians were able to return to the atoll for only a short time in 1972 before being evacuated again, permanently. After that, restricted public access to the Atoll kept visitors away for the next four decades, leaving the fate of Bikini in the nuclear imaginary to the world's imagination.

Imagining Bikini Atoll

Bikini Atoll had exploded into the global consciousness during Operation Crossroads, with much of Bikini's renown being the result of extensive media coverage. With more than 300 still and motion picture cameras mounted on twelve steel towers and in three C-54 cargo planes flying over the lagoon, and 170 journalists in attendance, the Crossroads stories and images were published in many of the world's major newspapers and magazines (Degroot 119; Shurcliff 12). Bikini's place in the global nuclear imaginary became irrevocable as over the next several decades the public's interest in the Atoll was fed by the steady release of motion pictures – first theatrical and later documentary – that pictured Bikini through the lens of the imagined and real consequences of nuclear weapons testing.

Particularly provocative in those early decades were science fiction films featuring nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific plotlines. Beginning with *Godzilla* (1954), and followed by films like *It Came From Beneath the Sea* (1955), *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (1957), *From Hell It Came* (1957), *Mothra* (1962), and *Brides of Blood* (1968), the trope of Bikini Atoll as a violated and violent Pacific island paradise often saw Bikini being renamed or used anonymously in the films as habitats for Hollywood monsters. As vacuous as these films may seem, they represent an important contribution to the

history of Bikini's development in the nuclear imaginary, andare some of the first tangible representations of nuclear fear in American popular culture.[4]

It was not until 1987 that the world received a more factual depiction of Bikini's use as a nuclear weapons testing site with the release of director Robert Stone's documentary *Radio Bikini*. Making extensive use of films created by the US government during Crossroads, which were interwoven with contemporary interviews with the then Bikini *irooj* (king) Kilon Bauno and US Navy veteran John Smitherman, the Academy Award-nominated film documented the exile of the Atoll's population along with the health consequences of the nuclear tests on American servicemen.

Bikini was featured in 1988 in *Nuclear Exiles,* an episode of the long-running television documentary series *National Geographic Explorer*. *Nuclear Exiles* chronicled the history of the Bikini exile as it followed a group of elders on their first heartbreaking return visit to the Atoll. The film was also the first to examine scientific efforts to deal with the Atoll's residual radioactive contamination and the Bikinian's legal battles with the US over contested reparations.

In 1992, the American Broadcasting Corporation network's documentary series *World of Discovery* featured the Atoll in an episode entitled *Bikini: Forbidden Paradise*. Focusing principally on the Crossroads shipwrecks, the widely viewed program used film footage of the USS *Saratoga* aircraft carrier and the Japanese Navy flagship *Nagato* shipwrecks captured during the US National Park Service's Submerged Cultural Resources Unit's underwater archaeological survey. Paying particular attention to the Atoll's hazards, *Bikini: Forbidden Paradise* contributed much to the notion of Bikini as a poisoned ecosystem.

A 1995 documentary focusing on the history of nuclear weapons testing emerged out of efforts by American filmmaker Peter Kuran to declassify and restore some of the hundreds of nuclear weapons testing films in US government archives. Released as *Trinity and Beyond: The Atomic Bomb Movie*, Kuran's film was the first independently produced documentary of American atomic and thermonuclear weapons testing. Making extensive use of previously unseen footage, Kuran's digitally-enhanced video provided disturbingly lucid evidence of the explosive devastation caused

by atmospheric nuclear weapons tests, including the Operation Castle Bravo detonation, the largest atmospheric nuclear test ever conducted by the US. The images of Castle Bravo and other hydrogen bomb tests made public for the first time in *Trinity and Beyond* reinforced notions of, yet did not specifically show, the nuclear violence done to Bikini Atoll.

Reimagining Bikini

By the time the Bikinians reacquired possession of their Atoll under the Compact of Free Association there was little they could do to reverse the pollution and environmental damage caused by Cold War nuclear weapons testing. Although the islands of Bikini and Eneu had been cleared of debris, derelict vehicles, and minor testing structures (such as concrete slabs) during a joint Atomic Energy Commission-Defense Atomic Support Agency task force cleanup effort in 1969, and new palm trees had been planted in regular rows across land that had been flattened by road graders, much of the Atoll's original topography, fauna, flora, and built landscapes were gone. Because the cleanup had focused almost exclusively on Bikini and Eneu, there remained dozens of reinforced concrete blockhouses and other structures on other islands. Built to withstand nuclear explosions, these blockhouses were also able to weather Nature's most formidable forces and without significant human intervention, their ruins would last for hundreds of years. Recognizing this apparent inexorability of the change in the landscape and determined to make the most of their ravaged homeland, the Bikinian people began efforts to shape what may be the most logical and realistic public image of the Atoll in the nuclear imaginary.

It began with the 1989 archaeological survey of Bikini Atoll lagoon conducted by the US National Park Service's Submerged Cultural Resources Unit (SCRU) and featured in the *Bikini: Forbidden Paradise* documentary. Invited by the governing Bikini Council to assess the historical significance of the sunken fleet and the feasibility of developing the lagoon into a marine park, the SCRU extensively surveyed eleven of the twenty-one ships sunk at Bikini (Delgado et al. 22). Although a marine park never materialized,

the SCRU investigation became the basis for an even more ambitious and significant reclamation of Bikini's place in the nuclear imaginary.

In 2005 the Kili-Bikini-Ejit Local Government began work with the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), a global non-government organization dedicated to promoting the application of theory, methodology, and scientific techniques to heritage conservation, on the process of adding Bikini Atoll to the UNESCO World Heritage List. ICOMOS serves as an advisor to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee. Australian archaeologist Steve Brown visited Bikini in 2009 as an ICOMOS representative to undertake an evaluation of the Bikini's World Heritage nomination document. Brown conducted a terrestrial survey of the Atoll to do a preliminary recording of features associated with nuclear weapons testing. Making copious field notes that included maps and floor plans of structures and features, Brown also took more than eight hundred digital photographs of artifacts, structures, and features on ten islands, documenting the extensive landscape and seascape modifications he believed were attributable to the American occupation of Bikini Atoll ("Physical Traces of the Nuclear Test History of Bikini Atoll" 8). Although Brown did later expatiate on the nature of his expedition,[5] he had not been tasked with interpreting the remains of Cold War nuclear weapons testing activities at Bikini. Instead, his report recommended the Bikinians undertake research to identify imagery showing development during the nuclear test period on Bikini Atoll and then use this material to document landscape modifications and construction associated with nuclear testing. He also suggested they undertake detailed recording of the surviving material evidence of nuclear testing at Bikini Atoll, including structures, infrastructure, and buried remains (18). Brown's recommendations are the basis for my archaeological work.

In 2010, Bikini Atoll became the world's first Cold War site to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Based on the intrinsic heritage value of Bikini's terrestrial and underwater nuclear weapons testing remains, the World Heritage Committee inscribed the Bikini Atoll Nuclear Test Site as having Outstanding Universal Value as "tangible testimony of the birth of the Cold War and… the race to develop increasingly powerful

nuclear weapons," as well as having given "rise to powerful symbols and to many images associated with the 'nuclear era', which characterized the second part of the 20th century" (148). Acknowledging that the displacement of indigenous people and the contamination of their homeland was a consequence of nuclear testing repeated around the Cold War world, the Honorable Tomaki Juda, Nitijela (RMI Parliament) Senator for the People of Bikini and son of the *irooj* of Bikini when the US evacuated the atoll for nuclear testing, spoke on behalf of the Bikinians in the preface of the World Heritage List application:

> As a World Heritage site, Bikini Atoll will forever tell the story of this period of human history. We wish the world to remember the role of our tiny atoll in the global politics of the 20th Century – for the role of the Bikini tests in the start of the Cold War and the nuclear arms race. As a World Heritage site, Bikini Atoll will remind all of us, around the world, of the need for global peace and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. Bikini Atoll may then actually fulfill the promise for which we reluctantly left our homeland, more than 64 years ago, "for the good of mankind and to end all world wars." (qtd. in Baker 7)

In this tribute to an Atoll that was all but lost to the hegemony and global politics of the twentieth century, Tomaki Juda gave voice to a future for Bikini in which the sacrifice of their beloved Atoll was not in vain. Reincarnating the promise made by US Navy Commodore Ben H. Wyatt to his father, in which the US vowed to use Bikini "for the good of mankind and to end all world wars," Tomaki Juda articulates a powerful re-imagination of Bikini Atoll as a tragically enduring artifact of nuclear imperialism.

Archaeologies of Occupation and Devastation

Early in the summer of 1952 a shallow-water reef, roughly three hundred meters long by one hundred meters wide, separated Bikini's two southern islands of Aerokoj and Aerokojlal. It was small space, but culturally important nonetheless as in the reef's tidal pools native Bikinians had for

hundreds of years trapped fish of the Diodontidae family (Streck 258). The deadly Diodontidae, or porcupine fish, based on archaeological evidence and ethnographic evidence from Bikini and other atolls, is believed to have had deep-rooted religious and ceremonial uses. By summer's end the Aerokoj/Aerokojlal reef was gone, buried under a three-meter-thick layer of borrowed sand and coral rock mined from Aerokojlal's oceanside reef in order to create a single island long enough to accommodate Bikini Atoll's first airfield. The infilling of the Aerokoj/Aerokojlal reef was only one of many modifications made to Bikini's islandscape for the sake of nuclear testing. Other changes would follow, with many having similarly deleterious effects on traditional Bikinian life styles, yet prevailing mythology would have us believe that most were caused by nuclear detonations.

Historical archaeology allows us to read America's Cold War occupation of Bikini Atoll through the scars it left upon the islandscape. Some of the most obvious scars are the ruins of concrete structures built as scientific stations for data collection. Of the more than five hundred structures built, none were more expensive, extensive or robust than the blockhouses. Built to endure nuclear explosions in frighteningly close proximity to ground zero, blockhouses required tons of concrete and steel and months to construct. Built on meter-thick concrete foundations, a blockhouse's exterior wall and roof thicknesses typically varied from 1-meter to 2-meters thick with concrete reinforced by steel rebar (short for reinforcing bar) up to 4 cm in diameter. The concrete consisted of Portland cement, sand, and calcareous coral mined from the reefs. In some cases the blockhouses incorporated the mineral limonite, which made the concrete even more impenetrable to radiation. The roughly one dozen largest blockhouses built at Bikini ranged in extent from 10 to more than 280 square meters and from one to three stories in height. Depending upon the size and complexity of its design, in 1956 a blockhouse cost roughly US$125,000 to build, which today would be more than one million US dollars (Hanson 292). This cost is useful in understanding not only the expensive nature of American nuclear testing, but also the rationale for the purposeful location and orientation of Bikini's blockhouses.

Constructed at locations near ground zero, yet distant enough away to ensure the structure's survival, blockhouses required an unobstructed line of

sight to the nuclear device. Occasionally it was feasible to remove any trees or brush on islands along this sight line, but more often the blockhouses were simply built close to an island's shoreline with their fronts oriented toward ground zero. Apertures in this face allowed instrumentation and photographic devices to collect data and images. Because the initial nuclear blast on any island or reef caused a crater, the orientation of the blockhouse's front face required the use of barges for subsequent nuclear tests. The use of barges eliminated the need to construct new blockhouses or the need to attempt to change the facial orientation of existing blockhouses. The use of barges anchored in the lagoon also helped limit the destruction of Bikini's islands by reducing the number of ground shot detonations.

In the archaeology of Bikini Atoll, the terms "borrow areas" and "borrowing" are used in the rhetoric of America's occupation as euphemisms for acts of occupation and devastation. In excavations performed by H&N workers, "borrowing" was the act of relocating hundreds of tons of sand and coral rock from one area of the atoll to another for use in roads, causeways, airfields and the modification of islands. Apart from nuclear detonations, borrowing was one of the most significant ways in which the Bikini islandscape was altered. In situations where sand was borrowed, large alluvial sand deposits were excavated and hauled to construction areas, while coral rock was mined from reef flats.

Bikini Atoll's bedrock is coral compacted together over millennia into calcium carbonate rock. Bikini's reef flats consisted of four hermatypic (reef-building) coral species, including Porites lutea, Helioporacoerulea, Isoporapalifera, and Acropora digitefera (Emery 208). Coral mining began in April 1953 as one of the first operations set up by H&N under Operation Castle. H&N miners favored *Porites lutea* for its density and hardness, and for the fact that it could be found in a roughly 50 to 300 feet wide band parallel to the island's seaward shoreline (*Completion Report – Operation Castle* 40). Coral quarries were created on the reefs of Aerkojlal, Bikini, Eneu, Nam and Oddik islands, as H&N estimated more than 20,000 cubic yards of coral would be needed. Based on the reported amounts of concrete H&N produced during the Castle, Redwing and Hardtack operations, as much as 40,000 cubic yards of coral was mined for concrete production alone (*Completion Report – Operation Redwing* 2-7). Given that coral rock

was also used for building roads, causeways, airfields, and for ballast in the hulls of nuclear test barges, much more coral was probably mined. As an act of environmental destruction not often considered part of the American occupation, coral mining left indelible scars on the Bikini islandscape.

Among Bikini Atoll's most iconic proof of destruction are its blast craters. The direct effect of powerful nuclear explosions, they appear as three large, deep bowl-shaped cavities in the reef. The largest, the Bravo Crater, was created by the Operation Castle Bravo test and enlarged by the Castle Romeo test and the Aspen, Cedar, Fir, Poplar, and Sycamore tests of Operation Hardtack, which were all detonated on barges in the Bravo crater. Romeo deepened Bravo Crater, but it was the 9.3 Mt Hardtack Poplar test,[6] detonated roughly 600 meters southwest of Bravo ground zero, that expanded the crater's initial width by destroying reef on its western rim and washing away much of the adjoining Bokbata Island. Other blast craters include the Tewa Crater on the reef between Nam and Bukor Islands and the Zuni Crater in the atoll's southern chain of islands. Created by the 5 Mt. Tewa detonation of Operation Redwing, satellite imagery reveals the crater as a 900-meter-wide "bite" out of the lagoon-side reef. Likewise, the roughly 560-meter-wide Zuni Crater was initially created by the 110 Kt. Operation Castle Koon test, but then substantially enlarged by the 3.5 Mt. Redwing Zuni detonation.

Challenging one of the central tropes of nuclear mythology is the fact that none of Bikini Atoll's islands were destroyed in a single nuclear explosion, although two islands were severely damaged by multiple detonations over a decade of testing. Evidence of this fact is found in photographs, construction reports, and multiple mappings of the Atoll from before and after nuclear testing. Among the islands damaged by testing is the southern island of Jabej. Conspicuous for the Zuni Crater that lies off its western end, Jabej was once almost three times longer than its current length. Although the Castle Koon and Redwing Zuni explosions each took large chunks out of Jabej's northwestern shoreline, the Nutmeg, Hickory and Juniper tests of Operation Hardtack also eroded away much of the island with powerful water waves. Satellite imagery reveals five Hardtack blockhouses still stranded in shallow waters roughly one hundred meters offshore.[7]

Beyond the numerous terrestrial features comprising Bikini's archaeology

of destruction are perhaps the most famous ruins of atomic testing: the submerged ships of Operation Crossroads. Under Crossroads, ninety-three American, German, and Japanese ships were anchored in the lagoon for an experiment aimed at measuring the thermal pressure and radiation effects of atomic weapons. Twenty-one ships sank as a result of the Able and Baker atomic tests. Although the history of Crossroads and the archaeology of its shipwrecks are more capably discussed elsewhere by Delgado (see 1991; 1996; 2006), recent marine archaeology research in Bikini lagoon by the University of Delaware has generated a comprehensive geo-acoustic survey of the lagoon floor that promises to yield new high-resolution (one meter/pixel) digital elevation maps of the underwater landscape of Operation Crossroads and the Castle Bravo Crater (see Trembanis et al.). Imaging, for the first time ever, the Crossroads Baker crater on the Bikini lagoon floor, the researcher's high-resolution views of the lagoon landscape provide better context for the effects of nuclear testing on both ships and the lagoon floor.

Conclusion

In this essay I have suggested an archaeology-supported path forward for the Marshallese that focuses on developing a deeper understanding of the American occupation of Bikini Atoll and a wider promulgation of a historical narrative of a once-poisoned homeland that is slowly being healed by Nature while being actively managed by the Bikinians as a heritage resource. Bikini Atoll's place in the global nuclear imaginary has been decades in the making, but its status as a World Heritage List site will forever remind the world of the nuclear imperialism perpetrated on it by the United States. There may always be guileless others who will reach into the nuclear imaginary to appropriate Bikini's identity for their own ends. In a world where names, images, and even personal identities are stolen with regularity and occasional impunity, protecting Bikini Atoll as intellectual property may be a truly Sisyphean task. However, rather than have these moments devolve into a social media conflict, perhaps they might be better conceived as instances of both commonality and difference

in the recognition of a contested cultural icon that is in essence neither a beer, a bathing suit, nor home to SpongeBob SquarePants.

Notes

[1] LA-UR-20-23441. Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited. Los Alamos National Laboratory, an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer, is operated by TRIAD National Security, LLC, for the National Nuclear Security Administration of the US Department of Energy under contract 89233218NCNA000001. By acceptance of this article, the publisher recognizes that the US Government retains a nonexclusive, royalty-free license to publish or reproduce the published form of this contribution, or to allow others to do so, for US Government purposes. Los Alamos National Laboratory requests that the publisher identify this article as work performed under the auspices of the US Department of Energy. Los Alamos National Laboratory strongly supports academic freedom and a researcher's right to publish; as an institution, however, the Laboratory does not endorse the viewpoint of a publication or guarantee its technical correctness.

[2] Broinowski characterizes nuclear imperialism as the "ideological and material domination and subjugation of one group, nation state, or ideology by another through the development of nuclear weapons and energy technology" (1348). For more on its nature, see Shiga.

[3] Among the best references on the exile are these six: Kiste and Chambers provide anthropological perspectives. Firth is an expert on the legacy of the colonial period in the Pacific Islands. Hezel is a Jesuit priest and expert on Micronesian history. Peck offers a unique bureaucrat/physician's view.Niedenthal provides a Marshallese perspective.

[4] For more on nuclear fear and artistic and popular culture responses to the Cold War nuclear arms race, see Weart; Jacobs.

[5] Brown (2013) provides some excellent philosophical discussions on the heritage of nuclear testing and the nature and politics of Bikini's World Heritage Listing.

[6] This explosive yield, as well as all others in this paper, are referenced from *United States Nuclear Tests July 1945 through September 1992. DOE/NV-209-Rev16.*

[7] The Hardtack structures are visible using Google Maps on the eastern rim of the Redwing Zuni Crater using the satellite image function at 11.502776, 165.373948. The geographic coordinates (in decimal degrees) of other sites mentioned include Aerokoj/Aerokojlal Island at 11.509216, 165.409905, Tewa Crater at 11.681532, 165.341161, and the Castle Bravo Crater at 11.699771, 165.274385.

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Misria Shaik Ali

Memorializing Decommissioning: A Nuclear Culture Approach to Safety Culture

The waters of the Hudson river bear thick histories of the colonization of Turtle Island, revolutionary war and industrialization. The Indian Point Energy Centre (IPEC) is located almost midway along the 315-mile-long Hudson river in Buchanan, Westchester County. Commissioned in 1962, IPEC houses three reactor units and Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installations (ISFSIs).[1] Before IPEC, on the land that was named as Indian Point stood the Indian Point amusement park – a recreational space for the Hudson River Day Line's passengers which began its steamboat operations on the river in the 1860s. In the 1920s, the owners of the day line, the Van Santvoords and the Olcotts, purchased around 240 acres of a forest by the Hudson. After learning that the Kitchawank Tribe, an Algonquian tribe, lived there, they felt that it would be "catchy" to name the land as Indian Point and built the amusement park on it.

In 1954, the investor-owned utility company, Consolidated Edison, Inc., selected Indian Point as the site for New York's first nuclear power plant. IPEC's Unit 1, which was commissioned in 1963, was decommissioned in 1974 following defects in cooling pipes and protests by the Hudson River Fisherman Association against the plant's unsafe operations that led to fish-kill in the Hudson. IPEC's unit 2 and 3 were commissioned in 1974 and 1976 respectively. IPEC is now owned by Entergy Nuclear North East, a subsidiary of Entergy corporation, and is located on the land of the Algonquian Kitchawank Tribe.[2] Underneath IPEC lies the 26-inch diameter Algonquin Gas Transmission pipeline owned by Spectra Energy, a private energy company. After five decades of protest against IPEC's safety violations by the Indian Point Safety Energy Coalition (IPSEC), the Stop Algonquin Pipeline Expansion (SAPE) and the Riverkeepers, the plant is

slated for complete shutdown in 2021: in April 2020 Unit 2 was shut down and is now being decommissioned.[3]

The current conversations around decommissioning in the US nuclear order are oriented towards finding absolute, universal technological fixes defined by the need for a national, permanent deep geological repository (DGR) and consolidated interim storage sites.[4] In the 1970s, the United States Court of Appeal (DC Cir) ordered the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to devise the waste confidence rule, according to which the NRC will work towards finding a national DGR. It was an effort to avert the fear that if new plants were licensed locally, states might become permanent radioactive waste repositories without a national DGR to move the waste away from the reactor's site (Minnesota v. NRC 602). The 2007 review of the 1984 waste confidence rule promises a DGR within the next 160 years and, until then, advocates for a "continued storage" of spent nuclear fuel at the reactor's site or at an away-from reactor site in ISFSIs. The ISFSIs at IPEC are currently managed by the private company Holtec, Inc., which has also been maintaining IPEC's decommissioning.[5] With the next 147 years marked for in-situ and away-from-reactor ISFSIs, the advocacy for Hardened On-Site Storage (HOSS) put forth by IPSEC and SAPE reveals "a situated technical practice" for ISFSIs as a critique to the current fixation on a national DGR (Haraway 3).[6] This fixation fetters the US nuclear order to pursue Yucca Mountain as a suitable site for DGR, against the resistance of its indigenous peoples.

Yannick Barthe et al. analyze how, in Sweden, the idea of the DGR – originally conceptualized by American nuclear physicist Alvin Weinberg – has become an institutional fixation, with its promise of technological fix as "absolute safety" (197). This, they claim, impedes the positive effort of social assessments of technological processes by citizens in technological controversies (Rip 349, 361-63). In arguing against the faith in technological fixes embedded in the episteme of safety culture, Susan Silbey analyzes three key conceptualizations of culture in safety culture – as causal attitude, as engineered organization, and lastly, as emergent and indeterminate. In framing cultures as emergent, indeterminate and open, she calls for researchers to address the "situated interests" that mobilize "to produce countervailing power" in managing hazards (362).

"Effective safety communication" is a trait of the "positive safety culture" which has shaped the USA's nuclear order since the "Policy Statement on the Conduct of Nuclear Power Plant Operations, 1989" was issued by the NRC.[7] Effective safety communication strives to establish a "safety conscious work environment" by encouraging employees to "speak up" and provide "feedback." Like other traits of safety culture, this trait restricts the work of ensuring safety to employees, so that "the people and the environment" can be protected from ionizing radiation emerging from nuclear operations. The narrative construction of these traits by the NRC as that which needs to be practiced by its employees (the Self) simultaneously constructs the Other (the people and the environment) as passive recipients of the benefits accruing from such practices. People and the environment are not recognized as active agents of knowing radiation contamination, its dangers and safety concerns through their memories of safety events and the imagination of danger – an argument I explicate in a later part of the article.

In this article, I examine the pertinent importance in tweaking safety culture using a nuclear culture approach. Under such an approach, negotiations on safety regulation attend to the memories of safety events and imagination about danger and radiation that shape the concerns and the advocacy put forth by marginalized stakeholders. How can nuclear institutions meaningfully address the protection of people and the environment if there is a lack of engagement with the local people living around them, their memories of safety events and their imaginations about danger? Using Michelle Murphy's regimes of perceptibility, I respond to the above question and trouble the dominant nuclear regimes of perceptibility at IP (defined by safety culture) with the advocacy for HOSS, "a situated technical practice," emerging from people's ways of knowing, sensing and remembering danger and safety events at IP (Haraway 3). Safety culture is framed using a list of nine traits that are fixed, determinant and closed. Against this, I propose nuclear culture as one that attends to the "Other" and the possibilities of emergence that come with listening and attending, thereby allowing for the "culture" of nuclear operations to accept (rather than deny) emergence and indeterminacy of unknown dangers and risks. I critique the politics of expertise through the lens of cultural criticism, thereby allowing for conversations between the social sciences and the humanities to nuance the discourse of radiation protection.[8]

Memorializing Decommissioning: Attending to Memory and Stuff

Besides providing a cultural critique of safety culture and its memory and imagination, I also contrast them with the memory and imagination of the nuclear culture that is emerging at IP. Ivan Illich, in *H20 and the Waters of Forgetfulness*, argues against the development of a mid-city lake at Dallas, Texas. He claims the water that would be used to make the mid-city lake is actually water of forgetfulness, that is, water that undergoes not just the industrial purification of dirt but also of memory. Taking cue from Gaston Bachelard's analysis of matter as the "stuff to which our [collective] imagination gives shape and form" (qtd. in Illich 3) in order to explicate matter as culturally constructed, Illich draws a distinction between waters of forgetfulness or *Lethe* and waters of memory or *Mnemosyne*, associating Lethe with industrialized cultures. Bachelard explicates imagination as a dialectical process between form and matter or between "formal and material imagination" (1). I use this dialectical process of *materialization* to explicate the ways in which waters as stuff are imagined within safety culture and nuclear culture at IP, and why HOSS advocacy is a materialization of IP's nuclear culture. The concept of stuff wraps in the materiality and the discursivity of water, HOSS and other stuff, and grounds "stuff" in the imagination of emergent cultures, which is both discursive and material.

This article, hence, is about the "stuff" whose names epitomize the violence of the colonization of Turtle Island – the waters of the "Hudson," IP, and Algonquin Pipeline – and how the debates around the decommissioning of IPEC offer new directions for "memorializing the process of decommissioning," by tweaking safety culture using a nuclear culture approach.[9] Evans T. Pritchard, indigenous historian of the Algonquins, tells the story of the US Colonization of Turtle Island as seen through the eyes of the "Others." He remarks:

> This [book] is about the land that [Henry Hudson] discovered, the people who encountered him, and the river that flowed beneath him, both ways, upstream and down. The land is Turtle Island, the River is the Mohicanituck (… "Great Waters Constantly in motion," as interpreted by DeLaet) and the people are the Eastern Algonquin people. It is their story. (2)

It was an effort to talk about Mohicanituck, named today as "Hudson," on whose fish the regional Algonquin community were dependent, and about their encounter with European colonizers. Pritchard names native people as "Algonquian" people, names their many "villages" and accounts their "reactions" to colonization that have not been recorded in popular history. The very re-orientation of the 250-acre of the Kitchawank tribe's land towards commercial usage came with the naming of it as IP. Sarah Kavanagh explicates how "faux-Indian names" are used to materialize the imaginary of Indian-ness as belonging to the past (170). By roping in Robert Berkhofer's "White Man's Indian," she argues that, while Indian ghosts are created through nationalistic acts of commemorating, native bodies, their histories and their land claims are erased.

As a critique of the memory practices of scientific environmentalities that seek to "humanize the violence of technological obsolescence through museumization" (Visvanathan) of those who are rendered obsolete, Shiv Visvanathan remarks that museums embalm life to encourage forgetting while memory is active, open-ended and inventive.[10] Further, in arguing for commemorating heritage as a *mnemosyme* (well of remembrance) of people, Visvanathan calls for an ethical understanding of the violence of museums, i.e., how they render obsolete those lives they "preserve." He thus demands a move towards "inventive memory" where "emergence and otherness" are creative possibilities for democratic memory practices. Hence, this essay is also about those "stuff" which the "Others" of the NRC and IPEC advocate for and imagine with – namely the members of IPSEC, SAPE, the indigenous peoples, and people of color whom the current mode of decommissioning at US targets – including HOSS and Mohicanituck (Hudson that's constantly in motion). Seeing Indian Point, the protection against ionizing radiation at IP and the process of decommissioning IPEC through the eyes of such Others offers a nuclear culture approach to safety culture.

The HOSS advocacy explicates a "situated technical practice" that offers alternative directions to the current mode of decommissioning, a national DGR, that the US nuclear order is fixated on (Haraway 3). This also requires the white bedroom communities around IP that have benefited from the presence of IPEC since the 1970s, in the words of Marilyn Elie (lead IPSEC activist) to be "custodians of the radioactive waste" and to stay with the

trouble of radiation in order to prevent the dumping of radioactive waste in the lands of indigenous and people of color communities. In *Staying with the Trouble*, Haraway argues for "a time for freshness" with tentacles of underground beings spreading the grounds of the Anthropocene to make oddkins and to embrace experiments of staying with the troubles of geological epochs (2). Making oddkins requires one to encounter the other, become with the other in "unexpected collaborations and combinations," and this can be initiated by "inheriting the past without denial" (4). In the worlds of Anthropos and Capital impressed by demiurgic and savior imaginaries of "techno-fixes" (or "techno-apocalypses"), Haraway reminds us to "embrace situated technical projects and their people" (3).

By roping in arguments made by Visvanathan and Haraway, in the final section on Heritage as making oddkins, I explicate HOSS as a *mnemosyne*, a well of remembrance, where past incidents of safety, danger and radioactive contamination congregate to *materialize* the HOSS aboveground. Nuclear institutions, its governmentalities and environmentalities, fixated on technological processes that are embedded in imageries and imaginaries of techno-fixes and apocalypses, render radiation contamination imperceptible.[11] However, in nuclear cultures, mutated and injured bodies, in form and matter, become signs of irradiation posing an anti-thesis to radiation's invisibility orchestrated by the nuclear industrial-complex. Hence, in knowing irradiation, it becomes crucial to analyze the perceptual, epistemic, psychic, material and semiotic ways of knowing radiation by peoples inhabiting nuclear cultures. This article, hence, loops alternative ways of measuring, sensing, remembering and knowing radiation contamination at IP in order to trace the emerging nuclear culture at IP, using the works of Visvanathan, Haraway, Jonathan Crary, Murphy and Illich.

I. Water

In this section, I explicate how water as stuff is imagined by the safety culture and nuclear culture at IP. In *H20 and the Waters of Forgetfulness*, Illich analyzes the rationales for constructing a mid-city lake at Dallas,

Texas, by constituting urban space and urban water as the stuff the city imagines with. In line with Ivan Illich, to theorize IP as a nuclear culture where danger and safety are emergent and indeterminate, I juxtapose the waters or rivers that concern the IP resistance with with the complex spatiality of IP.

The Hudson waters bound IPEC. Besides nationalistic histories, the Hudson enfolds stories of environmental activism that talk to "making oddkins" in the valley. In the 1960s and 1970s, activist groups like the Scenic Hudson and the Hudson River Fisherman's Association (HFRA), via their resistance to the Storm King hydroelectric project of Con Edison, unprecedentedly compelled the Federal Power Authority to attend to the environmental impacts of energy developments, epitomized by the signing of the Hudson Peace Treaty in 1980 (Revkin). Although the HFRA was successful in its appeal to the then Atomic Energy Commission for mandating cooling towers requirements for IPEC to reduce fish-kill in the Hudson (Lifset 174), as an incentive to compel Con Edison to withdraw the hydroelectric project, the National Resource Defense Council waived the requirements rendering the HFRA's struggle unsuccessful. The negotiations on appropriate energy infrastructures in environmental controversies have historically put the concerns of anti-gas, anti-nuclear and anti-dam movements at contestation. Today, environmental groups at IP have reconciled such oddness/differences to form what they call "The Unity Group."

IP as Complex Spatiality of Danger

The source of environmental activism against energy infrastructures at IP goes beyond IPEC. Dr. Courtney Williams, lead activist at SAPE, has been involved in resistance movements against the high-pressure Algonquin Incremental Market gas pipeline expansion (AIM). Spectra Energy initiated the expansion in 2017 by replacing the already existing 26-inch diameter Algonquin Gas Transmission pipeline with a 42 inch-diameter AIM pipeline in the region. AIM cuts through IP and is "within 105 feet from critical safety infrastructure [NPP] at Indian Point" ("Stop

the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion"), making IP a complex spatiality of danger. Williams's words talk to the complexity of everydayness at IP:

> In 2013, [SAPE] was holding an info session at our local library about a gas pipeline expansion in the area. By that time, we realized that we were living 400 feet from this Algonquin Gas Transmission pipeline, which we didn't know when we bought our house because there's no law in NY state requiring disclosure of this kind of thing. So, my husband went to the info session… and came home and said, 'either we should sell our house or move away right now. These people are crazy, because they're saying that the pipeline company wants to build a new gas pipeline underneath the NPP,'and we didn't sleep much that night. We looked into it and realized that the pipeline ran under the NPP and the company was planning to expand. (Williams, "Interview")

Today, the 40-year-old Algonquin Gas Transmission pipeline lies beneath IPEC as an auxiliary pipeline sending alarm sirens of danger across IP. Williams explains:

> Like anytime we hear a loud noise, explosion, we worry [that we need to evacuate]. We have Sirens that we have to test or that they test that [sirens] supposedly. Well, so they test the sirens routinely, but the difference between the siren for the firehouse and for the NPP is that the siren for the NPP… is like a steady way. Whayyyyyy… for firehouse, it goes whaywhaywhay. (Williams, "Interview")

Hearing the sirens of the energy facilities creates confusion amongst the local people whether there is an emergency, or a testing is being carried over. Sirens from police vehicles, sirens from fire trucks or ambulances also cloud their sense of danger.[12] Living in constant emergency requires people in risk cultures to sharpen their senses, creating fields for experiencing, knowing and remembering the emergent dangers in their surroundings.[13] A knee-jerk categorization of such sensorial orientations as caused by fear by nuclear regimes of perceptibility indicates the inability to engage with the lived experiences of the people beyond the scientism of the issue and explicates the constant effort by the nuclear industry to shape the manner in which human subjects perceive and attend to dangers of irradiation. Murphy defines

regimes of perceptibility as "produced by assemblages" – "arrangements of discourses, objects, practices, and subject positions that work together within a […] knowledge tradition" (10, 25) to render the phenomenon of exposure perceptible by including some objects, action and knowledge while excluding others. Murphy builds the concept from Crary's work on *Suspensions of Perception* where he argues that, in using scientific discourses and technological apparatuses, modernity shapes the ways or orientations one uses to *attend* to matters of concern. Environmental activism at IP, as this article shows, is a contestation between ways of knowing and sensing radiation contamination by local people and the dominant nuclear regimes of perceptibility that prescribe scientific modes of knowing and sensing radiation as the "God-trick" or the only path to truth (Haraway 42).[14]

Paul Blanch's story provides a way to excavate how dominant nuclear regimes of perceptibility shape perception, memory/forgetfulness and everydayness at IP. In November 2015, Blanch, an ex-consultant to Entergy and a whistleblower, revealed that the NRC's approval of the AIM pipeline to be sited besides IPEC relied on a "partially handwritten […], undated [and] […] unsigned" risk assessment report compiled by Entergy; the report concluded that the siting poses "no undue risks," if the isolation value is shut "within 3 minutes," in the worst-case scenario of a rupture in AIM pipeline (qtd. In Momma). Such a rupture may lead to a station blackout, cutting electricity supply, and may also damage the back-up diesel generators required for the safe shut down of IPEC. Citing the 2010 San Bruno pipeline rupture, Blanch claims that field verification procedures delay the timely shutdown of the valve. Further, Entergy stated that only the safe shut down of the NPP is within "the jurisdiction of NRC" (Entergy's 10 CFR).

If nuclearity is "a technopolitical phenomenon that emerges from political and cultural configurations of technical and scientific things" and "a property distributed among things" (Hecht, *Being* 15), local peoples' ways of knowing at IP that draw rhizomatic connections between technological processes of IPEC and AIM through compiling worst-case scenarios explicate the nuclearity of the AIM and interrupt the "hybrid forms of power" that get to designate something as nuclear; this is a process of making oddkins (Hecht, "Cosmogram" 103; *Being* 14-15). While

Entergy's safety analysis draws boundaries and differentiates between the jurisdiction of AIM and IPEC at IP, local people in nuclear cultures, who draw connections across temporalities and spatialities of danger, emerge as active agents of producing knowledge for knowing, remembering and sensing danger, not passive recipients of radiation dosages or hazards whose protection the safety culture addresses.

As active agents of knowing danger, the Unity Group has proposed the need for a Citizens Oversight Board (COB) to overlook the decommissioning process, to Entergy, NRC and New York State.[15] However, a Community Advisory Panel (CAP), consisting of 25 politicians, Entergy employees and bureaucrats with no representation from IP's local task force, has been instated to oversee the decommissioning. The Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act which will come to effect in 2021 requires the NRC to report on "the best practices for establishing and operating local community advisory boards" (5577). As of today, Unity Group's advocacy for a COB and the above-ground HOSS stands rejected with the formation of CAP. The rejection thereby undermines IP people's ways of knowing risks, danger, and ensuring nuclear safety.

Risk analysis reports like the one discussed first of all control *ways of remembering danger* (detailed in the section on memory). Secondly, the risk assessment image, even if intended by the "experts" to be a communication material for "lay" understanding, explicates an age-old technique of nuclear industry and regulatory institutions where the information supplied is authenticated by "powerful boundaries of secrecy and alleged expertise": this technique undermines "the naïve and subjugated knowledge" of nuclear cultures as at IP emerging from lived experiences, memory and sensoria (Abraham 4). In line with Abraham's call for scholars of Critical Nuclear Studies to attend to such neglected, subjugated knowledge, this paper explicates a "nuclear culture" approach to nuclear safety that attends to the ways people living in complex areas of danger know and visualize ionizing radiation. Foucault claims that the attention to subjugated knowledge renders critique possible, and in so doing reconciles differences and addresses marginalization (7-8). In the following sections, I discuss the rhizomatic connections made by activists at IP by engaging with oddkins to make sense of the dangers emerging from its complex spatiality.

IPSEC and SAPE are two key activist groups at IP resisting the reduction of IP to an energy mine. However, to stay united in their struggles was a decision consciously taken by both the groups. As Williams states, SAPE & IPSEC literally are

> in the intersection of gas infrastructure and nuclear infrastructure. There have been efforts by probably the industry and marketers, say 'like, oh if you don't want gas infrastructure, we need NPPs because it's clean,' that has pit activist communities against one another. Here in the Hudson Valley, we have strongly resisted that, and we started a new group called the Unity Group; united for clean energy. (Williams, "Interview")

Marilyn Elie also echoes Williams's sentiments. The kinship between SAPE and IPSEC, in the form of the Unity Group, emerges from IP's complex spatial terrain of danger, and "place-making" at IP is defined by the danger "events" that emerge from its complex spatiality (see Massey).

Memory and Waters of Forgetfulness

After decades of struggle against critical safety practices that concretize risk and danger at IP, Riverkeeper, NY State, Entergy signed an agreement calling for the shutdown of IPEC by 2021. In his opening statement, Riverkeeper's attorney Mark Lucas states that

> [t]he facility [IPEC] at issue indisputably leaks radioactive matter into the groundwater and into the Hudson. [IPEC's] unabated thermal discharge [hot water] impacts the natural habitat resulting in degradation of the resource and the aquatic biota, including threatened and endangered species. (Lucas)

Safety practices at IPEC, embedded in the imaginaries of a safety culture that includes technological fixes, construct the Hudson as a body of H2O or cooling water that is sucked into the reactor. H2O, for Ivan Illich, is an industrialized, commercialized, domesticated and modernized meaning of water, purified from dirt and memory for "human survival"

(76). Survival at IP today depends on the purification of the Hudson waters' toxicity stimulated by industrial-anthropogenic activities, making it into the Hudson of the Anthropocene. In Greek mythologies, when *Lethe*, the waters of forgetfulness, like the Hudson of the Anthropocene, washes away people's memories, the memories do not disappear but rather accumulate in the well of remembrance, *Mnemosyne* (30). While the toxic waters of the Hudson are purified from their dirt, there is a compulsive need for memories of radioactive contamination of the Hudson waters to be retained as signs, and hence commemorated with a "Mnemosyne", the aboveground HOSS.

The Hudson has lost its significance as a river that is constantly in motion, flowing both upstream and downstream and simultaneously stirring the mud deposit that lies in its depth. In fact, this unique significance, recognized by its indigenous name *Mahicantuck*, is reversed to rhetorize the river as intrinsically unclean by industrialists, supplementing the dominant nuclear regime of perceptibility. Secondly, IPEC's radioactive waters that are discarded into the Hudson give them a degree of imperceptibility, with no signboards around, until nuclear regimes of perceptibility acknowledge the contamination, stabilizing it as institutional memory ("Environmental Impact"). Lack of accurate safety information from the government other than just rhetorical communications and the confidentiality of safety information to ensure nuclear security compel the sustained flow of information to render radiation perceptible between nuclear cultures. Hence in nuclear cultures, accidents, like Fukushima, are rather "a near past" that informs present experiences of *becoming irradiated*.[16] In a similar way, the "forgotten" Texas Eastern auxiliary pipeline under the surface of the Arkansas river adds to IP people's knowledge about institutions' responsibility to ensure safety:

> This happened in June 2015. This is an image of auxiliary pipeline under the Arkansas River blowing up and Spectra didn't even know it had happened. When this pipeline blew up, it blew chunks of cement that damaged the Tugboat. When the tugboat captain saw all the damages, he called the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard examined the situation and said, 'I think there's a gas pipeline near here.' So, they called SE… and only then [SE] realized that their pipeline had blown up.

The Texas Eastern Pipeline (TEP) connects the East Tennessee Natural Gas Pipeline in the Southern US with the AIM pipeline that extends up to Nova Scotia, Canada, along the eastern seaboard. Spectra Energy's plan to replace the existing Algonquin Gas Transmission pipeline with the AIM pipeline makes the Algonquin Gas Transmission one an auxiliary pipeline under IPEC. Since auxiliary pipelines "are not normally in use," to quote from SE spokesperson Phil West's response to the TEP rupture, the IP people fear that Algonquin Gas Transmission under IPEC may as well be beyond the active attention of Spectra Energy: in Blanch's words, "Entergy and Spectra have not fully considered that worst-case scenario" (qtd. in Thielman). Scientific institutions that treat accidents in isolation, as events happening elsewhere, do not pay attention to the knowledge repositories constructed by local people as "worst-case scenarios" by collating information and stories of danger. Such reports' rhetorical insistence on the safety-ness of critical infrastructures, rooted in technological rationality, regulate people's memories of danger (articulated through worst-case scenarios) by erasing the discursive, institutional and technological resonances between safety events in risk cultures (see Rice and Jahn 136-55).

Radiation, TEP and the Algonquin Gas Transmission pipeline are stuff that are "beneath the surface." The specific recommendation of the Unity Group that is key to *memorializing decommissioning* is the need for an aboveground HOSS storage at the reactor's site and *not underground*.[17] As Elie remarks, "this [spent]fuel needs to be stored above ground. So, people can see it and it won't be forgotten about and that's it. *There is no good solution*". By storing the spent nuclear fuel *underground*, Marilyn's concern is that it might be forgotten in the vast timescale required for radioactive decay. STS underground studies point to problems of conflating underground and invisibility and argue that "cultural imaginaries about the underground" reinforce "a distance" between visibility and the underground (Kinchy et al. 31). They claim that the "invisibility of the underground makes it analogous to studying other 'invisible' forces like… radiation" (31). In the recent literature on nuclear studies, scholars ask: "is radiation invisible at all?" (see Kuchinskaya).

Works in sensory studies explicate the need for shifting sensorial analyses' attention from "body" and the "thing" to "transmission flows" and "field of sensorial experience" (Hamilakis 115; Ingold 97-104; Hahn 171). In sensorial fields of experience, heterogeneous elements like "material substances, airwaves, gestures, and movements, as well as discourses, affects, memories," *relate* and get entangled through "encounter with one another" in the institution's safety practices to render radiation perceptible (Hamilakis 115, 118). Following this, ontological inquiries into the (in)visibility of the underground or the radiation has little to do "with objects themselves," whether they be underground or radiation, but instead concerns the relationality established by regimes of perceptibility. Such regimes frame the fields of experiences and regulate memory through techno-scientific practices of safety that insist on technological fixes.

At IP, where both radiation and underground pipelines have been orchestrated to be invisible, the notion of (in)visibility is one that concerns regimes of perceptibility rather than radiation/underground pipelines themselves. In addition, real-time decay heat monitoring and sensing technologies as parts of aboveground HOSS advocacy clarifies that the Unity Group do not simply believe that formally *materializing the invisible stuff*, radiation, aboveground would render radiation visible; it's not simply a matter of inversion. Along with formally materializing HOSS aboveground, other parts of the Unity Group's advocacy – including sensing technologies, safety mechanisms and safeguards, citizenry's practices of overseeing decommissioning, lived and sensorial experiences and memories of danger, and memorializing decommissioning, to name a few – mesh together in cultivating a new regime of perceptibility at IP that attends to people's ways of knowing and sensing radiation contamination neglected in the past by dominant regimes of perceptibility. In order to memorialize the violence of non-transparent and secretive nuclear regimes of perceptibility, the Unity Group, imagining with the aboveground HOSS, a stuff, calls for its materialization as a dialectic between its form, above ground, and HOSS's material arrangements.

III. Heritage as Kinship

In September 2007, environmental justice organizations from every US State released the "Principles of Safeguarding Nuclear Waste at Reactors" advocating for HOSS as a key principle of interim storage of nuclear waste at in-situ or away-from-reactors ISFSIs. The advocacy states that HOSS is "rooted in values of community protection and environmental justice" and is meant to protect nuclear waste storages from "terrorist attacks and earthquakes" ("Overview"). The HOSS advocacy, fearing the exposure to and contamination of communities that are not already exposed to radiation, stands against the movement of radioactive waste to "away-from-the-reactor" sites, especially Yucca Mountain.[18] The HOSS advocacy recognizes that a national and consolidated DGR mandated by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1987, the interim storage in dry-casks where radioactive wastes are "tightly packed," and the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel which is "a proliferation threat" are environmentally unjust, and hence are non-solutions ("Principles").

The Unity Group has expanded on the principles of HOSS to include rolling stewardship and aboveground dry-cask HOSS facilities constructed horizontally, making them unappealing to terrorists' attacks. Rolling stewardship, formulated by nuclear scientist Gordon Edwards, is a way of decommissioning which involves consensually taking responsibility to oversee radioactive decontamination of nuclear infrastructures by the current generation of citizens in nuclear cultures.[19] Edwards explicates that the existing techno-scientific practices of spent fuel rods' storage leads to "abandonment" of nuclear waste which further weakens the collective memory and proposes rolling stewardship as a way of prolonging "the memory of radioactive waste" as radioactive decay occurs over protracted temporalities (66). In such a way, the *materialization* of aboveground HOSS in the Unity Group's advocacy comes to be a critique of the dominant nuclear regimes of perceptibility that delegates the responsibility of radiation protection to its employees (the Self). By tapping into America's haunting legacies, HOSS is a stuff that IP imagines with to make oddkins spatially and temporally possible in order to "stay with the trouble" of radiation. Such stuff are mnemonic devices that interrupt dominant

regimes of perceptibility. They preserve the fraught memories of living with radiation contamination by embalming stuff like HOSS in such a way as to generate the remembrance of the haunting legacies of environmental racism and injustice.

Conclusion

Commemorating heritage in "a time of freshness" with stuff that cultures imagine with, and to make oddkins temporally and spatially, come about by attending to haunting legacies and "inheriting [them] without denial" (Haraway 3). Nuclear museums or "exhibitory complexes" that fill the corridors of the US – from Los Alamos to Oak Ridge – are "material and symbolic tools" that "sought rhetorically to incorporate the people within the processes of the state," thereby materializing and further consolidating nationalistic imaginaries (Bennett 99). Such atomic and nuclear museums tell the jingoistic and demiurgic tales of nuclear nationalism. Visvanathan's theory of heritage is one that intends to rescue the notion of heritage "from [such] jingoism of the nation state which conscripts it for identity formation", "a bureaucracy that forges it into a technical entity," and lastly, a "tourist fixation." Heritage as "a mnemosyme of people" provides possibilities for "form[s] of trusteeship and caring for a world" where heritage "go[es] beyond the textuality, the materiality of history to capture [...] kinship with a different time" (Visvanathan). Such a notion of heritage is one that pays attention to the memories of Others, who have been marginalized by technological operations, by memorializing stuff through acts of trusteeship and care that reconcile differences.

HOSS as a *mnemosyne* of the people at IP committed to making oddkins is a situated technical project that alters safety culture's imaginaries by interrupting its regimes of perceptibility, inflicting on them stories of danger collected from across the USA's space and time. A situated technical project that inherits haunting legacies without denial is also a heritage project. Situated technical projects emerge from the tension between "a cosmic faith in technological fixes" and "a position that game is over" or "it's too late." The Unity Group, through COB, is taking up the duty of

oversight and staying with danger via rolling stewardship, at least until the USA looks for technological processes for radioactive waste storage other than empty or indigenous lands. HOSS advocated by the Unity Group is a mnemonic device that alters the practices and processes of nuclear operations in order to memorialize the haunting legacies of the USA which are further perpetuated through environmental injustice and racism. The HOSS advocacy by means of interrupting IPEC's safety culture renders Indian Point as a nuclear culture.

Situating Nuclear Cultures

1. Nuclear cultures are open and emerge from the emplaced experiences of danger and safety, where ways of knowing irradiation emerge as a resurgent force from the dialectical interplay between existing systems and practices. They are not closed systems of autopoietic functioning and processes that minimalize *a priori* risks.
2. Nuclear cultures recognize people as active agents of knowing irradiation and converses with "naïve or subjugated knowledges" about safety, danger and risks rather than neglecting them.
3. Nuclear cultures appropriate myths that communities could playfully engage with. While technological rationality constitutes today's nuclear safety culture, kinship is one of the myths that make up nuclear cultures, thereby altering the dominant regimes of perceptibility.
4. Here, stakeholders confront oddkins allowing them the multivocality that attends to marginalized lives for subsequent experimentation with symbiosis.
5. A nuclear culture approach is that which not only reinvents the memory practices of safety culture but also reorients its processes and operations in more democratic ways by means of paying attention to the other.
6. Lastly, nuclear cultures compel attention to the complexity of "becoming irradiated" as they strive to be recognized as nuclear by the current nuclear safety order.

Future research on nuclear sites can enlarge nuclear cultures by adding stories, experiments and struggles from nuclear geographies, nuclear criticism and other layers of nuclear cultures. The suspension of perception enforced by centering nuclear safety in *talking about irradiation* sharpens the dialects of the nuclear industry, leaving people's experience of irradiation under-theorized (Jasanoff and Kim 2). The next 147 years, marked for in-situ and away-from-reactor ISFSIs in the American nuclear order, demands approaching nuclear safety via nuclear culture that shifts safety imaginaries from absolute, demiurgic, consolidated technological solutions to experiments and imaginations that are situated and interspersed by different anti-genocidal or anti-exclusionary social groups, based on kinship, espousing a shared care for living on a damaged planet and thereby constructing a new postmodern set of ethics.

Notes

[1] Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installations are used at interim storage facilities, either within the reactor's site or in away-from reactor sites, to store spent fuel rods that were used in the reactor to generate electricity. They are stored in such facilities until the radioactivity of spent fuel rods decay into stable elements.

[2] Kitchawank Tribes are part of the Wappingers Confederacy and occupied parts of today's counties, namely Westchester, Putnam and Bronx.

[3] IPEC committed nearly 40 safety violations between 1980 and 2016. Established in 1976, Riverkeeper is a non-profit environmental organization, that protects the Hudson from degradation. IPSEC and SAPE are local advocacy groups at IP that strive to ensure the safety of energy infrastructures at IP.

[4] See "Recommendations of the Blue-Ribbon Commission." During the hearings, David R. Wright, the current President of the NRC, supported the need for a national DGR at Yucca Mountains stating that the cost of deploying security for waste stored in dry-casks (ISFSIs) temporarily at the reactor's site was constraining.

[5] In 2017, Holtec, Inc. sought the approval of the NRC for establishing an Interim Storage Facility which would house up to "8,680 metric tons uranium of commercial spent nuclear fuel" at Lea county, New Mexico. The area is used for cattle grazing and the NRC is currently carrying out the economic and environmental impact assessment of the site.

[6] The advocacy for HOSS states that the "on-site storage of irradiated fuel rods [be it in on site or away from reactor ISFSIs] in dry casks should be made safer and more secure by adoption, by NRC, of regulations to mandate HOSS. HOSS is a system whereby more space between the containers increases security, and earth mounds or berms form a barrier between the containers and any public-access points such as [...] water-front. HOSS also mandates real-time heat and radiation monitoring and would also provide for local community over-sight of the waste installation such as a citizen advisory board" ("Talking Points").

[7] On safety culture and decommissioning, see "Safety Culture."

[8] In the collective effort at bringing about a strategic research agenda for the social sciences and humanities in radiological protection in 2019, the Society for Radiological Protection called for ways to "develop avenues for systemic collaboration [...] between technical and non-technical communities" and explore the "interrelation between behavior, perception of risks, economic aspects, knowledge, culture, historical memory" (Perko et al. 2, 7).

[9] On "nuclear culture," cultural history and critique of "atomic culture," see Boyer, and Messmer. On "British nuclear culture," see Willis, and Maguire. On constructive critique of the use of nuclear culture as a property of nuclear zones, see Martin and Davies, and Hughes. On artistic practices and nuclear cultures, see Carpenter, and Gibbs and Robert. In my work, I situate nuclear cultures as emergent rather than as a virtue or property of a zone that is nuclearized and is informed by Science and Technologies Studies (STS), Sensory Studies and Critical Nuclear Studies, thus adding to the on-going effort for a shared meaning of nuclear culture.

[10] Luke defines environmentalities as "instrumental rationalities [embedded] in the policing of ecological spaces" (65).

[11] On nuclear and images/imagery, see Lifton; Weart; Berger. On nuclear and imaginary, see Carpenter, "Shifting the Nuclear Imaginary," and Hales.

[12] Attending to the difference in sirens is crucial for emergency response. Emergency protocols of IPEC require evacuation while those of AIM pipeline require people to stay indoors.

[13] See Pink on emplaced knowing: knowing occurs through both embodiment and emplacement in the environment.

[14] On sensorial ways of scientific and technical knowing in NE, see Parr, and Mckenzie and Spinardi.

[15] The UG has proposed amending "the Public Service Law to create a Board to oversee aspects of decommissioning." The COB would meet at least 10 times a year and consists of 15 voting members including "first respondents, labor unions, environmental organizations, economically disadvantaged community and the general public" and 8 designated State and county officials serving ex officio" ("Citizens Oversight Board").

[16] Berlant claims that today's eventualization is defined by a disturbed time called the

historical present where the on-going present defines what events come to be our near past and near future events.

[17] See endnote 6.

[18] Excluding places where storing radioactive waste in reactor sites is dangerous and unsecure like Praire, Minnesota (see State of New York, et al.).

[19] See Minnesota v. NRC 602 F.2d 412.1984, Waste Confidence Decision (49 FR 34688), and 1990 and 2007 reviews of the 1984 decision.

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Dibyadyuti Roy

Apocalyptic Allegories: Resisting Strategic Nuclear Imaginaries through Critical Literacy

In a critical scene from *The Matrix*, Neo aka Thomas Anderson is introduced by the rebel leader, Morpheus, to the "Desert of the Real," or the computer-generated simulation that Neo had perceived as the "real world" before this point in his existence. Neo is informed that, during the war between humans and solar-powered artificial intelligence machines at the end of the twenty-first century, humans had deployed nuclear weapons in the hope that a nuclear winter devoid of solar energy would obliterate the sentient machines. Ironically, Morpheus notes that in the aftermath of the nuclear winter, the machines realized that "the human body generates more bioelectricity than a 120-volt battery and more than 25,000 BTUs of body heat" (*The Matrix*): the most effective and renewable form of energy that the machines would ever need. Beyond the effective operationalization of a dual apocalypse, nuclear and technological, the scene highlights the use of human bodies as a back-up resource to serve their inhuman technological masters: a possible reference to the dehumanizing attributes of the specialized discourses that facilitate strategic nuclear imaginaries and answer the clarion call of the military-industrial elite for aggressive nuclearization. Science and Technology Studies scholars Sheila Jasanof and Sang-Hyun Kim point out that these national socio-technical imaginaries are "collectively imagined forms of social life and social order reflected in the design and fulfilment of nation-specific scientific and/or technological projects" (121). Such imaginaries, which in the American context are produced and disseminated by the military-industrial complex, create tangible connections between nationhood and nuclearization. At the same time, though, they also obstruct other possibilities for a humane future, which by contrast is devoid of catastrophe and destruction. However, the articulation of the horrors of the nuclear, either as a weapon or a technology,

is constrained by the lack of a specific intimacy with the material and tactile elements of the nuclear, which are understandably unavailable among the living. Exceptions to this statement include victims and survivors of nuclearization – such as the Pacific islanders, Native American minorities, or the Bishnois in India amongst others (see Roy, "Strategic Science vs. Tactical Storytelling," and "Will the Real Atomic Subaltern Please Stand Up") – for whom an articulation of the violence of the bomb may not be possible due to their minority positionality. The fact remains that cultural productions of the Apocalypse play a crucial role in creating a critical argument against aggressive nuclearization. They also shape a resistive literacy opposed to both martial ideologies and the techno-positivist theorizations, instrumentalization, and experimentation of weaponized nuclear technology (Galison 118-57). Significantly, the relative stability of such state-sponsored and militarized nuclear imaginaries has been the subject of a considerable body of critiques in contemporary American nuclear culture.

Cultural expressions of the Apocalypse underwent an epistemic shift with the Trinity tests on July 16, 1945, followed by the horrific bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that decisively reconfigured the meaning of the Apocalypse. Arguably for the first time in human history, the Apocalypse was recast from its etymological origins in Greek (*apokalypsis*), signifying an uncovering or unveiling, to a human-engineered catastrophe emphasizing destruction instead of revelation. Barring a brief period between the 1950s and 1960s, which was characterized by a propaganda-based bomb culture that celebrated nuclear technology as a panacea for all human needs (see Drogan and Link; Zeman and Amundson), American nuclear culture actively acknowledged the potential of weaponized nuclear technology to end human civilization. This irrevocable alteration of the eschatological tradition – from an imaginative practice of predicting futurity to a cataclysmic vision of complete annihilation – underlines the pessimism that lies at the core of a transformed apocalyptic tradition, which shifted from the "traditional optimistic conclusion" to "imaginative but definitive end-scenarios" (Rosen xv). This article leads to one of the key questions that this neo-apocalyptic genre and indeed this *RSAJournal* special issue aims to address: what are the pedagogic stakes for cultural

productions that imagine our world as ended or ending through the hubris of aggressive nuclearization?

Motifs of literacy, while seldom discussed, share a self-reflexive relation with nuclearization, since the specialized nature of nuclear technology transforms nuclear discourses into signifiers of power: a self-reflexive form of cultural capital that emerges from, and simultaneously legitimizes, nuclear weapons. Jacques Derrida notes that "in our techno-scientific-militaro-diplomatic incompetence, we may consider ourselves [...] as competent as others to deal with a phenomenon whose essential feature is that of being *fabulously textual*" (23). Keeping this premise in mind, this article examines two contemporary cinematic renderings of post-nuclear apocalyptic spaces, *The Matrix* (1999) and *The Book of Eli* (2010), as representative of American nuclear culture, but also coextensive with nuclear cultures elsewhere. Nuclear weaponry's dependence upon "non-vocalizable language, structures of codes and graphic decoding" (Derrida 23) implies that Anglo-American conceptualizations of literacy and strategic nuclear imaginaries derive from the same epistemological source, where "subject manner or meaning is privileged over form" (Hwang iv). Therefore, countering hegemonic knowledge systems, such as specialized nuclear discourses, can only be achieved by developing counter models of critical multimodal literacy: a tactic coterminous with challenging the epistemology of modernity based largely within a print-paradigm. Inclusive models of multimodal literacy that acknowledge linguistic, aural, spatial, verbal and even tactile methods of acquiring knowledge become the primary motif in *The Book of Eli* and *The Matrix*. This allows both these neo-apocalyptic productions to recover the *non-vocalizable* humanity suppressed by hegemonic knowledge paradigms.

I emphasize in this article that, since the period of the Cold War, the global nuclear landscape has rarely been more unstable. Increasing animosity between Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) such as the USA and North Korea, or India and Pakistan, as well as the recent nuclear disaster at Fukushima have prompted the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* to move the Doomsday Clock to 100 seconds from midnight in 2020. This act has been accompanied by a laconic but chilling warning:

> the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Science and Security Board today moves the Doomsday Clock 20 seconds closer to midnight – *closer to apocalypse than ever* [...] the international security situation is now more dangerous than it has ever been, even at the *height of the Cold War*." ("Doomsday Clock Timeline"; italics mine)

Turbulent times such as these, I suggest, warrant the need to critically engage with the imagined landscapes of popular culture, especially post-nuclear apocalyptic films.[1] From a methodological point of view, I examine these two contemporary American cultural productions as texts from the post-catastrophic genre. I provide a close reading of the two texts within the context of the "enduring nuclear," or the "slow violence of the nuclear disaster" (Deckard 1, 22), which highlights the epistemic violence of constantly living in fear of an anticipated nuclear catastrophe, in an always already global nuclear landscape.

The instructive potential of apocalyptic tales is not new. Indeed, they have always occupied a distinctly edifying place (at least within the theological traditions). Narratives that adopt the traditional (and etymological) notions of the Apocalypse are sites where "the damned are educated by their own punishments" (Henning 213). In these self-contained pieces, retribution is followed by salvation, since it is precisely salvation that is predicated by a world/theological order that perceives the Apocalypse as redemptive. While maintaining their valence in global popular culture, nuclear Apocalypses have undergone several shifts in the American context. If the period between 1945 and the 1970s was characterized by an increased focus on addressing nuclearization in its most extreme forms, such as redemption or devastation (see Drogan and Link), during the 1980s nuclear culture was co-opted into children's literature as a site for educational and instructive messages (Hager). The events of 9/11, however, made it impossible to locate an educational potential in nuclear scenarios. This led to the rise of a neo-apocalyptic tradition, such as cautionary tales "positing potential means of extinction and predicting the gloomy probabilities of such ends" (Rosen xv). In re-evaluating Elizabeth K. Rosen's assessment, this article focuses on representative and contemporary American apocalyptic films that illustrate how catastrophic post-nuclear apocalyptic sites can also be inherently pedagogical sites, which are causally

linked to an epistemic excess. The post-nuclear holocaust spaces in the texts analyzed here demonstrate that the need to express this surfeit of knowledge – of how the militarized use of nuclear technology can result in unparalleled destruction, mass fatalities and indeed the erasure of all human archives – results in tropes of literacy becoming the key motifs within this reformed neo-apocalyptic tradition. In contesting Susan Sontag's assertion that fantasies of the Apocalypse are a rather "*inadequate response*" (italics mine) to "the most profound dilemmas of the contemporary situation" (48), I point out that any act of artistically representing/articulating the disaster is always an act of tangible recovery. Particularly in the case of cultural productions that deal with post-nuclear apocalyptic landscapes, this recovery of the "knowledge of the [imminent] disaster [...] saves it from being this disaster" (Blanchot 9). In other words, I argue that a key tactic for challenging the strategic and militarized nuclear imaginaries is through a critical consumption of cultural productions that acknowledge and indeed materialize the catastrophic sites of speculative post-nuclear landscapes.

Neo-apocalyptic culture, which is substantially influenced by the ideologies of the military-industrial complex, as well as by the global anxieties it engenders, reflects the nuclear scenarios constructed in Techno-strategic Discourse[2] – a specialized linguistic paradigm which combines strategic thinking with nuclear technology. In formulating "rational systems for dealing with [...] nuclear weapons" (Cohn 690), Techno-strategic Discourses not only codify the strategies of nuclear war but also erase the catastrophic potential of nuclear weapons, subsequently dehumanizing all living subjectivities including survivors of a nuclear fallout. Cohn discusses the dehumanization implicit in Techno-strategic Discourse:

> What hit me first was the elaborate use of abstraction and euphemism, of words so bland that they never forced the speaker or enabled the listener to touch the realities of nuclear holocaust that lay behind the words. [...] This language has enormous destructive power, but *without emotional fallout.* (691; italics mine)

Current depictions of nihilism in neo-apocalyptic culture can be linked to the unstable status quo existing amongst antagonistic Nuclear

Weapons States (NWS) that were and still are being forced by the theory of mutual survival into nuclear deterrence.[3] Neo-apocalyptic texts reflect the dread implicit in nuclear deterrence that a first strike by any NWS would probably connote irredeemable world annihilation. Paradoxically, since the "physical power [of nuclear weapons] exerts no force until it is textualized" (McCanles 13), in order "to compensate for its incapacity to enter the domain of human semiotics and thereby directly communicate its threatening message" (13), purveyors of nuclear systems seek fulfilment in the verbalizations of Techno-strategic Discourse. The power of nuclear weapons, unlike conventional weapons cannot be displayed through "the palpably visible pageant of cavalry, infantry, artillery, and implements moving across the countryside, usurping the routing peasants and poultry, approaching the watchtowers" (13). During the Cold War, this forced the US and USSR to adopt discursive signifiers to communicate both their strength to their adversaries as well as to remove the bomb's catastrophic potential from the public sphere. Even in the current volatile nuclear landscape such an ideological nuclear legacy implies that testimonials of nuclear threat are mostly confined to linguistic spaces such as "the verbal texts of dispatches, diplomatic missions, treaties and ultimatums [...] understood as tissues of verbal signifiers referring beyond themselves to the 'real' power that gives these whatever force they claim" (13).

Post-nuclear apocalyptic landscapes, therefore, become convenient sites for portraying dehumanization, since the landscape itself emerges from an ideology (of militarized nuclear technology) that has scant regard for humanity. Subsequently, these texts translate the premonitions of catastrophe implicit in Techno-strategic Discourse into the non-redemptive spaces of post-nuclear apocalyptic settings. Cultural imaginations of post-nuclear apocalyptic landscapes, I argue in this essay, recover what is abstracted and denied within the domain of militarized and strategic nuclear scenarios – namely an acknowledgement of the immediate as well as the long-term physical and psychological fallout of nuclear weapons on living (and non-living) beings. These imagined settings illustrate how the use of nuclear weapons must naturally be accompanied by bodies stripped of their values, ethics, morals and sense of identity; in other words, of the very qualities that make them human.

Cohn highlights that Techno-strategic Discourse "almost seems a willful distorting process, a playful, perverse refusal of accountability – because to be accountable to reality is to be unable to do this work" (698). Dehumanization in the literal sense of "removing the humanness" is expressed in these post-nuclear apocalyptic landscapes not by the absence of human beings but rather through the presence of bodies "that seemed human – had a human-looking form, walked on two legs, spoke human language, and acted in more-or-less human ways – but which was nonetheless *not human*" (David Livingstone Smith 1). As David Livingstone Smith notes in his seminal treatise, *Less Than Human,* ideologies/individuals that perform such dehumanization literally believe in the sub-human status of the populations they abhor. Using the example of the Nazis during WW II, Smith mentions how the Nazis were "convinced that, although Jews looked every bit as human as the average Aryan, this was a facade and that, concealed behind it, Jews were really filthy, parasitic vermin" (2). This mode of thought that creates a clear "conceptual distinction between *appearing* human and *being* human" (2) is what structures the imaginary governing nuclearization as well. The dehumanized settings in the neo-apocalyptic productions discussed here serve, in fact, as an effective pedagogical reminder of the cruelty and potential for mass genocide implicit in the nuclear bomb and weaponized nuclear technology. Therefore, the cultural productions analyzed in the following section use depictions of dehumanization to challenge the abstraction of human bodies as well as to promote a new literacy revolving around community-based humane practices.

Resisting Literacies of Power in *The Book of Eli* and *The Matrix*

> Language is the essential matrix of action and policy. Every decision to pursue power, wealth, pleasure, or any other goal is shaped from the very beginning within the nexus of language. (Chernus 6)

Language and nuclear weapons are inextricably linked[4] since the destructive capacity of nuclear power is ensconced within specialized

discourses (Hilgartner et al. 209). By virtue of their role in creating these discourses of catastrophic power, the users of this language (defense intellectuals and nuclear analysts) are culturally and socially constructed as empowered hyper-literate entities. This section demonstrates how *The Book of Eli* and *The Matrix* question such dehumanizing epistemes by using non-traditional subjectivities, as the repositories of redemptive and indeed revelatory knowledge within these post-apocalyptic nuclear landscapes. The erasure and elision of minority subjectivities are symptomatic of specialized domains such as Technostrategic Discourses, which allow and legitimize the participation of only privileged and normative bodies. Donaldo Macedo terms such knowledge systems as *literacies of power*: an ideology that systematically negates the cultural experiences of many members of society – not only minorities but also anyone who is poor or disenfranchised (Macedo 48). The movies discussed here are distinguished by their attempts to question those literacies of power that deny the value of human bodies and serve dominant ideologies. While there are multiple texts that perform similar tactical subversions of strategic knowledge systems, this article chooses to focus on *The Book of Eli* and *The Matrix* for two specific reasons. Firstly, both post-apocalyptic texts, though thematically divergent, become primers for understanding the different signifiers for *literacy*, which is always a social process and deeply intertwined within its specific context. Secondly, the specific setting of both texts deals with spatial estrangement – a "massive destruction or disruption of the landscape so severe that" even familiar terrains "have to be explored afresh" (Seed 203). Such an estrangement of familiar (American) landscapes implies a cognitive dissonance by disrupting any normative understanding of place or time: an act of epistemic violence based in strategic nuclear imaginaries that reminds the audience that "we are always on the edge of disaster without being able to situate it in the future" (Blanchot 1).

The potential for salvation that was considered synonymous with earlier conceptualizations of the apocalypse was replaced, after 1945, by the "nuclear referent": a signified that cannot have a material existence since the presence of a nuclear apocalypse must be synonymous with the absence of all signifying systems (Derrida 20). Unsurprisingly, many artistic productions in the neo-apocalyptic tradition have further consolidated

this sense of an irrevocable ending, through representative examples that conceptualize the apocalyptic as an "adjective now understood to be a synonym for the catastrophic or devastating" (Rosen iv). Peter Szendy takes this argument further in his topical treatise *Apocalypse-Cinema* and notes that the affinity between the apocalypse and cinema is due to the contingence between "anticipations, intimations, representations of the end of the world and [...] *the finitude of the film* as a structure delimited in time" (qtd. in Weber x). The sense of urgency that results from the finiteness of film-as-a-medium also makes it a particularly potent political site, since the director can choose to deliver content which provokes conversation/action and in effect extends the life-span of cinema beyond the viewing duration of films.

At first glance both *The Matrix* and *The Book of Eli*, separated by a little more than a decade, would seem to belong to the nihilistic neo-apocalyptic genre, as they deal with decidedly non-redemptive spaces that arise in the wake of a nuclear holocaust. Films in the genre of "apocalypse-cinema" are bound to have thematic similarities, and *The Matrix* as well as *The Book of Eli* share multiple intersecting points, including an emphasis on religiosity, a denial of modernist grand narratives and an attempt "not merely to represent apocalypse [...] nor just to tell about it, but to enact it, with as great an immediacy as is possible" (Weber xiv). Beyond such surface similarities, the imagined sites in both these cinematic texts use the finality of an apocalyptic setting to highlight the key connection between strategic nuclear imaginaries and the complete abstraction of human subjectivities. The (real and imagined) catastrophic circumstances found respectively in fact-based speculations of techno-strategic discourses and the cultural interpretations of post-apocalyptic spaces are shown to have a crucial connection: the politics of literacy. As these texts highlight, in both domains literacy moves beyond being a theoretical notion to become a social site of difference that can be used to both create and dismantle literacies of power.

In *The Book of Eli* the protagonist Eli (Denzel Washington) is one of the few survivors in a post-apocalyptic world, which has been ravaged by a nuclear war. He has become a *walker* who moves from one place to another in search of subsistence and shelter, and has been doing so for

thirty years. While he wears tattered clothes, scavenges for attire from dead bodies and eats only animals that he has himself hunted, Eli has remained on a righteous path and refuses to engage in any unethical act to fulfil his material needs. In this bleak post-nuclear apocalyptic setting where there has been a complete breakdown of social order leading large sections of humans to cannibalism, Eli is distinguished by his actions: he is empathetic to the plight of stray animals and even reformed robbers. His only means of solace are listening to classical music on a battered iPod and reading a book that he carries in his backpack.

On the contrary, Eli's antagonist in the movie, Carnegie (Gary Oldman), is introduced as a "cultured" individual who is nattily dressed and groomed, within a setting where most individuals don't bother about cosmetic looks and hygiene. When the audience first encounters Carnegie, he is reading the biography of Benito Mussolini, as his henchmen bring forward a further consignment of books. It soon becomes clear that Carnegie, who is the ruler of a small town, is a tyrant, and much like the subject of the autobiography he is reading, has plans for world domination. He seeks to achieve this ambition by appropriating the "power" invested in a particular (initially unknown) book, and hence regularly sends out his accomplices in search of textual artefacts. However, unlike Eli, Carnegie is bereft of a moral compass, as is made clear in the first few scenes. He rules over the inhabitants of the town he stays in and exploits, physically and sexually, a blind woman, Claudia (Jennifer Beals) and her daughter Solara (Mila Kunis), who are forced to live with him for food and shelter.

In sharp contrast to Carnegie, the Bible quoting yet heavily armed Eli has the makings of being a humanist and an idealist. Eli has unmatchable combat skills, but he refrains from using violence until he is forced into it and believes he is helping his fellow survivors. As the movie progresses, the viewer is made aware that Eli's apparently invincible status resides in the faith that he derives from a first edition of King James Bible, which he carries in his backpack. The audience soon comes to know that it is this *very* book that Carnegie sees as a "weapon aimed right at the heart and minds of the weak and desperate" (*The Book of Eli*). Carnegie's desperate attempt to acquire this book from Eli is fundamentally in conflict with the purpose of

Eli's journey: to reach a destination on the US West Coast where his faith and a "voice in his head" have asked him to take the Bible.

At their first meeting in Carnegie's bar-cum-brothel, Carnegie asks Eli "Do you read?" to which Eli responds, "Every day," underlining that conventional textual literacy is a rare commodity in this uncivilized world. Film scholar Seth Walker argues that while the authority of Eli resides in his theological faith, Carnegie's power derives from his charismatic authority, based on the Weberian paradigm of leaders who rule through affective surrender (6). However, I contend that in this dystopic setting, where the only forms of literacy required are the skills that allow an individual to survive (often through looting, mutilating and plundering others), Carnegie's and Eli's ability to critically engage with printed material underscore their evolved and consequently "hyper-literate" status. Carnegie remarks to Eli that "people like you and me [read: literate and educated] are the future" (*The Book of Eli*), since Carnegie believes they are in possession of the social and cultural capital required to control the world. In an exchange with his second-in-command Redridge, Carnegie notes:

> It's not a fucking book. It's a weapon! A weapon aimed right at the hearts and minds of the weak and the desperate. It will give us control of them! If we want to rule more than one small, fucking town, we have to have it. People will come from all over. They'll do exactly what I tell them if the words are from the book. (*The Book of Eli*)

In abusing his literate status to exploit his fellow human beings, and in using his personalized interpretations of religion for social and political domination, Carnegie epitomizes not only the Western tradition of logo-centric literacy, but also all specialized knowledge frameworks (such as Techno-strategic Discourses) that use language for non-altruistic and harmful purposes. Carnegie exemplifies the "modernist modus against which postmodernists identify themselves" that create referential models of epistemology, as opposed to the postmodernist conception according to which "the meaning of any word, concept, or idea is *not* anchorable in any definitive sense" (Smith 252). These monolithic modernist models, criticized by deconstructionists as being "driven by a desire to establish

human meaning through an anchoring of it in constructs and categories, which can then be taken to 'represent' an original reality" (252), is exactly what Eli stands in opposition to in the film.

The parallel between the setting of *The Book of Eli* and the contemporary world is explicit: Eli and Carnegie represent the two opposite poles of the same spectrum in which knowledge of specialized discourses produces valued hyper-literate bodies. Eli mirrors the position of skilled yet empathetic experts, such as doctors and teachers, who are understood to contribute positively toward human society. In contrast, Carnegie represents such individuals as nuclear hawks and corrupt politicians, who often operate within a grey realm of profiteering and exploitation (Obeidalla). Eli therefore actively resists the literacy of power that Carnegie represents, and instead believes in a democratic and pluralistic model of knowledge dissemination. Hence, he refuses to hand over the Bible, which he knows will be exploited for Carnegie's personal benefit. On the contrary, as the audience later finds out, Eli's intended destination in the West is a place from where multiple physical manifestations of the Bible (literally meaning "The Book") can be produced and circulated for individualized interpretations. As the plot progresses, Eli is violently forced by Carnegie and his troops to forsake possession of the Bible when they hold Solara hostage. However, in a significant twist, it turns out that the book is in Braille, revealing Eli's visually challenged status. Significantly, the Bible that Eli carries with him performs a critical role since it is a text that predicts both the disaster/Apocalypse and the resultant revelation. It functions as a semiotic marker indicating both the Apocalypse and the consequent potential for a (neo) revelation through a non-traditional model of literacy. The power of the Bible is therefore indeed the power of the sign and the persistence of semiotics in creating fluid signifiers that are not tied to specific signifieds. In doing so, Eli reminds us that the signified for nuclear technology need not be tied down to the potentially catastrophic (and hegemonic) nuclear imaginaries of the elite military-industrial complex. Indeed, like the Marxist critique of religion that tells us "how elites have used and still use their religion – to give themselves a sense of legitimacy for their privilege" (Raines 169), *The Book of Eli* reminds us that strategic nuclear imaginaries are utilized by elites to justify their political and colonizing goals.

Significantly, Eli's inability to see and engage with the printed text is not a drawback, since he has memorized the entire book, thus enabling himself to physically narrate the content to the librarian at his final destination, Alcatraz Island (which in the meantime has been transformed into a makeshift library and press). By contrast, Carnegie's inability to decipher the Braille text (as a visually able person he is unversed in Braille) is a striking reversal of the "deep politics of exclusion that resides [...] within the logo-centric tradition" of literacy (David G. Smith 253), which constructs interpretations from alphabet-based printed texts as the dominant discourse. Eli's physical proximity to the text for the last thirty years and his very ability to engage in a tactile conversation with the Bible (and metaphorically all sources of knowledge) reinsert the humanizing potential of literacy within an otherwise dehumanized space. Eli's final act of narration before his death, as he lies down beside the librarian at Alcatraz Island, shows a community-based model of literacy that directly challenges super-specialized epistemic models – like nuclear discourses – that only cater to the interests of a few elite subjectivities. Eli's intimate narrative performance also emphasizes the unreliable (yet humanistic) tradition of oral narration as a legitimate act of knowledge production, which is often denied within hegemonic literacy models. This act of deconstructing what is understood as the first printed artefact[5] in human civilization, through the unreliable memory and narration of a traditionally minority subjectivity, metaphorically demonstrates that meaning cannot be grounded into a singular model, since the "meaning of something cannot be 'defined, only derived referentially'" (250). Eli's verbal performance underscores that "what is lost continues to 'play' [...] within the present interpretations as a 'trace,' which can itself be archaeologically recovered through the process of 'deconstruction'" (253).

Distinguished from the "extraordinary abstraction and removal from [...] reality" (Cohn 686) that characterizes the mechanized modes of specialized discourses, knowledge is produced in *The Book of Eli* through human interaction and aimed at an inclusive community-based dialogic model of social progress. Furthermore, verbally eliciting an unstable narrative in a post-apocalyptic space, from a racially marginalized literate body, undercuts the hegemonic tradition of literacy implicit in Anglo-

American epistemes. It establishes the importance of recognizing non-traditional processes of literacy that exist within "women, aboriginals, or once-colonized peoples of the Third World" who are "marginalized within the reigning dispensations of knowledge and control" (David G. Smith 253). As a racial minority who initiates a humane model of literacy, Eli not only challenges "the literate abuses of power [that] are the result of long-standing projects, like European imperialism" (Willinsky 1), but also reverses the destructive tradition of the neo-apocalyptic genre by representing a (re)new(ed) beginning through decentered knowledge production. This continues even after Eli's demise, as in the last scene of the movie, where we see Solara taking up Eli's sword and attire to embark upon her journey and presumably carry forward the legacy of Eli as a walker. Considering the terribly reductive portrayals of women in post-apocalyptic settings, and "the anti-feminism in popular contemporary apocalyptic films" (Hussain 8), the portrayal of Solara as a primary protagonist is refreshing and reasserts how epistemes of power must move beyond normative subjectivities. Critically, alternate models of literacy, symbolized by Eli and Solara, show the empowering potential of knowledge when it is not just intended as capital, to be exploited for personal benefit. On the contrary, knowledge embodies a new form of "revelation" through "the hopes, the promises and pleasures, that come of working language's possibilities" (Willinsky 3).

Unlike *The Book of Eli,* the post-nuclear apocalyptic setting in *The Matrix* is not made immediately apparent. In the past, critical scholarship around *The Matrix* has focused on a range of topics. These include the often unconvincing amalgamation of spirituality and world religions (see Milford), including the racial politics of messianic figures (Allen); philosophical treatises about the metaphysics of the matrix (see Chalmers); the concept of *simulacra* and Jacques Baudrillard's influence on the movie; the conflation of destructive apocalyptic technology that embraces the role of world religions; and the film's esoteric use of philosophical concepts (see Lutzka 113-29; Stucky 1-15). However, hardly any scholarship exists that highlights *The Matrix* as a post-apocalyptic artefact, even though this topic forms one of the most significant narrative tropes in the movie. When the movie celebrated its twentieth anniversary, in 2019, amidst reports

of a fourth film being released, interest in the film resurfaced. Since then, though, little attention has been paid to this filmic artefact as a key node in understanding contemporary hegemonic American nuclear imaginaries (Woodward). While analyzing the reasons for the lack of scholarship on this critical facet of nuclearization is beyond the scope of this essay, I would like to point out that artefacts exist "under the pressure of a fundamentally historical sensibility" (Nora 7), which allows for its interpretation within specific pressing contexts. The elimination of *The Matrix* from the pantheon of American nuclear culture might be indicative of how the banalization of nuclear threat since the end of the Cold War (Masco) has allowed strategic nuclear imaginaries to be normalized within contemporary culture. Therefore, my discussion of *The Matrix*, and its recovery within the postnuclear apocalyptic genre, is a hearkening back to academic projects like *nuclear criticism*, which had a distinct agenda for politically-enabling voices of the anti-nuclearization minority (see Ruthven; Hubbard).

The Matrix is ostensibly set in the America of the 1990s, where Thomas Anderson, a gifted computer programmer, is stuck in a dead-end coding job by the day and transforms into Neo, the hacker, by night. He is fascinated by the mysterious group of anti-establishment hackers led by Morpheus and Trinity, who are continuously on the run from the government and its black-suited agents. Neo has an inkling that there is more than meets the eye in his world, a suspicion that is confirmed when black-suited agents arrest him in his workplace and literally "melt" his mouth shut during a brutal interrogation. It is only later, when Trinity arranges for a meeting between Neo and Morpheus, that Neo (and in effect the audience) becomes aware that the normal world circa 1999 in which he apparently exists, is a "neural interactive simulation," or *The Matrix*. As Neo is "plugged-out" of The Matrix, by means of taking the red pill, he is made aware that the actual temporal setting is circa 2199. This post-apocalyptic world, or the "desert of the real," as Morpheus terms it, resulted from a nuclear war between humans and artificial intelligence machines, a hundred years before. Humans had sought to end the war by nuking the atmosphere and stopping machines' access to solar energy, their main energy source. However, by a twist of fate, machines decided to replace their dependence on solar power by harvesting humans for their bioelectricity.

Neo's "plugging out" of the computer-generated matrix is critical in more ways than one. His liberation highlights the importance of understanding The Matrix as an unstable signifier. Neo is made aware that The Matrix he inhabited is a sixth iteration of a simulated world, which the machines created to enslave humankind. However, only those who manage to escape The Matrix can access this knowledge. The parallel with hegemonic knowledge systems in our everyday world is clear here. Each iteration of the matrix represents an evolved surface of signs that are utilized by the transcendental signifying system – machines in this case – for their own profit. As within specialized paradigms like Techno-strategic Discourses, where human bodies are abstracted into "collateral damage" (Cohn 692) to further strategic interests, The Matrix has been created by an AI consciousness to literally deny human subjectivity and "keep humans pacified while being used as a power source" (Rosen 102). Furthermore, the motif of dehumanization that emerges within such specialized knowledge systems is also made explicit.

In a scene from the movie where Morpheus has been captured and is being interrogated by Agent Smith – head of a powerful program that eliminates threats against The Matrix – the agent comments: "Human beings are a disease, a cancer of this planet. You're a plague and we are the cure" (*The Matrix*). As in *The Book of Eli*, where Carnegie abuses literacy in order to create distinctions between rulers and underlings, the Agent symbolizes institutions and practices which create rigid binaries between dominant bodies and minority others through apparent epistemic superiority. Although it might be argued that the evolving models of The Matrix represent an evolution and hence a pluralistic paradigm, its multiple models are unified by the single goal of the machines – to quell human resistance. Neo's potential to be the "One" is only realized when he manages to perceive The Matrix in its "real form" – not as a tangible physical human world but as a specialized domain or computer simulation that reduces human bodies into "batteries" to support binary systems constituted of 0's and 1's. While configurations of literacy in *The Book of Eli* undercut hegemonic discourses in favor of legitimizing "the right to speak of all voices that are suppressed within the dominant dispensation of things" (David G. Smith 253), *The Matrix* explores another

facet of critical literacy, namely "the continuation of literacy by other means [...] that has given the written word a much greater a power to proliferate" (Willinsky 16). Interestingly, the simulated world created by machines to enslave human consciousness is still primarily a print-based culture. Even though computers are present in this artificial world, there is a reliance on information that has been physically documented. This is clear in representative scenes where Neo's hacking records are shown to be gathered by Agent Smith in a bulky dossier. However, the ostensible existence of a print-based literacy is a facade that has been maintained by machines to create a simulation of a human culture (circa 1999) within The Matrix. It may not be a stretch of the imagination to suggest that the failure of pre-Matrix human beings (circa 1999) to anticipate issues with machine sentience could be due to their reliance on print capitalism (Anderson 44-45), which has historically focused on profiteering and legitimizing dominant interests through the medium of print. Pertinently for Neo and his fellow human survivors who have taken the red pill to gain insight, there is a recognition that to simultaneously shuttle between The Matrix and the Zion (the only human subterranean city) they cannot rely on any one form of literacy, either digital or print. Survival within this difficult post-nuclear apocalyptic space requires an expertise in multiple semiotic resources (e.g. language, gesture, images), co-deployed across various modalities (e.g. visual, aural, somatic) (see Anderson). *The Matrix* emphasizes the importance of democratized knowledge circulation within and in opposition to bodies and organizations that champion specialized knowledge, alongside challenging the "decontextualized, culturally insensitive and often ethnocentric view of literacy" (Collins ix).

Neo's ability to unearth and literally deconstruct the dehumanizing matrix is latent to his pre-enlightened position not only as a software programmer-cum-hacker but also as a discerning reader of Jean Baudrillard (*Simulacra and Simulations*), Kevin Kelly (*Out of Control: The New Biology of Machines, Social Systems, and the Economic World*) and Dylan Evans (*Introducing Evolutionary Psychology*). Such eclectic reading habits indicate that Neo, the Chosen One, needs to be the repository of multiple epistemic systems, since monolithic models, based exclusively in either print or digitality, are destined to fail in this dystopic world. In fact, as highlighted in "World Record" (one of the

movies in *The Animatrix*[6] series), an awareness of The Matrix requires "a rare degree of intuition and sensitivity and a questioning nature" qualities that can be mapped onto postmodern conceptions of literacy that need "an ability to decipher beyond what is represented" (Hwang). Specifically, in order to negotiate with the sentient machine consciousness Neo and the other human survivors need to have a level of multimodal literacy that unlike "textual literacy [. . .] requires one to possess increasing layers of literacy" (Liu, qtd. in Hwang). Neo's journey towards achieving this literacy, which is concomitant to becoming "The One," reaches fruition when The Matrix can be perceived as "a world without rules and control, without borders and boundaries" (*The Matrix*). This realization is finalized in the movie through tactile human contact, as the apparently-deceased Neo receives a kiss from Trinity – leading to Neo's revival and the physical deconstruction of Agent Smith by Neo's appropriation of his body.

Neo's destruction of the omniscient computer program Agent Smith (who is capable of assuming anyone's body/identity) essentially underscores the deconstruction of a single signifying system in favor of a pluralistic "world [where] anything is possible" (*The Matrix*). Neo's actions are mirrored in the tenets of postmodern critical literacies that decry monolithic knowledge systems, and insist on recognizing continuously evolving and dynamic modes of literacy. While some scholars have extolled Neo 's character as a solitary messianic figure in a dystopic world, the movie highlights that, in order to deconstruct entire knowledge systems, a cohesive and collective effort is required. While a valid critique of Neo is that he reinserts the trope of the (white) Western Messianic figure within post-apocalyptic settings, some scholars have also offered the counter viewpoint "that Neo literally 'wakes up' to the true nature of reality through an amalgamation of the historical Indian Buddha and the Greek Oracle of Delphi" (Hussain 6). By incorporating Eastern as well as Western elements and thereby deconstructing a monolithic knowledge structure, *The Matrix* initiates a critique of self-identifying "progressive" models of literacy, emerging from Anglo-American contexts, which ignore the voice and value of minority resistive voices, such as those raised against strategic nuclear imaginaries. Not surprisingly, in the last scene of the film Neo makes a telephone call to a presumably sentient machine consciousness, promising that he is "going to show the people what

you don't want them to see" (*The Matrix*), implying that the deconstruction of this monolithic model will be a community effort and not one based in a single body or subjectivity. The delegitimization of the dominant discourse in the film also occurs through the deconstruction of Neo's own ideological assumptions. Before his "death," Neo had been dubious of his status as "The One" who embodied the hopes of human salvation, but his resurrection critically underscores the fact that in order to conceive a pluralistic world it is necessary to go beyond any orthodox thought systems, even if they are one's own.

Conclusion

> Events themselves only become meaningful as either the consequences of previous texts or the causes of still further interpretive texts. (McCanles 16)

The fear of global annihilation through nuclear war remains a threat that has loomed large over human civilization for the past several decades; paradoxically, it is a threat that cannot be quantified because, unlike conventional wars, until now nuclear war has only been the "signified referent, never the real referent" (Derrida 23). Beyond the domain of nuclear bomb testing, which occurs (mostly) under controlled circumstances, the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki remain the single referential point for linguistically or culturally constructing nuclear events. Significantly, this implies that the real spaces of nuclear strategic thinking, and the imagined spaces of a post-nuclear apocalyptic culture, exist in a dialectical relationship as they collectively anticipate/predict a nuclear catastrophe. Due to large-scale advancements in the field of nuclear technology, especially after the Cold War, the destructive capabilities of nuclear weapons have indeed multiplied to "levels of such grotesque dimensions as to defy rational understanding" (Keenan, qtd. in Cohn 688). Through specialized terms such as "clean bombs," "counter-value attack" and "collateral damage,"[7] which manage to make abstract the destructive capacity of nuclear bombs, specialized and strategic nuclear imaginaries completely mask the element of human suffering. It is

precisely this human suffering that is expressed in the texts discussed here, which by unmasking the terrible realities of nuclear war uncover what remains unsaid in sophisticated linguistic paradigms. Beyond the surface dissimilarities, in both films the hope of human redemption is invested in a humane community-oriented literacy. While in the case of Eli the redemptive source is a graphical, material form of literacy, Neo emphasizes the fact that focusing on either print or digital literacy is futile unless it is grounded in empathetic human communities. Critically, in both cinematic texts there is a deliberate detachment from the associations of devastation and catastrophe found within the neo-apocalyptic genre. *The Book of Eli* and *The Matrix* construct post-nuclear apocalyptic spaces as terrains for the retrieval of social order. Significantly, this retrieval is to be attained through dynamic multimodal forms of literacy.

In both films there is a disavowal of a single book/signifying system/world order, which can be linked to a critique of monolithic epistemes and the assumptions as well as practices that arise out of these discourses. The motif of a journey portrayed in the films leads to the realization that in both our pre-nuclear "real" spaces, as well as post-nuclear "imagined" spaces, literacy is empowering, but only when we refuse to stagnate within preconceived notions and move continually forward. Eli's literate status in the pre-apocalyptic world allowed him to access value systems that were rendered obsolete in the post-nuclear world. Even though Eli is exceptionally literate, his model of empathetic literacy is underlined through his realization at the film's conclusion: that it is the book's signified values he wants to proliferate rather than the signifier (the book) itself. This proliferation is exemplified by Solara, the female protagonist in *The Book of Eli* who takes over Eli's baton. Having appropriated the attire of the deceased Eli, she is shown, as the movie concludes, embarking on a journey to spread the message of civilization (presumably through community-oriented knowledge.) Similarly, Neo's status as the catalyst for change is fully externalized through his telephonic clarion call, which simultaneously anticipates the rise of multiple "Neos" who break free from the darkness of The Matrix into an enlightened revelation. *The Book of Eli* and *The Matrix*, in contrast to the specialized nuclear discourse that promotes a hegemonic literacy of nuclear technology in favor of militarization, focus on a

pluralistic understanding of literacy that eschews traditional print-based frameworks and caters to democratic definitions of multi-modal literacy, which seek to be more inclusive and support the "integration of multiple modes of communication and expression" ("Multimodal Literacies").

I hope this article goes some way in showing how the so-called objectivity and specialized knowledge implicit in strategic nuclear imaginaries are inherently colonizing sources of knowledge that do not admit democratic dialogue in the nuclear domain. Furthermore, while the nihilistic tradition of neo-apocalyptic culture has gained considerable purchase, there is still more than ample space for cultural productions that earnestly examine and challenge the epistemological and political traditions of the Cold War. The films from the neo-apocalyptic tradition examined here adopt a praxis that politicizes our understanding of specialized knowledge systems and the individuals who colonize them, in order to reclaim the value of literacy as a humanizing enterprise. What is more, they promote a renewed neo-apocalyptic tradition that recovers the etymological origin of the Apocalypse as an uncovering, instead of a covering-up, of catastrophe and nihilism. In doing so, these cultural productions become allegories of a redemptive understanding of the dialectic between literacy and power. By downplaying the position of individuals considered as *hyper-literate* in our current socio-political milieu, such as defense intellectuals within the military-industrial complex who represent "an exaggerated investment in the power of [specific forms of] literacy to the detriment of attention to how life is lived" (David G. Smith 248), the texts analyzed in this article emphasize that "any concern about language must point eventually to a concern about human relationships – a concern for how we have come to be organized and structured as a human community" (250). Both Eli and Neo underline that a mere awareness of epistemic knowledge is dangerous unless we interrogate the function and role of such knowledge. Precisely because they realize the intentions of specialized strategic discourses and the privileged entities who sponsor them, Eli and Neo represent subjectivities that can move beyond limiting notions of literacy, texts, power and identity. This is indeed an advanced model of acquiring and disseminating knowledge – a pedagogy that is not bogged down in monolithic systems but is in constant movement towards recognizing protean modes of knowledge circulation.

Notes

[1] I use the term "post-nuclear apocalyptic landscapes" to specifically denote post-apocalyptic settings that arise from a nuclear holocaust/a scenario where nuclear weapons bring about the destruction of human civilization, as we know it.

[2] The term "Techno-strategic Discourse," which is central to our discussions of the nuclear, was coined by Cohn "to represent the intertwined, inextricable nature of technological and nuclear strategic thinking [...], to indicate the degree to which nuclear strategic language and thinking are imbued with, indeed constructed out of modes of thinking that are associated with technology" (690).

[3] Within this context it is vital to emphasize how deterrence is an entirely discursive phenomenon, since "deterrence depends not so much on possessing military capability and the willingness to use it, as on the *communication of messages* about that capability and that willingness" (McCanles 11; italics mine). In the period preceding the Soviet nuclear test the American military-industrial complex had been unwilling to share nuclear knowledge into the public domain, due to the sole presence of America in the nuclear club. Due to the lack of a competitive or a threatening adversary in the global nuclear landscape between the years 1945 and 1949, this strategic approach implied that American nuclear policy was under no pressure to declare itself as either a benign or a malevolent power. The entry of Soviet Russia into the nuclear arms race, however, ensured that the American government could no longer maintain their non-committal status quo. Confronted with a nuclear adversary "communication of messages" suddenly became vital not only for conveying constant information about nuclear weapons within the American military-industrial complex but also for addressing rising public fears about America's threatened sovereignty and presumed nuclear annihilation. On the other hand, the fear of retaliation from each other made the USSR and the US understandably cautious in the public exhibition of their nuclear capabilities. The forms of testing the capacity of nuclear bombs through underground, atmospheric, exo-atmospheric and underwater testing, undertaken during this period (and also later) by countries that have nuclear capability, are essentially non-full-scale tests that do not provide actual data about the destructive capabilities of fission or fusion bombs (see Sublette).

[4] This phenomenon became especially pronounced following the successful testing of Soviet Russia's first nuclear bomb First Lightning in 1949 and the effective declaration of Soviet Russia as a nuclear superpower. Latent fear of a nuclear conflict and the consequent holocaust that had been embedded within the American national imaginary since 1945 was suddenly galvanized in the population as a whole. The situation was not helped by US governmental discursive models like apocalypse management that construed the Cold war as an Augustinian struggle between good and evil and suggested that "communism, nuclear war and economic mismanagement all threatened to destroy the nation utterly" (Chernus 7). The declaration of Soviet Russia's nuclear capabilities became a watershed moment in the history of nuclearization since, for the first time in human history, the idea of nuclear deterrence had been established.

[5] Bibles published by Gutenberg's Press are popularly understood to be amongst the first printed artifacts known to human civilization.

[6] *The Animatrix* is a collection of nine short animated films set in the world of the motion picture *The Matrix*. These movies deal with interconnected and often independent storylines that contribute to the trilogy of motion pictures.

[7] "'Clean Bombs' are nuclear devices that are largely fusion rather than fission and that therefore release a higher quantity of energy, not as radiation, but as blast, as destructive explosive power. 'Countervalue Attacks' is the military term used for describing the process of attacking cities with the aim of inflicting maximum damage to the cities while 'Human Death.' in nuclear parlance, is most often referred to as 'collateral damage'" (Cohn 691).

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Marco Petrelli

Southern Wastelands: *Alas, Babylon*, *The Road*, and the A-Bomb in the Garden

Symbolical representations of space in American literature have always gravitated towards utopian and dystopian extremes. When it comes to the southern United States, whose first appearance in American English-language literature we owe to the notoriously prone-to-embellishment John Smith, the imagination often veers towards utopia. In *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England & the Summer Isles* he writes: Virginia "is a country that may haue the prerogatiue over the most pleasant places knowne, for large and pleasant navigable Rivers, heaven & earth never agreed better to frame a place for mans habitation" (21-22). Commenting on the tendency to depict the South as an earthly paradise, Lewis P. Simpson writes how the literary image of the region coincided with "an open, prelapsarian, self-yielding paradise, where [one] would be made regenerate by entering into a redemptive relationship with a new and abounding earth" (15).

That "abounding earth" was to exert its influence on the southern mind for a long time, and as a matter of fact the Edenic image of the South became an enduring symbolical construction deeply ingrained in the imagery of the place.[1] Thomas Jefferson literally sowed his political ideals in its terrain, attributing to the landscape's power to inspire paradisiacal reveries also the power to function symbolically as a very material signifier and as a metonymy for democracy. As John M. Grammer affirms, the region was literally written into existence through its identification with an eco-political model: pastoral republicanism (11). Joined together by the sheer force of faith, images of the Garden of Eden and pastoral democracy have played a pivotal role in the multilayered set of symbols that constructed southern space, and the centrality of such space in the region's collective unconscious has been rhetorically maintained up to contemporary times.

The southern literary mind is thus reluctant to get rid of its archetypal

eco-ideological pillars. This is probably because it had to surrender its dreams of Arcady at least once in the past (together with the Army of Northern Virginia) after Robert E. Lee's surrender to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox on April 9, 1865. If the dimension in which southern literature was born is the prelapsarian garden of Genesis, what kind of southern literature is situated at the opposite end of the teleological spectrum, that of the Apocalypse? What if a catastrophic event, not unlike the Civil War, were to bring utter destruction to the South's eco-mythical grounds again, turning the southern garden into a barren wasteland? The literature of the southern United States, steeped in Biblical rhetoric, is of course replete with eschatological images. What is remarkable for its absence in this tradition is a conscious concern for the far more concrete nightmare of a nuclear Armageddon.

In this essay, I will compare two post-apocalyptic southern novels, Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon* (1959), and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006). Using a geo-centered critical approach, I will map these texts' relationship with, and their response to, the Atomic Age in connection with the mythical complex of the pastoral, intended here as an inversion of the atomic-apocalyptic mode. In *By the Bomb's Early Light*, Paul Boyer comments on American literature's initial failure to address the A-Bomb. When it comes to the literature of the South, that first "muted" response becomes a protracted silence. Frank and McCarthy's novels are about the only examples of southern literature openly influenced by the Atomic Age, and because of that they possess intrinsic exemplary value: they can help fill a small but puzzling gap in the study of the American literary representations of the bomb.

It is a remarkable coincidence that Boyer's chapter on the relationship between the A-Bomb and the American literary imagination opens with a southerner's failure to translate on the page "that unsettling new cultural factor" (xix). Writing about James Agee's project for a screenplay titled *Dedication Day*, "a tantalizingly incomplete work," Boyer mentions how the writer from Knoxville considered the atomic bomb "the only thing much worth writing or thinking about" (243). In spite of that, the manuscript was abandoned after only five thousand words. This fragment, according to Boyer, exemplifies the "partially hidden" American intellectual response

to the bomb, and "Agee's difficulty in translating anguish and dread into literature" (244).

It is also remarkable that, among the first "allusive and tentative" appearances of the A-Bomb in American literature, Boyer mentions another example from a southerner: Carson McCullers's novella *The Member of the Wedding* (1946), in which the devastating aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki's bombing is quickly but meaningfully dismissed as being simply too much for the protagonist's mind to bear. Southern literature was quick to respond, but ultimately failed to fully grasp and articulate the threat of annihilation embodied by the bomb. Clearly, this particular machine could not be allowed in the garden.

From Prelapsarian to Post-apocalyptic and Back

In point of fact, the symbolic space of the southern garden has been constantly under threat of the possibility of its dissolution, and the apocalyptic implications that possibility carries with it for the individual, southern society at large, and for the spaces they inhabit. Simpson defines this mode "apostatic imagination" (14). Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*'s query XVIII (173-76) is a perfect example of that attitude, and Grammer is right when, after observing how pastoral (and generally Anglo-American) republicanism characterizes itself as perpetually threatened by corruption, he describes it as possessing "what amount[s] to a theory of entropy" (15). In other words, the southern eco-political imagination contains in potency its own demise. It is an apocalypse in the making.

In spite of that, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives characterized as distinctively southern are surprisingly quite scarce, and, when it comes to nuclear scenarios, downright rare.[2] Zombies and viruses have roamed about below the Mason-Dixon line, but, as mentioned before, Frank's *Alas, Babylon* and McCarthy's *The Road* seem to be the only post-atomic novels set in the South.

The common ground between McCarthy and Frank is survivalism: neither of the two pays much attention to other historical-political details. Frank gives his story a clearer historical context, but McCarthy's

minimalist chronotope (almost) puts the novel in a vacuum. *Alas, Babylon* is chiefly focused on sociological speculation, outlining a social theory that shows some derivation from southern republicanism. *The Road*, in all its Beckettian barrenness, delineates a far more complex and radical picture that encompasses quintessentially southern societal, mythical, and ecological aspects. Frank, a pragmatic government consultant as well as a writer, is most of all interested in depicting his fellow Americans' reaction to the sudden fall of the nation's social and political order, an event compared to a biblical catastrophe – "Alas, alas, that great city, Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come," reads the verse from which he took inspiration for the title (*The Holy Bible*, Rev. 18.10).

As a novel devoted to now-classic Cold War apocalyptic anxieties, *Alas, Babylon* seems quite banal trite today: the nuclear WWIII scenario in which the Soviet Union abruptly discharges its nuclear weapons on a stereotypically serene 1950s American community is so ingrained in the popular imagination as to be almost reassuringly familiar. The novel itself reveals its acritical adherence to the popular narrative of the times. When protagonist Randy Bragg tries to warn Malachai, the ever-present southern family's African American hand, of the impending war, the man doesn't look surprised at all: "I read all the news magazines… I know things ain't good, and the way I figure is that if people keep piling up bombs and rockets, higher and higher and higher, someday somebody's going to set one off. Then blooey!" (Frank 49). This apparently superfluous exchange leads to some considerations on the novel's implicit political assumptions. Malachai is a descendant of the slaves that the Braggs owned before the Civil War. The way in which he is depicted – faithful, self-sacrificing and, ultimately, simple – is a barely veiled refiguring of thankful Old South slaves such as Uncle Remus. Bragg's house, a "big house, ungainly and monolithic, with tall Victorian windows and bellying bays and broad brick chimneys" (4) doesn't even try to conceal its plantation mansion past.

Through the eyes of a nosy neighbor, Florence, Frank also clearly connotates the property as a pastoral haven with all the romantic overabundance of an antebellum dream: "its grove, at this season like a full green cloak flecked with gold, trailed all the way from back yard to river bank, a quarter mile. And she would say this for Randy, his grounds were

well kept, bright with poinsettias and bougainvillea, hibiscus, camellias, gardenias, and flame vine" (4). This is a typical rhetorical move on the threshold of the apocalypse, as maintained also by James Berger, who in *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse*, writes how "the apocalyptic event, in order to be properly apocalyptic, must in its destructive moment clarify and illuminate what has been brought to an end" (5). Given the introduction of its protagonist and his spaces, *Alas, Babylon* is, consciously or not, another work of literature that mourns the passing of the Old South. By doing so, and in force of the consistent Edenic symbols associated with the southern pastoral, the novel is ambiguously positioned with respect to Cold War nuclear anxieties. Karl Jaspers defined the atomic apocalypse as "not an apocalypse at all, but rather the killing of all life on the whole surface of the earth" (21): the ultimate catastrophic event devoid of an actual eschatological dimension. Instead, Frank's novel, in its subterranean but coherent relationship with the traditional myth of the southern mind-in-place, carries with it a consistent biblical magnitude – the fall of man, the loss of the garden – lying beneath the pragmatic, factual layer of the plot. Speculative political fiction and foundational myths subtly mingle in *Alas, Babylon*. On the other hand, and in spite of its strongly scriptural tone, *The Road* is paradoxically closer to Jasper's definition in showing a progressive, total biological holocaust.

Alas, Babylon's connections with southern pastoralism go deeper than that. As posited by Eva Horn, Cold War post-apocalyptic fictions often took the shape of a cautiously optimistic "futurology" that imagined the nuclear threat as a possible trigger for positive personal and social change, picturing not "the end of the world [...] but its prevention" (35). In the foreword to the novel's 2005 edition, author David Brin, whose *The Postman* also falls into the category of post-apocalyptic narratives dedicated to the rebirth of civilization, notes that Frank "downplayed some of the horrors that would have attended any nuclear spasm" (xii). But Brin too is minimizing Frank's soft-pedaling approach to the nuclear holocaust. Apart from the catastrophic death count and some threatening "unnatural" suns, "much larger and infinitely fiercer than the sun in the east" (Frank 94), almost nothing realistic (acute radiation syndrome, for example) happens to the Florida community of Fort Repose. The novel's only interest is

showing how, under Bragg's guide, the small southern town braves the aftermath of the apocalypse and rebuilds civilization from scratch. A distinctively pastoral-republican civilization, of course. As reported by H. Bruce Franklin, President Harry Truman thought about the bomb as "the most terrible thing ever discovered," but also believed that it could prove to be "the most useful" (153), because of its supposed ability to bring peace to the world. Judging from his overtly optimistic approach, Frank would have enthusiastically agreed – or better, he most probably did agree. In his novel, the world is not destroyed, but ultimately reborn thanks to the bombs. The flourishing garden of American democracy is not turned into a post-atomic desert, and the long-sought dream of a "perpetual peace under the global hegemony of the United States of America" is reached (Franklin 154). But again, Frank's scenario is less a dream than a chauvinistic delusion in line with Truman's administration, because, as Gregg Herken writes, the idea that American nuclear hegemony could grant everlasting world peace was nothing but a "most deadly illusion" (7).

Unlike *The Road*, *Alas, Babylon* doesn't depict a grim, ruthless wasteland. Perils exist, and dog-eat-dog social dynamics occasionally appear, but, generally speaking, Frank's post-apocalyptic landscape is far from a Hobbesian state of nature. Instead, the novel shows the attributes, as observed also by Claire P. Curtis, of "a Lockean world of free men out to protect their bodies and their properties" (67). In accordance with John Locke's *Second Treatise*, Frank depicts a state of nature mostly ruled by reason and industriousness, dedicated to the re-creation of a purposeful society. The novel symbolical act belongs to that foundational Anglo-American republican discourse influenced by Lockean political theory: it is a post-apocalyptic account that "seek[s] to affirm the very story that [Americans] use to justify the legitimacy of [their] own state" (Curtis 67). The derivation from Locke is all the more significant when we consider the philosopher's influence on Jefferson's thought, and on the South's pastoral-plantation world in general – as Nancy Isenberg writes in *White Trash*, Locke's *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* is "a manifesto promoting a semi-feudalistic and wholly aristocratic society" (44). A description that perfectly fits the antebellum South. Read in this light Frank's wasteland

is not so much post-atomic as Anglo-colonial: idle land that needs to be put to use.

Randy Bragg, post-apocalyptic heir of the southern pastoral-republican tradition, starts rebuilding his symbolical garden from the exact moment in which he understands that the old order has fallen. Appomattox, which deprived his family of the aristocratic status that planters enjoyed in the Old Dominion, comes again under the form of a storm of nuclear bombs, and just as the Braggs never fully abandoned their antebellum realm, Randy too decides to hold onto the past. Early on in the novel, he refuses to embrace the barbaric ethos of the atomic aftermath: "Randy knew he would have to play by the old rules. He could not shuck his code, or sneak out of his era" (Frank 98). The question as to whether his era is actually the era of his ancestors doesn't matter much at this point. Given the chance, Randy Bragg (a true Cold War Scarlett O'Hara), would rebuild his Tara over and over. As a hard-working representative of the South's genteel republican tradition, not even the end of the world can stop him. For Bragg, tomorrow is always another day.

At the end of *Alas, Babylon,* the southern pastoral realm, "a secure retreat from the destructive processes of history" (Grammer 21) is restored. The protagonists' lives are even improved by the hardships that they invariably face with steadfast rationality. As Curtis writes, "Fort Repose succeeds [...] because it is possessed with a Lockean idea [...]: let me work hard to create what I can and then leave me alone" (73), an approach to freedom and private property distinctively connected to southern pastoral republicanism, and apparently untouched by the falling hydrogen bombs. The restoration of the southern garden also becomes a synecdochic restoration of the Old South as a whole. When an Air Force helicopter reaches Fort Repose a year after the nuclear attack and offers to evacuate its residents, Randy Bragg and his people decline to go. In a rather corny rhetorical climax, each inhabitant of this new Old South declares their loyalty to the reborn Dixie: it took an apocalypse to secede, but they eventually did it.

Dixie's Wasteland

If *Alas, Babylon* is a story of the resilience of the southern pastoral through the most dreaded event imaginable at the time, it is McCarthy, distinctly less restrained than Frank, who plunges the whole complex of the South's eco-ideological beliefs into serious crisis, with the most unsparing post-apocalyptic southern novel ever written, *The Road*.

Before analyzing the novel's construction of space and ideology, it is worth mentioning that, although a large majority of critics interpreted *The Road*'s setting as a nuclear aftermath (see Edwards; Lincoln; Snyder), the novel is deliberately ambiguous about it.[3] Still, there are some clear hints as to the possibility of an atomic bombardment, as in the following passage:

> The clocks stopped at 1:17. A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions. He got up and went to the window. What is it? she said. He didn't answer. He went into the bathroom and threw the lightswitch but the power was already gone. A dull rose glow in the windowglass. He dropped to one knee and rose the lever to stop the tub and then turned on both taps as far as they would go… What is it? she said. What is happening?
> I don't know.
> Why are you taking a bath?
> I'm not. (McCarthy, *The Road* 52-53)

The lights, the glow and the concussions seem to suggest some kind of unexpected nuclear attack. At least one of the details, filling the tub, clearly derives from the kind of Cold War first-response procedures that were surely drummed into McCarthy's mind as a boy. As a demonstration of how that reaction was common knowledge in the 1950s, we can find a bathtub scene also in *Alas, Babylon*: "I'm going to fill up all the pails and sinks and tubs with water," says Helen, Randy's sister-in-law, "that's what you're supposed to do, you know" (Frank 95). Other elements from the excerpt above and from the novel at large are mysterious or not entirely coherent with a post-atomic scenario (the clocks stopping, the progressive death of all the biosphere except for human beings), leaving the interpretation of *The Road* as a clear post-atomic narrative in suspension.

McCarthy had already showed his preoccupation with nuclear power before: in the final paragraph of *The Crossing*, Billy Parham witnesses the Manhattan Project's Trinity test from afar. Again, the text is ambiguous about the event. The protagonist himself does not understand what he has seen, but the intuitive violence of the act makes him burst into tears. "There was no sun and there was no dawn and when he looked again toward the north the light was drawing away faster and that noon in which he'd woke was now become an alien dusk and now an alien dark [...] a cold wind was coming down off the mountains" (McCarthy, *The Crossing* 437). Through the young boy's bewilderment, McCarthy echoes James Agee's inability to properly articulate the kind of unsettling emotions evoked by the atomic bomb. It belongs to an "alien," almost unspeakable world, its wickedness the only comprehensible trait when compared with the "right and godmade sun" that rises shortly after the artificial one (437). There is maybe another occasion in which McCarthy makes an oblique reference to the A-Bomb. According to Wade Hall, Natalie Grant, and Christopher Walsh, the puzzling "government tank" in *The Orchard Keeper* is similarly connected to the Atomic Bomb and to the Manhattan Project in particular, since it would contain nuclear waste from the Oak Ridge nuclear laboratory.[4] Even if there is no way to prove this interpretation, the way in which the tank is described, "a great silver ikon, fat and bald and sinister [...] clean and coldly gleaming and capable of infinite contempt" (McCarthy, *Orchard* 93) seems again to point in the direction of an almost metaphysical, barely contained evil. These surreptitious references stand as good examples of what Boyer defined as the "partially hidden" literary response to the bomb. Although the novels are only set in the 1940s, being published in 1993 and 1965 respectively, their reticence or inability to openly address the bomb mirrors the one that Boyer identifies in the literature of the time.

The Road similarly presents ambiguous connections with the bomb. John Cant considers that the interpretation of the novel as a post-nuclear work is "not unreasonable," but also that it is important to remember that we are presented with "another of McCarthy's allegorical worlds" (268-69), probably inspired by the kind of wasteland scenarios and fears that the author grew up with. The scared little boy, on whom McCarthy projects

his childhood anxieties, is a plausible evidence of the novel's conjuring up of a post-WWII end-of-the-world atmosphere. Author Michael Chabon has declared *The Road* as belonging to the large number of novels inspired by *Robinson Crusoe*'s pattern of imposing "a bourgeois social order on an irrational empty wilderness after the bomb or virus strikes". However, although Chabon is right in classifying the novel's spatial dimension as an "irrational empty wilderness," there is no such thing as a *Crusoe* pattern in it, apart from the man-versus-nature narrative minimum – so superficial to be almost negligible. There is no drive towards the creation of a stable order in *The Road*. Even if one were to accept the potential presence of an ordering force for the sake of the argument, it could be in no way classified as bourgeois.

With a plethora of clear references to classic bomb imagery, like underground bunkers, ghostly metropolitan ruins, ashen landscapes, and charred human bodies, *The Road* seems to symbolically belong to the Cold War zeitgeist as much as *Alas, Babylon* does. But, unlike Frank's all-around chauvinist optimism, a demonstration that his novel is chiefly a "futurology" extending the myth of American exceptionalism through a post-atomic quasi-utopia, McCarthy's story is way bleaker, and, in its pessimism, realistic. The first and most important difference between the two is the post-atomic landscape itself. Frank has a damaged but revivable (redeemable, even) garden. It is symbolically relevant that Bragg's orchard is virtually untouched during the catastrophic event. McCarthy presents us with a *tabula rasa* that, far from embodying Lockean possibilities for improvement, is the worst Hobbesian state of nature imaginable, an accurate reproduction of Jaspers' conception of the nuclear post-apocalypse as "the killing of all life on the whole surface of the earth" (21). Upon such terrain, providing no symbolical basis for pastoral-political speculations nor fuel for jingoist-escapist narratives, and in such conditions, American republican-bourgeois society doesn't stand a chance of being brought back to life. McCarthy's vision is atavistic, brutal, uncivilized.

In her analysis of contemporary post-apocalyptic novels, Heather J. Hicks frames such narratives into a "taut" dialectic: "either survivors should move beyond salvaging mere scraps of modernity and rebuild dimensions of it in earnest or they should concede that modernity is beyond salvage and attempt to devise something that transcends its historical form"

(3). *The Road* doesn't take either path, but, like *Alas, Babylon*, chooses rather to reconnect with a pre-modern era, and even with an ahistorical mythical time. Or better: it tries to do so, but it ultimately fails because the apocalypse deprives the protagonists of a fundamental regenerative element in American mythology at large: nature.

From a mythical-symbolic standpoint, the journey of the man and the boy is clearly the recreation of a frontier-era epic, its direction recalibrated southward instead of westward. Even in the ruthless nuclear winter the image of the South as paradise seems to have its appeal, or at least it does for the father, a true-born southerner.[5] But the couple's errand into the post-apocalyptic wilderness is marred from the beginning, because the abundance of the southern prelapsarian garden is fundamentally absent from the scene, being either a memory (for the father), or a tale (for the boy). The return back home, to the ideal wholeness of the southern pastoral realm, is impossible simply because home is not there anymore. In an early scene, the man goes back to the house where he grew up only to find it both empty and haunted by memories, while his son finds it unbearably scary (McCarthy, *The Road* 25-26). The place is a quite literal representation of the uncanny as Sigmund Freud defined it: something both strangely familiar and eerily not homely. Uncanniness characterizes every depiction of place in the novel thanks to the father's mediation: he is possessed by a strong desire to rejoin the archetypal home, but suffers a perpetual cognitive dissonance. His mind is chronically divided between the Arcady of memories, represented by his childhood, as it is often the case with the pastoral mode, and the "dark beyond darkness" (3) of the post-apocalyptic world. Projected onto the barren landscape, his psyche adds an additional unsettling touch to the already ghastly setting.

Joseph Masco adopts a very interesting take on the nuclear imagination and its connection with the uncanny, declaring that the nuclear age has witnessed an apotheosis of the latter. He defines the nuclear uncanny as a "perceptual space caught between apocalyptic expectation and sensory fulfillment, a psychic effect produced… by living within the temporal ellipsis separating a nuclear attack and the actual end of the world" (28) – precisely the time-space in which *The Road* moves. Masco also adds that the uncanny atmosphere of the nuclear age evokes fear because "it is an instant

when modernist psychic and cultural structures become momentarily undone or out of joint, thus revealing the dangerous vulnerability of the human sensorium to an uncertain and uncertainly haunted universe" (29). The modernist failure in making sense of an actual post-apocalyptic world is quite strong in McCarthy. *The Road*, unlike *Alas, Babylon*, doesn't believe in the resurrection of modernity. The wasteland represents one of McCarthy's "unifying themes" (Cant 6), and, more specifically, the novel's wasteland is a clear and direct derivation of T.S. Eliot's. But the dull world of *The Road* lacks the potential for meaning presented by the poem. In obedience to Masco's observations on the nuclear uncanny space, modernist structures don't hold here, and everything is simply "carried on the bleak and temporal winds to and fro in the void" (McCarthy, *The Road* 11). There is no salvific "Shantih shantih shantih" at the end of *The Road* (Eliot 433).

Conclusion

Comparing Eliot and McCarthy is also useful to understand the relationship that the novel establishes between nuclear apocalypse and ecological holocaust. As mentioned before, *The Road*'s biosphere is slowly withering away: there are no more wild animals of any kind in the grey forests that the protagonists cross to reach the southern shore, and, as the father informs us, "all the trees in the world are going to fall sooner or later" (McCarthy, *The Road* 35). The southern eco-pastoral realm is completely reversed into a gothic wilderness, a setting that, as highlighted by Megan Riley McGilchrist among others, is McCarthy's preferred narrative space (120). The post-apocalyptic twist added to that traditional southern setting gives the usual feeling of danger and entrapment connected to gothic spaces a heightened feeling of doom. In this respect, *The Road* stands as a great example of eco-gothicism, an ecological representation in which nature (or what is left of it) "demonstrates a crisis of representation," standing as a "semiotic problem" and a "space of crisis" (Smith and Hughes 2, 3). In *Alas, Babylon* the protagonist is still able to read his shattered environment to find in it a vision of an understandable order, the pastoral's primary function in moments of rapid and often disastrous change. In a similar

way, Eliot is still able to extrapolate some kind of meaning from the ruins of the world by means of the fragments he collects and re-arranges into an understandable order. McCarthy doesn't give his protagonists this possibility – his wasteland is unredeemable.

It could be objected that the man and the boy, like Randy Bragg, are standing by a righteous moral code in a fallen world. After all, they are "carrying the fire" of civilization represented by the "old stories of courage and justice" (McCarthy, *The Road* 41) that the father tells his son. The man still has some connection with old values, with civilization as it was before the apocalypse, and he actually lives up to his ideals. He actively shapes his days on "the perfect day of his childhood" (13), a day that, unsurprisingly, is also a perfect pastoral (and hence democratic) picture. But, in spite of the protagonists self-identifying as the "good guys," and although McCarthy ends his novel with at least a hint of hope for the young boy, it is impossible to forget that, apart from the vividness of its mythical dimension, the actual world is still lost. It is a "thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again" (287). Between the pastoral wish and its possible realization there is a sterile planet of ashes. *The Road*'s last image is one of hopelessness and loss, and an enigma that, in its recollection of a time lost forever, mourns the total disconnection of man and environment after the catastrophe.

Whether or not McCarthy intended the novel to be (at least partially) a representation of an atomic aftermath, his depiction is strongly reminiscent of what Spencer R. Weart defined "the new blasphemy". The progressive death of the biosphere depicted in *The Road* may be perplexing, but, back in the early 1950s when the author was a young man, nuclear power itself was still unfathomable for common people. As Weart demonstrates, pretty much every possible perversion of the laws of nature was ascribed to A-bombs, a general anxiety connected with humankind's archetypal fear of contamination. The fabled effects of the bombs, Weart writes, "strengthened the association between nuclear energy and uncanny pollution" (189). The tribal logic underlying this rhetoric implies that they who defy the order of things bring damage to the community and to nature itself: with a cannibalistic society roaming an endless deathscape, *The Road* could also be interpreted as the image of an ultimate biblical punishment brought about by the invention of the bomb.

One last comparison between McCarthy's and Frank's endings is useful in showing the novels' diametric involvement with post-atomic scenarios. Right before the survivors are reached by the rescue helicopter, Randy's niece Peyton performs a literal exhumation of the pre-apocalyptic era. Hidden behind a secret door in the attic, she finds some "old seventy-eights" that belonged to her grandfather (Frank 303). Randy is ecstatic as they play some classic jazz standards on an old phonograph: not only the old society is brought back to life, it is also given back its voice through the records. The songs (all sung by white performers) establish a vital, direct connection between the world before and the world after the bomb. It is almost as if the apocalypse had been nothing but a transitory annoyance. The irreversible detachment presented by McCarthy, on the other hand, is also highlighted by the failed communication between the past and the present. "Once there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains," he writes, "on their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes" (*The Road* 287). In lieu of the actual voices of the past breaking into the here-and-now, McCarthy translates the times of yore into a cipher. It is also interesting to notice that Frank, always the empiricist, entrusts a machine with the vestiges of the past, while McCarthy, whose metaphysical faith in the natural world is well-documented, relies once more on the biosphere. A decision that looks like a conscious act of sabotage towards the few survivors, because no living thing apart from humans survives the apocalypse. As a result, *The Road* negates the very possibility of transmitting and interpreting the past, and it does so by negating any kind of communication between humankind and the natural world.

The disconnection from the environment also carries with it a deeper symbolical disconnection that slowly pushes the older protagonist towards a total vacuum of significance. The forlorn condition of the father, maybe the last representative of the southern mind in the desolation of the post-apocalyptic world, has its roots in the fact that the very possibility of language is being erased together with the ecosphere:

> The world shrinking down about a raw core of parsible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the name of things one believed to be true. More fragile

> than he would have thought. How much of it was gone already? The sacred idioms shorn of its referents and so of its reality. (88-89)

The aim of writing in an ecological dimension is to inscribe man and nature into a common realm or semiotic space in which signification is possible and meaning can be generated and communicated. It is necessary to establish a common space between man and the environment in which language creates a stable, understandable, and meaningful connection between the two. As a symbolical equivalent of Adam's first task to name the world, this possibility can only exist in a pastoral-Edenic space, or in its various symbolical surrogates that the history of the European colonization projected onto the North American continent.

Read in this light, *The Road*'s post-environmental space is the total negation of a meaningful, empowering connection with space, and thus it represents the impossibility of using its symbolic dimensions as a palimpsest to rebuild civilization, to react against the devouring nothingness brought about by the end of the world. The nuclear uncanny fundamentally represents a "disorientation of self and environment," and since "experiences of self and environment are culturally specific" (Masco 34), given the pivotal importance that the eco-mythical complex of the pastoral has in the South's identity, social, and political definition, McCarthy's wasteland stands as the ultimate (and probably the only) southern literary apocalypse.

To reiterate, *Alas, Babylon* and *The Road* stand as diametrically opposed responses to the bomb: Boyer would define the former as an optimistic "prescription" of how American society should react in the case of such an event, and the latter as an ominous prophecy. And pessimists, he writes, often make the best predictions (150). Frank, an example of the Cold War patriot, aspires to empowerment and reaffirmation. McCarthy, on the other hand, nihilistically describes the definitive eradication of the southern garden with all its cultural layers. If "All things of grace and beauty … have a common provenance in [...] grief and ashes" (McCarthy, *The Road* 54), they will also have a common end in (radioactive) dust.

Notes

[1] There is no such thing as a single, monolithic southern mind, of course. Thrughout the essay, "southern" is to be understood as "white genteel southern", as the two novels examined focus exclusively on that tradition.

[2] The most well-known contemporary southern post-apocalyptic narrative is without any doubt Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore, and Charlie Adlard's comic series *The Walking Dead*, but the actual importance of the southern milieu in its symbolical dynamics could be argued. Other works, exhibiting different degrees of recognizable southernness, are Sara Taylor's *The Shore*, Omar El Akkad's *American War*, and Frank Owen's *South*. When it comes to post-atomic scenarios, the only existing titles that I have been able to locate are Frank; and McCarthy, *The Road*. The former is a post-apocalyptic novel *set* in the South: Frank was born in Chicago, but he spent large portions of his life in Florida. Because of that, *Alas, Babylon* shows a strikingly deep connection with some symbolical tenets of southern culture, making it an interesting case study. On the other hand, *The Road*'s southernness is quite clear, but its belonging to the post-atomic subgenre is ambiguous.

[3] Among the various critics that interpreted *The Road* as a post-atomic narrative, there are Edwards; Lincoln; and Snyder. Cant adopts a perspective similar to the one I use in this essay, recognizing post-atomic symbols in the novel, but also accepting its intentional vagueness.

[4] The essays I refer to are Grant; Hall; and Walsh.

[5] There has been some debate about it, but *The Road* is firmly set in the south-east of the US. The hints are numerous, and they have been collected by Morgan.

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William M. Knoblauch

Spaceship Earth: Nuclear Age Representations of Life After the Apocalypse

In 2018, Swedish company Magnet released *Aniara*, a space-based sci-fi film with heavy eco-dystopian themes. Based on a mid-1950s poem by Nobel Laureate Harry Martinson, *Aniara* is a tale of humans fleeing from a decimated earth when their spaceship unexpectedly collides with debris and is driven off course. With no way to correct the ship's trajectory, society breaks down. Cults emerge, authoritarianism reigns, and ordinary people are left to face the inevitable. The recently released film, however, features tropes common in Cold War-era dystopian science fiction. Like many post-Cold War films, *Aniara* replaces the atomic cause of global destruction with environmental degradation; this 2018 film, however, still features other prominent Cold War era concerns: debates about population, concerns about ecological devastation in an age of limits, and imaginings of how humanity might survive as a fragile, lonely species adrift in space. Curiously, these are all themes that peaked in popularity within a very short time span: 1968-1972.

Why did a film released in 2018 embrace so many tropes and ideas from one specific period of the Cold War? This article aims to answer that question. It begins by examining early Cold War concerns brought about by atomic weapons, the arms race, and nuclear testing. Next, it looks at the transitional period of 1968-1972, when biologists, ecologists, and futurists promoted ideas for global, peaceful, and sustainable coexistence on earth and in space. Finally, it examines films and books featuring tropes common during this period. From the 1972 film *Silent Running* through 2018's *Aniara*, visions of spaceship-bound humanity escaping earth have continued to fascinate audiences speculating on just what might bring about our global destruction, and whether or not humanity can survive.

Early Cold War Atomic Fears

With the atomic bombings of Japan on August 6 and 9, 1945, the world changed. Writers and scientists had long predicted an atomic bomb, but the postwar realization that humanity had entered the atomic age alarmed many Americans (Winkler 32-33; Rhodes 13-28). Some, like the scientific community, protested against further nuclear proliferation (see Rubinson). These figures – many of whom helped to design the bomb – warned that atomic warfare might not just destroy cities, but entire nations. With the production of a Soviet bomb in 1949, such warnings seemed more realistic, and nuclear weapons quickly increased in destructive power (thermonuclear weapons) and diversified their delivery systems (i.e. Submarine or Sea-Launched Ballistic Missiles, or SLBMs).[1] Not everyone, however, was skeptical about the bomb; some even promoted new uses for nuclear technologies. In the 1950s, US engineers began pondering the utility of Peaceful Nuclear Explosions (PNEs), and members of "Project Plowshare" hoped that atomic bombs could be used to clear harbors or canals (Kaufman 172). With the need to test these innovations, above-ground atomic tests became almost *passé* in Cold War life, and civil defense measures (Do-It-Yourself bomb shelters, public fallout shelters) became iconic symbols of 1950s America (see McEnaney). It took the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis to force the superpowers to put in place preventative measures, most notably the Above Ground Test Ban Treaty of 1963, which temporarily reduced global atomic anxiety.

After a decade of intense above-ground testing, more scientists – including ecologists and biologists – entered the political fray. Arguing about the threat of above-ground nuclear tests, ecologists exposed the real dangers of radioactivity both in the atmosphere and the biosphere. Washington University biologist Barry Commoner led a study of radioactive fallout's effects. By asking mothers to mail in baby teeth, he made connections between above-ground testing and soil contamination, revealing that traces of the radioactive isotope Strontium 90 had passed through mothers' milk (McCray 22-23). That was on land, but the world's oceans were also at risk, as the superpowers dumped radioactive waste with abandon (see Hamblin 92-96, 100-01). By the mid-1960s, atomic weapons

had become more than a military issue: they were now an environmental concern. As the 1970s approached, those concerns grew, especially because of the contributions of a few major thinkers during a specific four-year period.

1968-1972: A New Age of Global Environmental Concern

The period of 1968-1972 witnessed an increased emphasis on environmentalism thanks to the efforts of scientists, activists, and futurists. Their potential to reach a broad audience was realized earlier, when in 1962 Rachel Carson released *Silent Spring*. First appearing as a serialized story in *The New Yorker*, Carson warned of the dangers of pesticides – especially Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) – and their potential harm to humans (the book's title alluded to pesticides' ability to kill off bird populations). For her warnings, the chemical industry attacked Carson, calling her a hysterical and a crackpot. Still, the public took notice, and by 1968 environmentalism became a serious public concern thanks to certain specific contributors. In 1968 Paul Ehrlich released *The Population Bomb.* Essentially an update of the centuries-old "Malthusian Doctrine," Ehrlich argued that earth was reaching a point where global resources could no longer meet humanity's demands. Unless the global population was curbed, he argued, parts of the world would face starvation (3, 161). Concurrently, non-government organizations such as the International Planned Parenthood Foundation and Zero Population Growth echoed his warnings. Similar prophecies of doom appeared in literature, most notably Hal Lindsey's 1970 book *The Late Great Planet Earth* – an eschatological treatise that became the bestselling "non-fiction" book of the 1970s. By 1972, a more secular attempt to predict impending doom came from the Club of Rome. Comprised of a collection of MIT faculty, European chemists, and businessmen, its controversial publication *The Limits to Growth*, a systems-based prediction of Ehrlich-like doom, urged Americans to recognize the need for constraint in a new "age of limits" (McCray 25-32).

Living in this "age of limits" would require some innovative thinking,

such as the ideas of E.F. Schumacher. A British economist, Schumacher promoted ideas of "intermediate technologies," or tech that was "halfway between traditional and modern" (169). Instead of designing brand new devices, he implored people instead to improve upon already existing ones, be they wind turbines or compostable toilets (188-89). Schumacher's ethos became so central to the counterculture that "appropriate technologies" (AT) were featured throughout Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog*. By 1971, the eco-anarchist Murray Bookchin's *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* suggested that industrialized nations could create a utopian "ecological society, with new ecotechnologies, and eco-communities" (22). Although the adoption of DIY-technological fixes or eco-anarchistic ideas never went mainstream, their increasing prominence in Brand's catalog and in alternative communities reflected the hopeful idealism of AT proponents (Kirk 28-30).

This mixture of dire predictions and technological solutions emerged during President Richard Nixon's first administration. No environmentalist himself, but ever the political opportunist, Nixon soon publicly supported environmental initiatives. Concerning events in 1969 alone – the Santa Barbara Oil Spill, Ohio's Cuyahoga River Fire, and a Los Angeles continually veiled in smog – made environmental protection good politics. Additionally, in 1970, what started as an environmental "teach-in" had blossomed into the first Earth Day (see Rome). In Congress new initiatives such as the Clean Water Act gained public support. Assessing the electorate's mood, Nixon wrote into law a slew of environmental legislation, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Conservation Act, and the Clean Air Act. By 1972, however, the Nixon administration's façade was beginning to crack. That year Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Elliot L. Richardson, opined that if any nation consciously curtailed economic growth, it would bring about "the destruction of our liberties and freedom" (McCray 36). Later that year, Nixon revealed his own skepticism by vetoing the Clean Water Act, a veto Congress quickly overrode (Schulman 30-32). All told, the period of 1968-1972 – thanks to the efforts of environmentalists in writing, on campuses, and in Congress – had paid dividends.

While these events transpired on earth, it was the efforts of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in outer space that led to another paradigm shift in how people thought about the global environment. Also starting in 1968, a series of photographs taken from space contributed to a new conception of our world as a global community – or, as some commentators put it, a "Spaceship Earth." It was these images that provided another catalyst for the pop culture creations which attest to the impact of environmental and futuristic thought in the atomic age.

Imagining "Spaceship Earth"

While imaginings of earth from space date back at least as far as Plato, humanity had no photographic evidence until 1968. It was an auspicious year, one marked by numerous cultural and scientific achievements that led Americans to reconsider their place in the universe. It was the year of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey,* a revolutionary film featuring visions of man leaving earth. Also that year, Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog* published its first issue, offering access to do-it-yourself guides and a slew of AT gadgets to improve an increasingly fragile globe (Poole xiii-xv). In 1968, Soviet cosmonauts took the first ever black and white photograph of earth from space; not long after, on Christmas Eve, Apollo 8 astronauts captured the first ever color image of earth. Both photos presented a world without national borders or ideological divisions. The photograph was so stark it led *New York Times* journalist Archibald MacLeish to describe earth as a "tiny raft in the enormous empty night" (qtd. in McCray 22). Newspaper editorials abounded with mentions of "brotherhood on earth" and magazines featured the photograph on their front covers: *Time* captioned the image "Dawn," while *Life* proclaimed it the picture that best captured "The Incredible Year '68." Four years later, the Apollo 17 mission captured an even higher resolution photograph, the "Blue Marble" image (Poole 1-8).

Presenting earth alone and adrift in the black void of space – some called it a "Pale Blue Dot" – these images also conjured up a phrase that had been growing in popularity: "Spaceship Earth." The phrase originated with University of Michigan economist Kenneth E. Boulding, who in 1965

presented a talk entitled "Earth as a Space Ship." In it, Boulding compared two different visions of how humanity could proceed: unrestricted economic growth or a more ecologically-friendly existence in an age of limits. Soon economists like Barbara Ward embraced "Spaceship Earth" as a metaphor to promote the need for global cooperation (see Ward; McCray 23). Arguably, however, nobody more prolifically promoted this idea than R. Buckminster Fuller, who in 1969 published *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*. A far-thinking futurist since the 1920s, by the late 1960s Fuller had become an unlikely countercultural cult hero thanks to Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog*, which prominently featured his designs. Although a prolific designer, one design stood out from the rest: his geodesic dome, which according to historian Andrew Kirk, "became the preferred domicile for counterculture communes [as they were] cheap, easy to build, often portable, and environmentally friendly." Fuller's geodesic dome was the architectural embodiment of a countercultural, do-it-yourself philosophy, a symbol of how to maintain and care for our corner of Spaceship Earth (Kirk 58).

It may have been the counterculture's environmental metaphor of choice, but Spaceship Earth was not popular with everyone. One Nixon staffer proclaimed that those who embraced the idea would forfeit liberties and need to accept "the strictest sort of economic and technological husbandry," leading to a future that looked "much less libertarian and much more authoritarian" (McCray 36). Not surprisingly, other skeptics included futurists with a particularly Libertarian-bend, such as Gerard O'Neill. A Cornell graduate who spent his life envisioning and promoting ideas of space colonization, O'Neill detested the proposed "near-totalitarian ways that Spaceship Earth would have to be managed" (McCray 48). Instead, he saw outer space as a place where humanity could start over, a sort of galactic frontier of freedom – one that need not be the sole purview of NASA. In part, O'Neill's ideas sprang from his love of science fiction. In stories such as Robert Heinlein's *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress,* he read how space colonies repressed by totalitarianism might respond with revolts. The lesson was clear: Space, unlike earth, should be egalitarian, not totalitarian (50). O'Neill was not working to improve "Spaceship Earth" here on earth;

he sought to create plans for a space-bound society where humanity might begin anew.

O'Neill quickly attracted a coterie of like-minded Visioneers, dreamers who wanted to take discussions of space settlement (they rejected the term "colonization" for its imperialistic implications) from the theoretical to the concrete (Anker 240). Disciples like Dandridge Cole, a General Electric missile engineer, postulated that giant spaceships might build permanent settlements on asteroids, mining them for minerals and resources. Then there was Freeman J. Dyson, the British physicist who was just as curious about space settlement as O'Neill. By 1972 the two had struck up a near constant correspondence, much of it based on their shared love of futurist John Desmond Bernal's writings – especially the notion that to survive in space, humans would need to master the "eventual modification of people's genetic materials." Alongside notions of "transhumanism," they focused on engineering issues, and imagined rotating steel cylinders that could replicate gravity in space and harness solar energy for power. In time, they reasoned, smaller space habitats would combine, their self-sufficiency ensured by the rich asteroids they mined (McCray 51-52, 62). In short, these figures didn't just muse about the economic or political potential of space colonization – they went ahead and created models of how civilization might actually thrive in space.

O'Neill and his compatriots did not just ponder how humans would live in space, but *where* they would live. O'Neill's team recognized that no large space colony could linger in earth's orbit; gravity there was simply too unstable. Instead, the group settled on two Lagrangian points, L4 and L5, for settlement. Named after mathematician Joseph-Louis Lagrange, these points, each around 240,000 miles from earth, enjoyed unique gravitational stability, making them ideal locations for long term settlement. As O'Neill engaged in numerous speaking ventures and publicity opportunities, this idea spread; soon, student groups at places like Cornell and MIT formed, and public advocacy groups, such as the L5 Society, chanted a new catch-phrase: "L5 by '95!" (56, 90).

Be it on earth or in space, the notion of Spaceship Earth grew in popularity during America's new age of limits. By 1972, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)'s oil embargo constrained

the US economy and further validated the warnings of ecologists and economists. Quickly, popular culture presented dystopian futuristic backdrops that were thinly veiled metaphors for the 1970s ecological disaster. One example is Zero Population Growth (Z.P.G.), a 1972 Danish-American film clearly inspired by Ehrlich's writings: it features an earth so polluted that no fauna lives above ground; even breathing outside is near impossible. One year later, the dystopian film *Soylent Green* presented an earth that had become "an overpopulated, overheated, arid desert" with a starving society teetering on collapse (Canby 113).[2] Salvation seems to come in the form of "Soylent Green," a mysterious foodstuff rationed out by a now draconian government. Here was Ehrlich's *Population Bomb* brought to cinema, a world that had outgrown its food supply – although Ehrlich never predicted the stomach-churning revelation made at the film's conclusion when Charlton Heston discovers that "Soylent Green is made out of people!"

Equally disquieting sci-fi depictions soon emerged, but frequently these were set in outer space. Space colonization had become an increasingly seductive idea thanks to the beforementioned thinkers. By 1975, Brand began using profits from his *Whole Earth Catalog* to finance space-colonization research, and in 1976 O'Neill published his ideas on space settlement in *The High Frontier*. For thinkers like these, "the overwhelming majority thought space colonies could provide well-functioning environments for astronauts seeking to push human evolutionary expansion into new territories, while also saving a Noah's Ark of earthly species from industrial destruction" (Anker 239-40). Similar visions emerged in pop culture as well, and in time became common images in dystopian sci-fi during and after the Cold War. All told, the ideas that emerged during the formative period of 1968-1972 continued to inform visions of ecological disaster, not to mention the promises, and pitfalls, of Spaceship Earth.

Cultural Representations of Spaceship Earth

In 1972, Universal Pictures released *Silent Running*. The film opens with botanist Lowell Freeman (played by Bruce Dern) wandering through lush

green forests. The scene is idyllic. He swims in clear streams as contented frogs and birds look on; at one point, he holds and feeds a baby rabbit. Quickly, however, viewers see that this is no rainforest, but a greenhouse floating through space. The greenhouse's design here is telling – these are Fuller's geodesic domes. *Silent Running,* then, was a sci-fi space drama that embraced still-emerging ideas of the counterculture, a trope reinforced by Dern's protagonist. Unlike his compatriots, Lowell Freeman only eats the fresh fruit and "real food" he grows in his geodesic dome, not the synthetic and chemical-laced fare the others consume. He is constantly jeered at by crewmates who find his speeches on environmentalism childish. At one point, Freeman muses about:

> a time when there were flowers all over the Earth. And there were valleys. And there were plains of tall green grass that you could lie down in…you could go to sleep in. And there were blue skies, and there was fresh air… and there were things growing all over the place, not just in some domed enclosures blasted some millions of miles out into space. (*Silent Running*)

Clearly, Freeman is obsessed with his mission, one explained in a flashback audio clip from a bygone US President who states that "we… dedicate these last forests of our once-beautiful nation in the hope that they will one day return and grace our fouled earth." Again, the earth has become – like in *Soylent Green* – an arid wasteland. Freeman is earnest, but by comparison his churlish crewmates have so little regard for the greenhouse that they frequently crush crops and flowers with their buggies. Still, Freeman remains buoyant; he hopes one day to return to earth where his flora and fauna can re-foliate the planet.

When orders arrive for the ship to return, Lowell learns that their mission is no longer ecological; in fact, the crew is tasked with destroying the domes and returning to commercial service (the Valley Forge, after all, is owned by American Airlines). To do so, as late 1950s engineers had proposed using PNE's with Project Plowshare, they employ small scale atomic explosives to eradicate the greenhouses. Rather than destroy his own dome, Freeman mutinies, killing his crewmembers and defending his beloved forest. In the end, rather than return to earth, he decides to destroy his own spaceship with an atomic detonation, but not before saving one

final dome – an ecological Noah's Ark – with the last of his greenhouses intact, a lush and green "Spaceship Earth" left to be tended by one helpful robot. With this ending, *Silent Running* hinted at the evils of corporate power and the benefits of smaller, appropriate technology (the greenhouse robot). It also sent a clear warning about the fragility of Earth's ecosystems, one shaped by thinkers like Ehrlich and Carson.

The short-lived 1978 television series *Battlestar Galactica*, as well as its 2003-2004 reboot, also embraced ideas about life adrift on a "Spaceship Earth."[3] (In many ways, the show borrowed liberally from an earlier TV series: Harlan Ellison's 1973 show *Earthship Ark,* which, like *Aniara*, focuses on citizens grappling with life in a spaceship gone off course.) In each iteration of *Galactica*, the last surviving humans flee through space from an evil robotic race of "Cylons" in the "Battlestar Galactica," an outdated warship. While the series embraced sci-fi tropes about maniacal robots, it also captured O'Neill and his group's concerns on long term survival in space. For example, in the original series pilot, after escaping the Cylon attack, humans seek refuge on Carillon, a planet whose sole purpose is to mine "tylium" (much needed rocket fuel). In the 2004 series re-boot, the aptly named episode "Water," the Galactica's crew is less concerned about another Cylon attack and more with replenishing their water supply, which they find on a nearby moon. In each iteration, immediately after the Cylon sneak attack the most pressing issue is long-term survival in space, not military conflict.

In the 1980s, numerous works of science fiction adopted O'Neill's designs for space satellites. In 1983 Pamela Sargent's Young Adult novel *Earthseed* told the tale of project "Ship," an Artificial Intelligence-programmed satellite adrift for a century carrying DNA from a now ecologically devastated earth. Much of William Gibson's landmark 1984 novel *Neuromancer* takes place on "Freeside," a gigantic O'Neill-design cylindrical tube for vacationers which resides in "the L-5 archipelago" (Gibson 101). One year later, Greg Bear's *Eon* told the story of a Cold War standoff interrupted by the arrival of a cylindrical and hollowed out asteroid in Earth's orbit. Nicknamed "The Stone," humans soon learn that it is actually a lost space settlement named "Juno" designed to rotate and simulate gravity. In the 1990s, O'Neill's influence remained, and no

work of the decade better represented his designs, and Ehrlich's doomsday predictions, than Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the Long Sun*. Central to this four-book series is "The Whorl," an interstellar Spaceship Earth carrying the last survivors from a decimated Earth (see Gevers). In each of these examples, be they from the Cold War 1980s, or post-Cold War 1990s, sci-fi embraced fairly consistent visions of how humans might survive in space.

More examples of the Spaceship Earth-theme continued after the Cold War, but these works frequently replaced the atomic apocalypse with the realization of the Anthropocene. Coined in 2002 by Nobel Laureate Paul Crutzen, the term defines our current, human-influenced epoch of ecological destruction (Coombs 208). This is the backdrop of the 2008 Disney-Pixar animated release *WALL-E.* The film's protagonist, a cute robot, spends its days collecting and compacting trash, using it to build skyscraper-height refuse piles. There is almost no life left on earth, and the environment is arid and unstable; frequently, WALL-E flees for cover from dust storms. WALL-E (an acronym for "Waste Allocation Load Lifter – Earth Class") has only one friend, a cockroach, famously one of the few insects rumored to be able to thrive after the apocalypse. One day, WALL-E is visited by EVE (as in "Extraterrestrial Vegetation Evaluator"), a robot whose job is to assess whether plant life can again exist on earth. Discovering WALL-E's prized plant, she hijacks it, and returns (with WALL-E in tow) to an orbiting spaceship.

The humans aboard this Spaceship Earth provide quite the juxtaposition with 1972's *Silent Running*. Bruce Dern's character was a stereotypical 1970s-era countercultural environmentalist, someone who eschewed synthetic food and a disposable lifestyle. The humans of 2008's WALL-E, by comparison, are obese lay-a-bouts whose every desire is immediately fulfilled by corporate robots from "Buy-N-Large," a Wal-Mart-type super-corporation. These people don't even walk, but spend their days riding around what looks like a cruise ship. Although this is a children's film and the characters are drawn sympathetically, the overall setting depicted here is nothing short of horrific. While the film's overt attack is on consumerism driven by big box stores and corporations, WALL-E still incorporates Ehrlichian predictions of resource depletion and Carson's warnings of environmental degradation. The film also insinuates the promise of

Schumacher's AT, as it takes the efforts of two smaller, less advanced robots (WALL-E and EVE) to ultimately foil the evil plans of the corporation's computer mastermind AUTO, which seeks to keep the humans off planet.

Although much bleaker in tone, *Aniara* shares with *WALL-E* a warning about humanity's obsession with consumerism and disposable culture. In both films, the earth is rendered uninhabitable because of climate change. But this is no Disney movie; *Aniara's* Anthropocene-induced apocalypse is decidedly more graphic - in one flashback, a crewmember imagines birds in flight spontaneously combusting into flame. What makes *Aniara* unique among these examples is that it shows the dire fate in store for a spaceship *not* prepared or equipped for long periods of human survival. At the film's outset, a newly arrived crew anticipates another fun three-week trip to colonies on mars. Like in *WALL-E,* the ship here resembles a flying resort, with bars, restaurants, live shows and shopping options. After accidentally being driven off course and losing control of the ship, the captain and crew scramble to ration their supplies. For a short while, the travelers on board *Aniara* are placated with consumer distractions. In time, however, one curious amenity becomes the most important. The "Mima" is a room-sized computer that can transport travelers to serene memories in their minds of the time before earth's destruction. Over time, Mima becomes increasingly depressed after having absorbed so many nostalgic memories; it decides to self-destruct rather than continue to face the existential horror of existence. Adrift in space with no distractions and with no way to correct the ship's course, suicide becomes widespread. Through this bleak narrative, *Aniara* critiques consumerism and also implies the horrors that await humans aboard an ill-prepared Spaceship Earth.

The final example of Spaceship Earth in this essay comes from the book *Seveneves*. This work by sci-fi writer Neal Stephenson begins auspiciously; its first sentence reads: "The moon blew up without warning and for no apparent reason" (Stephenson 1). Over the course of almost 900 pages, *Seveneves* ponders how humans respond knowing that shards of the moon will rain fire down upon the earth making it uninhabitable for some 5,000 years. To preserve humanity, global governments plan to place two citizens from every nation on a "Cloud Ark" in space, while libertarian do-it-yourself survivalists build shelters underground. A third faction, unhappy

with either plan, begin to attack government rocket launches to the space station. In response, US President Julia Flaherty orders an SLBM attack on protestors in Venezuela. That once unthinkable military action, the use of nuclear force, has become, in the post-Cold War milieu of *Seveneves*, possible (277-79).

In the first half of *Seveneves* much of the action focuses on the crew of "Izzy." Modeled on the international space station, Izzy is attached to Amelthia, the pet name given to a gigantic asteroid that the crew mines for minerals in order, in time, to create new habitats in anticipation of their growing population. It's one more example of O'Neill and his cadre's vision of life in space: a series of connected satellites mining asteroids for necessary minerals. Also, as O'Neill had proposed, *Seveneves*' satellites rotate to stimulate gravity and harness solar power for energy. Stephenson even includes predictions by some of O'Neill's less optimistic colleagues – not to mention Nixon Administration appointees – regarding draconian measures to keep order on a Spaceship Earth. Not minutes after the earth is engulfed in flames, crew leader Markus Leuker enacts martial law under a Cloud Ark constitution, and bluntly declares "all nation-states of Earth, and their governments and constitutions, no longer exist." Similarly, as Robert Heinlein predicted in *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, before long a rebel faction on the Cloud Ark revolts, breaking off from the main colony and heading for Mars (322-24).

Seveneves borrows even more from O'Neill and the Visioneers of the early 1970s. For example, as Izzy's crew grows, and new units are continually added to the growing Cloud Ark, a rogue scientist, Sean Probst, predicts that the Cloud Ark is woefully under-supplied with water, a necessary element not just for human life, but propulsion. He and his crew set course to intercept the Grigg-Skjellerup comet (colloquially called "Greg's Skeleton") at Lagrangian Point 1 (L1); they are successful, but succumb to nuclear reactor radiation poisoning from their ship. Later in the novel, the cosmonauts of *Seveneves* seek shelter in the same gravitationally friendly Lagrangian points of the "L5 by '95!" group. Explaining the concept to a crewmate, one of the lead characters, Dinah, exclaims: "They're called the Lagrange points…and there's five of them around every two-body system" (148-49). Both ideas, of the Lagrange points and of asteroid mining in

space, were ideas born of O'Neill's team in the 1970s, but they live on decades later (McCray 56-57).

Finally, *Seveneves* borrows the radical ideas surrounding reproduction in space. Recall that Dyson's ideas on space reproduction (inspired by Bernal's 1929 writings) focused on radical surgery and the "eventual modification of people's genetic material." This is precisely how the "Seven Eves" of the story (referring to the final surviving humans in existence, all of them women) begin to repopulate Earth. As no males survived, and all organic specimens have been lost, the Seven Eves begin to lose hope, until geneticist Moira Crewe explains "We don't need sperm." Instead: "There is a process known as parthenogenesis, literally virgin birth, by which a uniparental embryo can be created out of a normal egg" (Stephenson 552). By Part III of *Seveneves,* set some 5000 years in the future, the genetic offspring of these characters frequently experience epigenetic shifts, hibernating for a time, and awaking with altered physical traits and characteristics – the confirmation, however fictional, of Dyson's predictions (595; McCray 62).

Conclusion

These examples, which span the years 1972-2018, show the longevity of a few specific ideas from the Cold War. First, ideas about the eventual end of the world, ideas made more vivid at the dawn of the Atomic Age, evolved as fears of global nuclear destruction gave way to environmental concerns. Next, the ideas promoted between the years 1968-1972 – such as Ehrlich's *Population Bomb*, Brand's DIY-Environmentalism in the *Whole Earth Catalog*, Fuller's Appropriate Technologies, and O'Neill's cadre of far-thinking space colonizers – embedded themselves into cultural visions of space settlement. Even as the Cold War gave way to new concerns about global climate change in the Anthropocene, visions of earthly apocalypse did not disappear; they simply evolved. Still, the ideas of the environmentalists, ecologists, economists, and futurists from the period 1968-1972 continue to shape ideas about global destruction and life off-planet aboard a Spaceship Earth.

The resiliency of these ideas is impressive considering shifting political and cultural concerns in contemporary America. As the 1970s gave way to the 1980s, DIY-enthusiasm and hopefulness about sustainability and AT gave way to unabashed, rampant consumerism. The 1970s-era of the rugged individualist gave way to 1980s corporate yuppies, while libertarian visions of space settlement shifted towards more earthbound endeavors. The 1986 Challenger tragedy may have contributed to reduced interest in such visionary dreams. However, in an era of private companies increasingly promoting space travel, O'Neill's vision lives on. As Elon Musk's Space-X corporation and its competition seek to reach space without government sponsorship or guidance, perhaps Spaceship Earth will become a reality. Likely, today's Visioneers will – like pop culture has repeatedly done – reference the ideas from 1968-1972 for guidance.

Notes

[1] For accessible compendiums on the atomic age, see Winkler, and Boyer. For more topic-specific treatments, see Intondi; Wolfe; Jones.

[2] Although based on Harrison, *Soylent Green* was only made into a film *after* the period of increased environmental concern examined in this article.

[3] In 2003, a *Battlestar Galactica* mini-series aired. The actual series re-boot took place a year later, in 2004

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Sandra Becker

Beyond the (Ka)Boom: Nostalgia, Gender and Moral Concerns in the Quality TV Series *Manhattan*

The proclamation of "[t]elevision [being] the atomic bomb of culture" (first NBC vice president John F. Royal, qtd. in Anderson 93) in the wake of both the commercial medium of television and the development of the first atomic bomb in the Manhattan Project, was long forgotten in the post-Cold War, twenty-first century. 2019, instead, saw the celebration of HBO's nuclear disaster miniseries *Chernobyl*, breaking series' rating records and leading the end-of-the-year rankings (see Spangler; Seale).[1] The five-episode long, dramatized portrayal of the nuclear accident at the Ukrainian power plant near Pripyat on April 26, 1986, not only received wide critical acclaim (including ten Emmys and two Golden Globes), but brought back the dangers of nuclear energy, contamination and state secrecies to the small screens and into the lives and minds of millions of viewers in the US and around the world. While standing out in many regards, the historical drama series is by no means the only show addressing atomic energy and its hazards: US TV series like *Mutant Ninja Turtles* (1987-1996), *The Simpsons* (1989-present) particularly with its three-eyed fish "Blinky" (season 2, episode 4), as well as the recent Netflix 1980s set series *Dark* (2017-2020) and the third season of *Stranger Things* (2019), feature themes like nuclear energy, power plants and nuclear waste as a threat or source of mutations, evil, or perilous travel through time and into parallel worlds. While the first two examples can be traced back to lingering fears after the Chernobyl disaster (Falkof 932), the latter two can be regarded as a mix of heightened awareness of the risks that come with nuclear energy after the 2011 Fukushima Daichii nuclear disaster, of human-caused damages to climate and nature and of the 1980s nostalgia that awoke in the late-2010s.

Aside from the widely discussed 1983 ABC television drama *The Day After* (Baur 323-25; Harvey, 117-42; Walker 285), scholars have likewise often overlooked the plethora of twenty-first-century fictional TV series involving nuclear bombs. These have been booming in the widely celebrated age of so-called Quality TV. The term 'Quality TV' is used by journalists and scholars – similarly to Prestige TV, Complex TV or Transgressive Television –, to describe early-2000s original, cable channel produced fictional TV drama series, that helped resurrect the medium of television after its believed near demise in the digital age (see McCabe and Akass; Mittell; Däwes et al.). Although the twenty-first century was "not the apocalypse" (Tay and Turner 31) for television, those series that helped the medium escape its prophesied end frequently featured references to the atomic bomb and echo the apocalyptic nuclear fears of the previous century. *The West Wing* (NBC, 1999-2006; season 2, episode 9) and *24* (Fox, 2002-2003; season 2), for instance, both featured an episode or even whole seasons on nuclear bombs and terrorism. In *Jericho* (CBS, 2006-2008), *Battlestar Galactica* (Syfy, 2004-2009), and *The Handmaid's Tale* (Hulu, 2017-present) atomic bombs or nuclear wars are forming the backdrop for post-apocalyptic stories and dystopian scenarios, while a nuclear bomb served a double-role as both catalyst for and relief from the vampire virus-based apocalypse in the FX series *The Strain* (2014-2017) by Mexican filmmaker Guillermo Del Toro.[2] In *Heroes* (NBC, 2006-2010), the main storyline of its first season revolved around a future nuclear explosion of an atomic bomb in New York City, which the superpowered protagonists try to stop from happening.[3] The alternate story-worlds of Amazon's *The Man in the High Castle* (2015-2019) and HBO's miniseries *Watchmen* (2019), on the contrary, reflected on the post-WWII nuclear age and the Cold War, with their protagonists trying to avoid the potential use of the A-bomb.

The WGN America series *Manhattan* (2014-2015), also advertised as *Manh(a)ttan*, departs from these well-established apocalyptic or dystopian themes around the bomb in US television series (see Wissner, "TV and the Bomb").[4] Presenting its viewers with a fictional account of the real-life, secret, US government financed Manhattan Project during WWII (1939-1946), the historic drama goes back to the origin of the bomb itself. This circumstance promotes a shift back to early-1940s fears of technological

advancement and to the people who created the first atomic bombs, asking whether they should be regarded as monsters of mass destruction or "great men" heroically ending the war. This is not to say that later Cold War fears of human annihilation and the apocalypse (such as that of mad, perverse scientists like Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*) are entirely unrelated to those addressed in *Manhattan*, nor that the series' narrative has not been influenced by earlier accounts of nuclear weapons in US TV, film and pop culture.[5] But if HBO's successful miniseries *Chernobyl* is said to reflect on today's post-truth age in the United States under its 45th president Donald J. Trump and the worldwide rise of right-wing populism (Westmore 19), the often-overlooked, short-run Quality TV series *Manhattan* should be valued, this article argues, for its critical take on questions about (toxic) masculinity and specifically on what defines "great men" in history.[6] The notion "toxic masculinity," that has gained significant journalistic and scholarly attention since the #MeToo-movement in 2017-2018, in this context should not be understood as a sexually virile and violent form of masculinity prone to sexual assault, but as a power-hungry, competitive and violent form that endorses "technology, soldiering, [and] nuclear weaponry" (Hultman and Pulé 193). By having *Manhattan*'s white, male protagonists questioning what constitutes "great men," how" to best end WWII and whether the bomb actually offers an ethically acceptable solution, while also including the life stories, voices and actions of minorities, the series does unintentionally continue the critical analysis of "toxic (white) masculinity" that the US activist, Shepherd Bliss, started, when introducing the term during the 1980s Mythopoetic Men's Movement; not in search of an "ecologically inspired masculine ontology" (193), but a critical form of atomic nostalgia beyond the celebration of white, male genius and a nuclear super power.

The Manhattan Project itself – referring to the secret efforts of scientists in an officially non-existent location in Los Alamos, New Mexico, to build the first atomic bomb – may not appear at first glance as a fit story for a *critical* period drama; nor do pre-1960s period dramas themselves to many critics. Internationally acclaimed period dramas like *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007-2015) and the British Cold War espionage series *The Hours* (BBC Two, 2011-2012) have at times been accused of returning to a pre-1960s

era to justify the reproduction of the blatant sexism and racism of the time before the Civil Rights and Women's movements – and hence, to feed a white, male nostalgia (Ferrucci, Shoenberger, and Schauster 100; Vineyard).

In the case of *Manhattan*, another form of nostalgia seems even more likely: what the American sociologist Lindsey A. Freeman has called, in a different context, "atomic nostalgia," "a new form of longing, a distinctively American, post-nuclear, industrial-scientific vision of a lost utopia," that "rests in a mostly conservative and celebratory grove" (10) of American greatness and democratic power ensuring freedom. This form of nostalgia seems particularly intense in the political and cultural *Zeitgeist* of the contemporary United States, in which the series was produced. Take, for example, the ongoing fascination with the immediate post-WWII years of the Fifties of the current US President and his proclaimed aspiration to "Make America Great Again." The latter represents, as Tim Engles points out, "a form of nostalgia that was particularly appealing to white men" and thus expresses the desire to return to a "fantasized past" of "unchallenged white male dominance" (1). The wide appeal of Donald J. Trump's celebratory political rhetoric of greatness, technological advancement, conservative values and masculine virility reveals a wider "restorative nostalgia" in US society; a form of nostalgia that, as Svetlana Boym notes, understands itself "as truth and tradition" (xvii) and commonly advocates for a patriarchal gender order (Engles 1; Doane and Hodges 3). It stretches far beyond the atomic nostalgia that Freeman's study ascribes to former historic sites of the Manhattan Project and museums as well as "the Whiteness of the bomb" that Ken Cooper detects in the Manhattan Project memory culture; one that is centered around the white male narrative of "'Oppenheimer's Baby'" (80) and "the separate-but-equal histories of postwar American politics, with the rubric of 'Cold War' on the one hand and 'Civil Rights' on the other" (81).[7] In this light, the surplus of pre-1960s period dramas appears symptomatic of a profoundly nostalgic age, both in fictional TV and in the real-life nuclear world longing for a lost past of US greatness and unquestioned white, male dominance.

WGN America's series *Manhattan* is of interest because it counters this nostalgia, even though its story is loosely based on the historic Manhattan

project. The series not only differs from earlier audiovisual accounts of nuclear bombs and the overall atomic memory culture in the US addressed by Freeman, but also in its portrayal of men, women and minorities from the supposedly sexist, racist storylines of other celebrated period dramas. This article thus argues that *Manhattan* not only adheres to an "anti-nostalgic mood," but that it devotes equal screen time to male and female concerns and reflections on their lives, giving voice to the subaltern and social issues that are often left out.[8] This is not to say that its cast is not predominantly white. But by showing inequalities due to sexism and racism and giving the respective discriminated characters a voice, background stories, and screen time for development, *Manhattan* is a step towards a liberal defense of certain progressive notions threatened by Trumpian nostalgia and hence towards often-claimed criticality of early-2000s Quality TV series. Before turning to the series and its reflective form of nostalgia, it is important to reflect upon the intertwined history of the two "white" technologies (K. Cooper 80-84, 92-93, 95; Dyer 84).

Starting with Fear and a Kaboom: Parallels in the History of Television and the A-bomb

> April 30 – President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gives a speech to open the New York World's Fair and become the country's first president to appear on television. The National Broadcasting Cooperation (NBC), owned by RCA, broadcasts the ceremony, thus becoming the first television network in the US to begin regular broadcasting. [...]
> August 2 – Albert Einstein writes President Roosevelt about developing an atomic bomb and the idea for the Manhattan Project is born. [...]
> September 1 – Nazi Germany invades Poland, beginning World War II in Europe.
> (Grimes and Steiner 371)

This list of events from 1939, compiled by the two television industry veterans J. Williams Grimes and Ron Steiner, indicates how historically interwoven the development of the two then-nascent technologies, TV and the atomic bomb, are. That fact remains a surprising lacuna in TV Studies,

with accounts of the history of television in the United States commonly focusing on early fictional TV content and the establishment of the three networks, NBC (National Broadcasting Company, 1939), CBS (Columbia Broadcast System, 1941), and ABC (American Broadcasting Company, 1948) out of the former radio stations (Lotz 22-23). This is all the more surprising, given the rhetorical fallout this historical interweaving had in discourses on the medium of television in the US context. About twenty years after NBC's first vice-president John F. Royal proclaimed "[t]elevision is the atomic bomb of culture" (qtd. in Anderson 93), the chairman of the FCC, Newton N. Minow, gave a speech at the meeting of the National Association of Broadcasters in Washington, DC, on May 9, 1961, in which he equated the "age of television" with "the atomic age":

> Ours has been called the jet age, the atomic age, the space age. It is also, I submit, the television age. And just as history will decide whether the leaders of today's world employed the atom to destroy the world or rebuild it for mankind's benefit, so will history decide whether today's broadcasters employed their powerful voice to enrich the people or debase them. (397)

While the medium has often been criticized for its triviality and dangerous celebration of pure entertainment (Postman 80), other scholars countered it by referring to the boomers' need for comedy:

> The unspeakable horror that palpable Armageddon conjures for the rational mind makes comedy particularly appealing. Under the threat of faceless end-of-the-world button pushing, there is an honest urge, if not responsibility, [...] to find a use for the static energies of cynicism. The bomb itself is best written into daily consciousness as a kind of punch line to history. (Marc 148)

Beyond the historical circumstance and its long-lasting rhetorical effects, the two technologies overlap in other ways too. Both were developed and tested in parallel as weapons of war and surveillance during and post-WWII. As TV scholar Lynn Spigel writes, television was used "as a surveillance and reconnaissance weapon during World War II" (47). Having started the first research into airborne television technology as early as 1935, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) – and owner of

NBC (Grimes and Steiner 371) – teamed up with the Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD) after 1941 (Abramson 3). The OSRD was the same federal government agency that set up the Manhattan Project together with the war department in 1942. Next to the mobile RCA Image Orthicon for aircraft-based, long-distance intelligence gathering, particular effort was put into the development of the so-called Mimo-Miniature Image Orthicon, a 50-pound light-weight camera "to be mounted in the army ROC high angle radio-controlled bomb made by the Douglas Aircraft : 'Company' (Allen 113; Abramson 5, 8)." As Spigel mentions, the public had been made aware of the fact that television technology was used for military purposes since the 1930s and was offered details on it in postwar "men's magazines on science and mechanics (47)." While this information might have potentially added to the already existing fear of some to allow "the new technology 'television'" into their homes, it also added to the new interest in science and technology. Historian Elaine Tyler May, in this context, points out that the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, not only marked the beginning of the Cold War and the "atomic age," but also "the era of the expert" (29) or – as Paul Boyer writes – the age of the "atomic scientists" (47-106), whom US citizens looked up to for guidance on how to manage their lives and fears of the potential annihilation of humanity.

The post-WW II domestic ideal of the nuclear family life in the suburbs equally goes back to the Manhattan project scientists, WWII and television; a fact that the *Manhattan*'s show-runner, Sam Shaw, has acknowledged in interviews (see Kenneally; VanDerWerff). The new suburban family domicile and the nuclear TV families of the Andersons of *Father Knows Best* (CBS/NBC, 1954-1960) and the Nelsons of *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (ABC, 1952-1966) were both an expression of and a distraction from nuclear anxieties (May 26, 138-39). As historian Elaine Tyler May points out, the government-supported move away from the big cities as potential target areas for a nuclear attack to the suburbs goes back to the recommendations of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist* on "defense through decentralization" (161).[9] Initiated by the Atomic scientists of the Manhattan Project, like the biophysicist and founder of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist* Eugene Rabinowitch, "the earliest planned

suburban communities in the US," as Shaw points out, "were modeled off Los Alamos, [meaning] that the very nature of modern America [had been] constructed out in that desert in the early 1940s" (indirectly qtd. in VanDerWerff).

Federal financial support encouraged the move to new suburbs like Levittown. The Veterans Administration (VA) program created under the 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act (or GI Bill of Rights) provided mortgage insurance for white veterans, enabling them to buy a single-family house for them and their newly united, nuclear families in the suburbs (May 161). Only two years after the GI Bill passed, the majority of white families in the United States lived in their own, single-family homes (162). This was followed by a rapid increase of households with TV access: Between 1946 and 1950, the "[n]ational penetration rates for television rose from 0.2 percent [...] to 9 percent" (Spigel 32); and "by the 1950s, televisions were selling at a rate of over 5 million" (May 163). With the move from radio to TV of both audiences and programming, the early radio show-based, urban ethnic working-class sitcoms like *Mama* (CBS, 1949-1957) and *The Goldbergs* (NBC/CBS, 1929-1956) became more nuclear family-centered on television, in accordance with the ideology of the "new melting pot" of the suburbs (Lipsitz 356; Whyte, qtd. in May 28). American studies scholar George Lipsitz argues that these shows solely served the purpose "to explain and legitimate fundamentally new social relations" (362) after WWII. Apart from mentions in scholarly works on family portrayals in US TV series by Lipsitz, Cantor, Brooks and Taylor (26), these ethnic working-class series seem to be almost absent from the collective memory of the 1950s USA; strongly influenced by the white, suburban sitcom families of the Andersons, Nelsons and Co. with their authoritative, breadwinning "super-dad[s]" (Cantor 210) and stay-at-home mothers (see Douglas).

In contrast to the strong presence of nuclear sitcom families and the first nuclear-themed Sci-Fi series, the live broadcasted atomic bomb tests of the early 1950s are surprisingly less present in both the works of scholars and the cultural memory in the US. Long before the first episode of the Sci-Fi series *The Twilight Zone* (CBS, 1959-1962) aired, "the first one to show the atomic bomb being dropped on US soil" (Presnell and McGee 40; see also

Wissner, "TV and the Bomb"), "television became the preferred medium for representing the spectacle of atomic blast once nuclear weapons testing began within the borders of the United States in 1951" (Anderson 93). The television set not only took over the role as central "family room" furniture (Spigel 39) that propagated the consumption-based, white nuclear family, but it offered a space for both the "thrill of atomic empowerment" (25) and "the efforts [...] to tame or 'domesticate' the fear" (26), to borrow the words from May's summary of the changing attitude towards the bomb from the 1940s to the 1950s. These juxtaposed tendencies can be traced in the telecasted transmission of nuclear bomb tests between 1951 and 1953. The very first live broadcasting of an atomic bomb test took place on February 6, 1951, at 5:30 A.M. (PDT). It was an unauthorized, clandestine undertaking by the employees of the Los Angeles stations KTLA and KTTV, who had positioned their camera on top of a Las Vegas hotel and aired the pictures live via their transmitter at the 200 miles away Mount Wilson Observatory (see Hart; Doherty 8). As KTLA reporter Stan Chambers recalls:

> We couldn't get near the field, because it was all top secret. Klaus [Landsberg, station manager] sent a crew to Las Vegas and put them on top of one of the hotels [...] They kept the camera open for the flash of light that would come on when the blast went off [...] We stayed on the air, they waited for the right time, and all of a sudden there was the flash. The people watched it, Gil [Martin, newsman in Las Vegas] described it, [Robin] Lane [station staff at Mount Wilson] talked about it, and that was our telecast. That one flash. You just see this blinding white light. It didn't seem real. (qtd. in Hart)

The record audience number for this early morning live telecast that Chambers reports, is a demonstration of the thrill and interest both in the bomb and the new medium of television.

In order to feed the hunger for information and to tame and further domesticate the two technologies, the following tests at the Nevada Proving Grounds (better known today as Nevada National Security Site, NNSS) were broadcasted across the whole of the US (Doherty 9-10; "Miss Atom Bomb"). The broadcasted tests from the so-called Operation Tumbler-Snapper test series took place on April 22, 1952 and those from

the Operation Upshot-Knothole test series on March 17, 1953 at Yucca Flat, Nevada (Doherty 9). While the first of these official tests turned out to be a failure, due to the orthicon tube of the camera being damaged from the intense brightness of the blast, leaving audiences hearing merely a "bomb away" before the screen blackened almost completely, the second test was set-up with care by the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and the Federal Defense Administration (FDA) (Doherty 9). The FDA had joined the atomic weaponry test operations in fall 1951 and under the name project "Operation Doorstep" (Eden 166) set up a "Doom Town" (Doherty 10) for the test on March 17, 1953, featuring "two wood-frame houses, eight backyard shelters, and 'fifty automobiles of various types, colors, and operating conditions'" (166). "The tremendous atomic burst over Doom Town in Nevada," as historian Thomas Doherty quotes a reporter, was not only a made-for-TV event about the marvels of technological advancement in the nuclear age, but brought the mushroom cloud and the potential effects of an atomic blast from the door step of a suburban home into the "family room" via its central piece of furniture, the TV set (Spigel 39).[10] All three big networks NBC (Morgan Beatty), CBS (Walter Cronkite) and ABC (Chet Huntley) had reports together with the military at the official observation site and ran repetitions of the live-program (Doherty 10). These telecasted atomic bomb tests thus set off an "atomic fever" (or rather "atomic numbing") that celebrated and consolidated the acceptance of both technologies ("Miss Atom Bomb" n. pag.; Lifton, qtd. in May 26), but also a number of more "unrealistic but reassuring civil defense strategies" (May 26) that documentaries like *The Atomic Cafe* (1982) and episodes like *Masters of Sex*'s episode "Fallout" (season 1, episode 10) make fun of.

Beyond the Ka(boom): Anti-Nostalgic Elements in the Portrayal of Gender and Technologic Concerns in *Manhattan*

> From this expanse of solitude, a great secret is soon to be revealed to the whole of man. At the dawn of 1945, great minds toil sleeplessly. Their tools, the very principles of the universe. Their aim, nothing less than a lasting peace for the world entire. [...] It would be a hulking task for a deity. But these are not

> gods. These are mortals. These are men. They have hopes and dreams, needs and desires. They have fears and misgivings for what the future may hold. […] They are the makers of a coming history we are all headed toward. […] History is too often not what happened, but what was recorded. A lie set down on paper with wet ink becomes a truth when dry. […] Such is the case of this history, here in the quiet desert. Here we find men whose achievements will be snatched for the glory of others, whose sacrifices will be forgotten as detritus. […] The cleanest telling would draw one great man in whom we could find a teachable narrative, an exemplar of what, should we give it our all, we could become. […] But those stories are myths. This is, as best I understand, that honest story. It is not simple, and few emerge untarnished. It is a story of the unknowable future and all the gnarled turns the present takes on its journey toward the world of tomorrow. (Journalist Woodrow Lorentzen in *Manhattan*, season 2, episode 5, "The World of Tomorrow")

The short-run TV series *Manhattan* tells in twenty-three episodes spread over two seasons a fictional account of the life and work of the nuclear scientists at the secret facility of the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos, New Mexico (1939-1946). It is produced by show-runner Sam Shaw (screen writer for *Masters of Sex*) and executive producer and director Thomas Schlamme (director for episodes of *West Wing* and *The Americans*) and aired between July 27, 2014 and December 15, 2015 on the basic cable channel WGN America. Even though it received an Emmy for its main-title design in 2015, produced by Imaginary Forces (the creative minds behind the Emmy-winning title of Netflix's *Stranger Things*), it was ultimately cancelled due to low audience numbers (see Rose).[11] The narrative of its first season starts on July 2, 1943; a day marked by "61 Countries At War/ More Than 40 Million Casualties/ 766 Days Before Hiroshima" as is stated in letters on the screen in the very first minutes of episode one (season 1, episode 1). While thus centered around historic facts and featuring historical figures like Leslie R. Groves and Robert Oppenheimer, its story revolves around the fictional scientists Frank Winter (John Benjamin Hickey) and Charlie Isaacs (Ashley Zukerman). Winter is the head of the Implosion Group, one of two teams of scientists in a race against each other and Nazi Germany in building the first atomic bomb. Isaacs has been recruited for Reed Akley's (David Harbour) team working on a gun

type atomic bomb called "Thin Man." He only learns about the real aim of his new job at what has been advertised to him as a governmental project for scientists at "Harvard with sand" (season 1, episode 1) once he and his wife Abby (Rachel Brosnahan) and son Joey arrive at PO Box 1663. Being terrified by the task itself, Charlie soon comes to realize that project "Thin Man" will not work. Against the rules of secrecy and compartmentalization at the military camp on "the Hill," Charlie approaches Frank and secretly teams up with him to advance the implosion bomb model. Once their secret activities are uncovered, Akley commits suicide and Frank takes on all the blame for Charlie's and his enterprise. Being completely cast out from the work of their husbands, Charlie's wife Abby and Frank's wife Liza (Olivia Williams) create their own carrier path and secrets. The second season focuses on the last year before the Trinity Test on July 16, 1945 – "21 Days Before Hiroshima" (season 2, episode 1). Accompanied by Frank Sinatra's song "This is the beginning of the end," the viewer learns about how Charlie has restructured the project and become one of its fiercest supporters. Frank and others though lose their faith, trying to sabotage the testing of the implosion bomb "Little Man;" "Unaware that on the eve of the Trinity Test 'Fat Man,' the optimized sibling of 'Thin Man,' had already been shipped to the Pacific Theater; Frank and the others lose their faith, trying to sabotage the testing of the implosion bomb 'Little Man.'"

Apart from the clearly gendered nature of the project reflected in the non-fictional names of the bombs Thin, Fat and Little Man, the first quarter of the series frequently features rhetoric around masculine virility, ranging from the competitive, complicated relationship between Charlie Isaacs and Frank Winter to that among the male members of Winter's research team who vie with each other for women's favor. In an argument, Isaacs, for instance, compares Winter to his imprisoned father, who used to take him along when he went out gambling: "[…] [T]he most pathetic part [is] […] that he was *never man enough* to admit to himself that he was a sinking ship" (season 1, episode 2). Not being "man enough" is clearly an attack on Winter's masculinity, indirectly questioning his ability to lead a scientific research project. Winter's team members Jim Meeks (Christopher Denham) and Paul Crosley (Harry Lloyd) follow a similar rhetorical pattern. When Meeks asks Crosley why it is him who has to do

the risky job of carrying the TNT to the explosion test site, Crosley says it is because he has no children. Meeks counters that neither does Paul have children, to which Paul answers, showing off his macho male virility and his previous successes with dating women at the camp: "No, but there's a chance I will" (season 1, episode 1). Masculinity and male genius are also central to Reed Akley's motivational speech to Isaacs. Trying to appeal to his assumed masculine drive towards competition, Akley tells him that he is a "once-in-a-generation mind" and that he is "competing with" Werner Heisenberg, "the world's most brilliant scientific mind [...] running Hitler's bomb project" (season 1, episode 3). In the same vein, J. Robert Oppenheimer (Daniel London) tells Winter when rejecting the request to grant the implosion group more equipment and man power to develop a bomb twelve weeks ahead of Akley's team that: "A man is made by his belief. As he believes, so he is. The Army believes in the Thin Man" (season 1, episode 3). The talk about masculine genius and virility is in fact taken to its extreme, when Winter's mentor and friend Glen Babbit (Daniel Stern), lays out to Isaacs and his colleagues their conceptual mistake in approaching the gun type bomb design by using the metaphor of his "big beefcake of a guy"-neighbor who couldn't satisfy his wife, who later on finds her joy with a "slick shrimp"-salesman, who gives her the "one good bang" (S01E05). However, the tone and rhetoric around masculinity changes in the course of the first season, bringing, particularly in the second one, the question of what it means to be a "great man."

In particular, *Manhattan*'s main protagonists do not fit the role models of the commonly celebrated men and scientists of the real-life Manhattan Project. The fictional scientists Frank Winter and Charlie Isaacs neither resemble the likewise fictional Reed Akley, the head of the Thin Man-project, who Frank Winter criticizes for being too clean shaven and well-dressed (season 1, episode 1) and only working from 9 to 5 in the midst of a world war (season 1, episode 4), nor the fictional version of the real-life Manhattan Project's scientific leader, J. Robert Oppenheimer, who "keeps the train running with salesmanship and charm" (Col. Emmett Darrow in season 2, episode 4) and brushes the talk of "*great men*" aside, stating: "Great men? Pasteboard masks" (season 2, episode 4). Charlie Isaacs and Frank Winter are both deeply concerned about what being a "great man"

means in life and – even more so – in the face of building a weapon of mass destruction. Right after learning about the gadget he is supposed to help build Isaacs is experiencing extreme stress symptoms, like nose-bleeding, sweating, and the room spinning around (season 1, episodes 1 and 2). Referencing the Jewish story of "The Golem of Prague," he tells Winter about his fear that they might be creating "Frankenstein's monster" that they won't be able to control (season 1, episode 1). The visiting Danish physicist Niels Bohr further heightens his concerns, warning that: "*Good men* invent bigger and more efficient methods for humankind to exterminate itself, hoping the world will lose its hunger for horror. But our species seems to have an insatiable appetite" (season 1, episode 4). His character, though, undergoes a 180 degrees transformation, suggesting as scientific representative to the Target Committee of Washington officials to drop the bomb not on an uninhabited island, but a city in Japan with the argument that: "We have to be monsters today, to stop the monsters of tomorrow" (season 2, episode 9). This though does not happen without Isaacs voicing his frustrations along the way with his own shortcomings as project manager in season two, since his "brain can't requisition B-29 bombers" (season 2, episode 4) and he lacks the diplomatic salesman charm of Oppenheimer. Moreover, after the failed pre-test to the Trinity Test, Isaacs shows himself deeply frustrated about the purpose of his work: "You come here believing that you're here to save lives. And you tell yourself you sacrifice the few to save the many. Pretty soon, [pause] everything's negotiable and you can't remember what you came here for in the first place. It's all turned around" (season 2, episode 8). In the end, Isaacs seems to have come to terms with the fact – as his former group leader, Reed Akley, remarked shortly before taking his life – that "*great men* are not always *good men*" (season 1, episode 12).

Frank Winter, Isaacs' critic, friend, and antagonist over the course of the series, is also an outsider from the beginning and undergoes a 180 degrees transition. In the very first episode, he is plagued by a nightmare of a mushroom cloud that threatens to swallow his wife and daughter, accompanied by The Ink Spots' song "I don't want to set the world on fire" (season 1, episode 1). He often suffers from ringing ears, works long hours, drinks a lot of whiskey and is restlessly pressured by the felt need to end

the war as soon as possible. Flashbacks to his time in the military in WWI (season 1, episode 4) and moments where he zooms out of the family dinner worriedly thinking out loud that "seven million people live in New York," making it "the most densely populated city in America" (season 1, episode 1), are thus paired with him continuously referring to the numbers of dead soldiers and war casualties: "A hundred American kids have been buried since the last time we walked through that gate. By tomorrow morning, there'll be 100 more. And you want me to slow down?" (season 1, episode 1) Winter, the one initiating the Manhattan Project by convincing Einstein to write a letter to the President in 1939 as is later on revealed (season 2, episode 3), becomes one of its harshest critics: even though his mentor and friend Glen Babbit, who arranged the meeting with Einstein in 1939, repeatedly tells Winter that "[i]t doesn't matter if you're a good man" and that "[a]ll that matters is that you are the man to end this war" (season 1, episode 13), Frank Winter starts to actively fight for better worker protection since "68 accidents [occurred] in the tech area since the start of 1945," demands a seat on the Target Committee via his own version of The Franck Report (season 2, episode 6), channels money to his wife's project on the impact of radiation on humans and the planet project (initiated by Fedowitz in season 2, episode 6), and even tries to sabotage the Trinity Test on July 16, 1945 (season 2, episode 10). With a changed mindset on what it takes to save the world, he keeps on trying to do the right thing and be a good man behind the scenes, rather than a great one making big decisions. These two deeply conflicted men do not personify the great, celebrated nuclear scientists working on a gadget to change the world for the better as J. Robert Oppenheimer – often referred to in the spirit of atomic nostalgia as "the father of the atomic bomb," while he was himself very much troubled by the implications of his successful work (see "Speech to the Association of Los Alamos Scientists," 2 Nov. 1945, qtd. in Smith and Weiner 315-25).

This complex, changing rhetoric around masculinity shows – in the words of Lorentzen's description of the Manhattan project quoted above – that "these are not gods. These are mortals. These are men. They have hopes and dreams, needs and desires" (season 2, episode 5); and even more importantly they are scientists. Driven on the one hand by curiosity and a

creative, inventive spirit, doing what is right channeled into the language of masculinity brings up the question of what "great men" that change history actually are made of, what makes their actions "great" and whether striving for the "greater good" – as, for example, with the goal "to save the many" (season 2, episode 8) as Isaacs states, reiterating the military saying (first mentioned in Latin by Col. Alden Cox; season 1, episode 1) – is an ethically justifiable goal after all. While the TV series *Manhattan* creates overall a "nostalgia mode" (Grainge 6) by including historic events and facts of the period as well as incorporating architecture, design, references to pop culture and brands of the time, its main protagonists feel constantly alienated from the people surrounding them on the Hill and at times even from their task and initial motivations.[12] The expression of gendered concerns about atomic technologies by its main, fictional protagonists and their feeling of alienation is what I suggest calling "anti-nostalgic" elements or an "anti-nostalgic mood" in WGN America's period drama. I borrow the conceptual ideas from Paul Grainge, who suggests a "mood/mode distinction" (11) of nostalgia in the medium of television, and from Dan Hassler-Forest. The latter notes in his analysis of Richard Linklater's film *Dazed and Confused* (1993) that the movie "avoid[s] glamorizing or fetishizing the reconstructed past it portrays" by having its characters "[…] repeatedly [expressing] their strong sense of alienation from their own historical moment" (203). Whereas Hassler-Forest refers to it as "post-nostalgia," I prefer to speak of it as "anti-nostalgic" elements or an overall anti-nostalgic mood that shifts the attention from an easy, uncritical enjoyment of the past and, in this case, the beginning of the atomic age and the USA's post-WW II power by having its characters acknowledge the underlying serious moral problem. In the context of the increased celebration of the US's atomic achievements in the form of uncritical "atomic nostalgia" for both powerful bombs and great men since the early-2000s that Lindsay Freeman detects (10), this approach to the atomic heritage of the United States should be understood as doing more than just adding a coat of moral gloss to the Manhattan Project.

Aside from these anti-nostalgic elements, *Manhattan* portrays the Hill as an inclusive parallel world of open-minded scientists. That does not mean that they eschew racism or stereotypes about ethnic minorities;

Isaacs, for example, is accused by his fellow Jewish government interrogator Occam alias Avram Fischer (Richard Schiff) that he sold intelligence to the Russians to save his wife's cousin in Minsk, "'cause family is everything" (season 1, episode 13). Likewise, the main cast is white, but *Manhattan* does include black and female nuclear scientists and gives those that suffer from racism and sexism a voice and a background. The only black scientist, Theodore Sinclair (Corey Allen), is introduced in episode seven of the first season. The audience learns that he had been competing for the Forbes prize with Charlie Isaacs and had helped to build the nuclear plant at site X (Oak Ridge, Tennessee). While he as a nuclear physicist is the expert and invested in the reactor project, he is merely treated as a secretary by the administrative staff, being banned from the reactor room though in the end he is the only one able to keep it from entering nuclear meltdown. As he seems to metaphorically summarize both the reason for the rising reactor temperature and his own situation at the plant: "Sometimes the most crucial elements in a reaction are pretty much invisible. Sometimes they're barely allowed into the building" (season 1, episode 7). Sinclair is witty and does not shy away from grasping a chance for promotion (letter to Frank Winter, season 1, episode 7; season 2, episode 4), nor to address head on the racism he experiences, particular when not among scientists. Arriving at Los Alamos with 1.12 grams of plutonium from site X and being welcomed by Glen Babbit, who asks him whether he had any problems finding his way to PO Box 1663, he frankly replies: "I had trouble finding a taxi in Santa Fe that would pick up a Negro" (season 1, episode 12). Whereas earlier movies like *Fat Man and Little Boy* (1989) commonly center on the famous, white military leader of the Manhattan Project, General Leslie R. Groves (played by Paul Newman) and the "father of the atomic bomb" J. Robert Oppenheimer, *Manhattan* includes real-life inspired non-white characters. George Johnson, Ph.D., one of at least six African-American scientists working on the Manhattan Project, who is mentioned in the 1955 *Ebony* magazine story "Secret City of Sudden Death," could have served as an example.[13] Similar to Louis 'Fritz' Fedowitz (Michael Chernus) and Glen Babbit, who react confused by Sinclair's remark on the problematic nature of living in a segregated country, Sinclair's potential real-life character inspiration, George Johnson,

is quoted in that article as stating: "there is no racism at Los Alamos, the scientists mostly being very progressive people. In Los Alamos, I feel like I'm a real citizen" (qtd. in Landrum 1). The series extends this favorable portrayal of so-called minorities to the mixed Indigenous, Mexican-American community living in the area – even though only in a handful of episodes (season 1, episodes 7 and 9; season 2, episode 7). Particularly interesting and closely tied to the storyline of *Manhattan*'s protagonist Frank Winter are the scenes at the funeral of his housemaid's brother in the episode "The New World" (season 1, episode 7). After the death of the brother of Paloma (Tailinh Agoyo), her family asks Frank to use his security clearance and military contacts to arrange for a burial in their sacred lands. Not only do Frank and Liza Winter as the non-Spanish speaking, white employers come across as ignorant, when they wonder "Did you know her brother was in the Pacific?" (Liza) / "Did you know she had a brother?" (Frank), but less cultured – both unfamiliar with the rites of their close neighbors at the Hill, and with the poetry of Robert Frost in the case of Frank Winter. The poet is cited by the burial ceremony leader, Anciento (David Midthunder), who thanks Winter for his help by quoting Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall" *stating* (towards Frank): "Maybe I just never met the right fence?" (season 1, episode 7). Even though the Indigenous community otherwise only plays a minor role in the series, other characters in *Manhattan* likewise address the issue of the camp area being not rightfully theirs. The ballistic expert and ordnance supervisor, Lazar (Peter Stormare), for example, mentions how the territory ended up in the hands of the military via a rancher's son, who went to college in order to live his life in a city: "Smart men make stupid choices. Cattle rancher stole it from the Indians anyway. […] You think we would be out here trying to save the world on some sacred Indian land?" (season 1, episode 9). This form of inclusivity and reflective historical acknowledgement of racism, segregation and disrespect for Indian land and people, hence adds another layer of anti-nostalgia onto WGN America's TV show. The series' revisionism thereby not only resists an unreflective atomic nostalgia, but works against the very particularly gendered and racialized nostalgia associated with Trumpism and other iterations of reactionary conservatism, prone to celebrate white, male genius and power. It does so by showing the

limits of the expertise of Frank Winter, who is neither able to communicate in Spanish, nor familiar with Robert Frost's poem and therefore not likely to grasp Anciento's comment.

It is not the mentioning or portrayal of inequalities *per se* that makes *Manhattan* such an outstanding example of the historical race for the bomb, but that it gives subaltern characters a voice and screen time to speak up and develop over time. This is not only true for racial or ethnic minorities, but also for female characters. It is true that sexism is prevalent in *Manhattan*, as in many pre-1960s period dramas. This becomes most obvious in scenes like that of Isaacs' tour through his new workspace in Dr. Reed Akley's "Thin Man"-group, when his guide, Tom Lancefiel (Josh Cooke), states on entering an office room filled with desks of women working on type writers: "You're looking at the best equipped lab in the country. Two Van de Graaff accelerators, our own cyclotron, and the finest computers money can buy. Computers, this is the youngest buck who ever won the Forbes Prize. Say hello to Charlie Isaacs." To which all the women respond in a chorus of high pitched, sweet voices: "Hi, Charlie" (season 1, episode 1). It does not help correct the derogative portrayal of these brilliant women doing both typing and the math for the nuclear physicists, that they are shown as being bribed by Frank's implosion team into running their numbers through the night with gifts of otherwise scarce nylon stockings (season 1, episode 1). As with the changing male rhetoric in the course of the first season, the portrayal of women becomes more complex, allowing for the exploration of their working life on the Hill and their voices. Even women working behind the scenes of the military- and scientist-led operation show pride in their jobs. As does the pregnant Gladys (Rebekah Wiggins), when introducing Isaacs' wife Abby to her new job at the telephone switch board: "Truth is, this job is just like Harvard. Getting in is the hardest part" (season 1, episode 2). This remark not only elevates their status as otherwise merely scientists' wives doing administrative tasks, but which highlights the fact that all women have to pass a lie detector personality test before they are entrusted with a job at the Hill; making them an elitist circle. Getting hold of one of these prestigious positions, Abby Isaacs develops over the course of *Manhattan*'s twenty-three episodes from a woman, who considers being the "mother of

a five-year old [being] plenty of job for [her]" (season 1, episode 3), to an alienated wife starting an affair with her neighbor and co-worker Elodie Lancefield (season 1, episodes 7 and 11), who thinks about leaving her husband and getting an abortion (season 2, episode 1), to a happy, Jewish pregnant soon-to-be mother of two, introducing her gynecologist to the Talmud and the ascribed meanings of different shades of red of female blood (season 2, episode 4), to a designated switch-board worker who feeds her husband relevant "intelligence" (not gossip; season 2, episode 4) and supports his career, to a worried mother making sure she gets her son away from the Hill and his monstrous Dad who is preparing the Trinity Test (season 2, episode 9).

Even more so than Abby Isaacs, the character of Liza Winter, who holds a Ph.D. in botany and had to "walk[] away from a tenure track lectureship in the Ivy League" (season 1, episode 4) and is deeply frustrated with not being allowed to undertake or publish papers as a Manhattan Project-member (season 1, episode 5), has her own story as a wife and inhabitant of the military camp in Los Alamos and voice as a woman. As she jokingly states to her husband: "I am not most women" (season 1, episode 1). Or as her similarly outspoken teenage daughter Callie states (Alexia Fast): "You in the kitchen is the definition of abnormal" (season 1, episode 1). Liza Winter, with her job as a botanist seemingly modeled on the real-life Katherine "Kitty" Oppenheimer, regularly clashes with the military staff at the Hill (season 1, episodes 1, 5 and 11), runs for election to the town-hall (season 1, episode 12), suspects deleterious radiation effects on the flora, fauna, and inhabitants on the Hill (season 1, episodes 9 and 10) and later on heads the project on researching the effect of radiation on humans and the planet (season 2, episode 6). She does not shy away from having an educative sex talk with her daughter's boyfriend, letting him know that "[p]remarital sex was not invented in 1944" (season 2, episode 1), addressing her mental health struggles (season 1, episode 12; season 2, episode 1) or stealing equipment from the hospital to do her clandestine research (microscope, season 1, episode 6; Geiger counter, season 1, episode 10). She easily outpaces the medical doctor, Dr. Adelman (Adam Godley), in his limited knowledge on the harmfulness of radioactive material, given that he admits to Frank Winter that he only had a week's training

in radiology (season 1, episode 6), and is able to reassure Abby with both scientific facts and empathy after a late-term miscarriage that it was not caused by radioactive contamination of the camp (season 2, episode 5).

WGN America's *Manhattan*, in light of the otherwise male-centered narrative and memory culture of the Manhattan Project, does not only include complex female characters, the representation of their development and voices, but also highlights female nuclear scientists. Just as the pre-1960s sexism prevails in the series, there are not many women among the scientists; even less so among the atomic research staff. The exception both in the WGN America series as well as the wider world of US audiovisual entertainment (between 2007 and 2017), in which female engineers (2.6%) and physical scientists (6.4%) have been reported as consistently scarce ("Portray Her" 12), is Helen Prins (Katja Herbers), from the Netherlands. Prins holds a Ph.D. in physics and worked at Princeton before joining Winter's implosion group. She is aware that she is higher in rank than many of her male colleagues (season 1, episode 4) and that this makes her exotic at the time: "A girl with a Ph.D. is like a monkey with a harmonica" (season 1, episode 2). She could be modeled on the likewise unmarried, female nuclear physicist with a Ph.D. title, real-life Manhattan Project-member, Jane Roberg, who worked at Los Alamos (Howes and Herzenberg 59). She has the wit and confidence to explain to Fedowitz how to get one of the military women from the cantina to sleep with him and to calling out Isaacs for being "melodramatic," when remaining shocked after the almost nuclear meltdown incident at the reactor at site X (Oak Ridge, Tennessee). The series allows her to voice her frustration about "[a]cademia choos[ing] a black man over a woman every time" as well as her sadness over the sacrifices she had to make as a woman "to do what [she] loves" (season 1, episode 7). Given the war-related once in a life-time chance to work on the Manhattan Project, the audience learns that she was forced to end the relationship with her fiancé, a Princeton Classics professor, and get an abortion: "Classics wouldn't come, so I laid down on a metal table in a duplex in Teaneck" (season 1, episode 7). Her confidence and feminist spirit is echoed in her insisting on "hav[ing] a choice" (season 1, episode 9 and 12), but also her less concerned opportunism to take any chance during the war to follow her scientific vocation. She thus tears up the letter

Sinclair gives her, in which he asks Winter to be allowed to join the project, to stay the only minority representative with a Ph.D., and offers to start the reactor at site X herself, stating to Isaacs who is concerned about the twenty-two unchecked security risks: "What? Somebody's got to sail into history books. It might as well be a woman for once" (season 1, episode 7).

Conclusion

In contrast to the widely celebrated HBO series *Chernobyl*, which uses the 1986 nuclear plant incident to comment on the danger of lies and cover-ups in the post-truth age, *Manhattan* offers alternative perspectives on the historic Manhattan Project and the Trinity Test, thereby unintentionally creating a narrative of reflective atomic nostalgia. At the same time, both TV drama series and the respective time periods they are set in have more in common than just the nuclear theme. While the 1980s are commonly acknowledged as the height of "nuclear fear" induced by the Cold War and the Chernobyl catastrophe, the late-1970s and 1980s, in fact, also saw the upcoming trend of the nostalgic desire for the 1950s – music, TV series, fashion, family life, morals; the latter influenced by the conservative turn in the course of the introduction of neo-liberalism in the United States (see Brown; M. Cooper, Sprengler; Dwyer). Simultaneous with survey data finding that Americans believe the 1950s to having been a happier, safer and better time to live in, voices from the 1980s men's movement to the current US president have been bemoaning the loss of great men and overall America's greatness (see Coontz 33; Jones et al. 27) – ironically so had political figures in the 1950s. In the November issue of the 1958 *Esquire Magazine*, the historian and critic Arthur Schlesinger Jr. had already proclaimed "The Crisis of American Masculinity;" in the same year, he decried furthermore "The Decline of Greatness," calling his era "an age without heroes" that is witnessing "the decline of strong leadership" (23).

Atomic tourism, nostalgia and celebration of US science have foregrounded both a great nuclear, peace-bringing world power nation and its great military men and scientists. The post-WWII "fantasy of the good life" (Berlant 3) and of prosperous life in the suburbs is thereby as much

tied up with the happy TV family of 1950s TV series of the beginning of the medium's triumphant move into US living rooms as well as with the atomic bomb and its suburban life inspiring secret communities of the Manhattan Project. *Manhattan* breaks with atomic nostalgia. Set just before the 1950s during WWII, the scientist protagonists are not only led to believe that they are working against the German Nazi staff led by Heisenberg on the part of the military, as Winter finds out in the second episode of season 2, but they find themselves more than once doubting their project's goal: the building of the first atomic bomb. Ethical concerns about the use of this weapon of mass destruction take center stage in the second season – having its main protagonists Frank Winter and Charlie Isaacs switch sites. Not only does *Manhattan* diverge from the American post-WWII power glorification of the atomic bomb and its Manhattan Project's creators by adding the anti-nostalgic element of serious ethical concerns and doubt in its mainly male protagonists and their gendered rhetoric about "masculinity," but the TV series includes intelligent and critical minority characters and voices into its narrative. This "reflective" form of nostalgia (see Boym xviii) in the series, that Freeman otherwise found to be underrepresented in the 2010 US memory culture, resembles that of the likewise scientist-focused 2005 release of the opera *Doctor Atomic* by John Adams. Whereas *Doctor Atomic* is mostly focused on white, male scientists like Robert J. Oppenheimer and their moral concerns in the last weeks before the Trinity Test, featuring only two women, namely Oppenheimer's wife Kitty and his Tewa Indian housemaid Pasqualita, the WGN American series *Manhattan* more inclusively embraces the voices, life stories and long-term development of white male, female and black scientists. Even though their screen time is beyond that of the series' white, male fictional protagonists and their overall number below real-life historical data, *Manhattan* represents a first step in television history towards a reflective, inclusive atomic nostalgia, that Lindsey Freeman hopes to see develop in the United States; as she puts it, "atomic nostalgia rests in a mostly conservative and celebratory grove [at the moment], [...] it doesn't have to stay there" (11).

Notes

[1] To be exact, the miniseries has been produced by HBO in cooperation with Sky Atlantic and as such is a US-British co-production. Until June 2020, a year after its final episode aired, *Chernobyl*'s ratings on the Internet Movie Data base (IMDb) have though been lowered by 0.3 points to 9.4/10, leaving the HBO miniseries surpassed again by AMC's hit series *Breaking Bad* with a rating of 9.5/10.

[2] For an analysis of the FX TV series *The Strain* with regard to gender and masculinity portrayals see Becker.

[3] The central episode in *Heroes*' first season on the explosion of the nuclear device is titled "How to Stop an Exploding Man" (season 1, episode 23). More than an unintentional reflection on the gendered discourses around the atomic bomb and nuclear weapons-based visions of power, the long-believed atomic weapon turns out to be a powerful, supernatural man.

[4] The spelling of the series title with the "a" in brackets is based on the posters for the second season of the series.

[5] In fact, Wissner shortly names *Manhattan* in her 2018 piece on "TV and the Bomb" as yet another example of the "varying influences from the Cold War," that she lists. Since there is no further explanation as to which themes and aspects she perceives as proof for Cold War influence, the author of this essay will in the following acknowledge that the series has, of course, been influenced by earlier portrayals of the bomb in fictional audiovisual narratives, but emphasize that *Manhattan*'s unique approach to the making of the bomb mixes historic facts with fictional characters and storylines.

[6] The usage of the term "toxic masculinity" is here based on its introduction by the US activist and psychology lecturer, Shepherd Bliss, during the 1980s Mythopoetic Men's Movement. Arguing "for an ecologically inspired masculine ontology," Hultman and Pulé summarize from his writings, Bliss "confronted technology, soldiering, nuclear weaponry and men's addiction to power" (193), by deeming them toxic.

[7] On November 10, 2015, shortly after the publication of Freeman's book on the uranium producing Site X of the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz signed the memorandum for the establishment of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. <http://www.energy.gov/management/office-management/operational-management/history/manhattan-project/manhattan-project-0>.

[8] An "anti-nostalgic mood" can also be found in period drama series like *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007-2015) or *Masters of Sex* (Showtime, 2013-2016), I would argue.

[9] Rabinowitch co-authored the Franck Report, submitted to the US government in June 1945. The group of nuclear scientists who signed the report therein asked the US government to refrain from using the bomb against Japan to end WWII. The report itself is named after the German Nobel Prize-winning physicist, James Franck.

[10] The term "family room" was later on coined by Nelson and Wright (Spigel 39).

[11] For detailed information and interviews with the creatives see <http://www.artofthetitle.com/title/manhattan/>.

[12] I here borrow the term from Film and Television scholar Grainge, who in return borrowed it from Fredric Jameson and added a new meaning to the "nostalgia mode," one that "maintains a sense of nostalgia's relationship with postmodernism, existing as a retro style, but it rejects the assumption of amnesia and historicist crisis common to much postmodern critique" (6). Other than Jameson, who defines the aesthetic mode of nostalgia as "cultural style" of postmodernism, bereft of any meaningful content, in his seminal work *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Grainge advocates that "meaningful narratives of history or cultural memory can be produced through the recycling and/or hybridization of past styles" (6).

[13] The "Black History Month Special Feature, 2012" on BlackPast.org furthermore lists the following black chemists and Ph.D.'s: Dr. Lawrence H. Knox (1906-1966), his older brother, Dr. William J. Knox, Jr. (1904-1995), Dr. Samuel Proctor Massie (1919-2005), Dr. Moddie Daniel Taylor (1912-1976) as well as the African-American mathematician, Dr. J. Ernest Wilkins (1923-2011).

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Forum

Louisa May Alcott's Rhetoric of Love: A Forum on the 13th Meeting of the European Study Group of Nineteenth-Century American Literature

(Coordinator: Daniela Daniele)

Daniela Daniele (University of Udine)

On October 10 and 11, 2019, the European Study Group of Nineteenth-Century American Literature convened at the Centro Studi Americani in Rome for its 13th Seminar. I coordinated the event and the American keynote speaker was Martha Saxton, whose 1977 ground-breaking biography convincingly framed the art and life of Louisa May Alcott within the American Transcendentalist circle, casting light on her submerged thrillers. On this occasion in Rome, she launched the controversial topic of "Louisa May Alcott's literature of love" which I turned into the conference title *Love and Misfits in the Fiction of Louisa May Alcott*.[1] This *RSAJournal* forum provides a synthesis of our debate on the author's modern articulations of love, which boldly questioned marriage and threw light on the celibate condition of many women who embraced it to keep full control of their own careers and the profits deriving from them. In the typically cordial exchange which characterizes the work of this study group, the main focus was on Alcott's vibrant critique of Victorian marriage; her heroines' arduous handling of marital relations and personal ambitions in the face of the tyrannical demands of their aged tutors. The queer and incestuous proclivities of Alcott's protagonists were also detected as a component in their contorted affective bonds with their parents, mates and siblings.

Martha Saxton (University of Amherst and American keynote speaker at the Seminar)

Louisa May Alcott's acknowledged work as well as her pseudonymous stories, written largely in the 1860s, have love at their core. Her famous novels and stories, her plays, and poems treat various currents of love, sometimes free flowing, sometimes dammed up, between siblings, friends, spouses, parents and children, employers and employees, and others. Her pseudonymous stories often look at love's disappointments, its potential for pathology, and its endless, often surprising permutations. She often portrayed love's frequent attendant, jealousy – the lessons it could teach, the damage it could do. In both kinds of work, she also wrote about the loss of love, its role in cultivating patience, cheerful sacrifice, and good character.

Love provides the broadest portal into her work, as its presence or absence, its form of expression or renunciation was crucial in shaping Alcott's understanding of people. She endured a turbulent childhood in which love appeared and disappeared at irregular intervals, usually accompanied by explicit or implicit conditions, which she had to divine and try to meet. Her life's work reflects her effort to make sense out of her early experience of the scarcity and unpredictability of this fugitive emotional nourishment. Alcott's poorly matched, impoverished, and idealistic parents powerfully demonstrated the endless work and sacrifice that sustaining a marriage required of wives. She absorbed her mother's view of love and marriage for women as a lifelong challenge to subdue the self and accept service to others as the highest moral calling. But in her pseudonymous fiction, she displayed the tension she felt between the ideal love her mother struggled to enact and the heavy burdens marriage placed on nineteenth-century women. In these works, her heroines revenge themselves on insufficiently caring or unscrupulous men. Love, for better or worse, as a cause for transcendence or vengeance, is a skeleton key to Alcott's work.

LORRAINE TOSIELLO (M.D. AND AUTHOR OF *ONLY GOSSIP PROSPERS: LOUISA MAY ALCOTT IN NEW YORK*, 2019)

It is undisputed that Alcott created a vision of mother-love which might be considered a passion in itself. In chap. XLII of *Little Women* Part II (1869), Jo March boldly declares: "Mothers are the best lovers in the world, but I don't mind whispering to Marmee that I'd like to try all kinds" (343). Alcott's first published story "The Rival Painters" begins with a young artist leaving his mother's embrace to seek his destiny. The humble artist finds himself in a contest with a rich and talented rival, also charged with creating a painting "the most perfect in grace and beauty" in order to win the hand of their master's daughter. While the rival paints the beautiful woman of their affections, the young artist wins the contest by painting his mother's portrait, "the face that first smiled upon him, the heart that first loved" (22). Not long after her first story, Alcott wrote of a dutiful love for a fallen mother: in "Ruth's Secret" (1856), a young woman risks scorn

when her secretive excursions are found to be visits to her alcoholic mother. The love of a mother can inspire great deeds, too, she writes. In *Hospital Sketches* (1863), Alcott states: "I maintain that the soldier who cries when his mother says 'Good Bye' is the boy who fights best and dies bravest when the time comes…" (7). In her children's novels, mother-love drives many a plot: from *An Old-Fashioned Girl* (1869) to *Eight Cousins* (1875). In *Little Men* (1871) and *Jo's Boys* (1886), Josephine March becomes a magnificent mother in her own right, doling out wisdom and love among her charges. In addition to the selfless and sacrificing traits of her mother, Alcott found in Abigail May Alcott a source of encouragement in her artistic pursuits, received a pen from her on a childhood birthday, and words of inspiration to bolster her confidence in her dreams of becoming a writer.

Daniela Daniele

I would proceed with Lorraine's opening quotation from *Little Women* Part II which adumbrates a very dynamic, unpredictable notion of love: "It's very curious, but the more I try to satisfy myself with all sorts of natural affections, the more I seem to want. I'd no idea hearts could take in so many; mine is so elastic, it never seems full now, and I used to be quite contented with my family. I don't understand it" (343). Louisa's non-conformism was indeed a legacy of her atypical, utopian family, black humorously though affectionately depicted in *Transcendental Wild Oats* (1873). The complicated affective life experimented in Fruitlands, the community founded by her father Bronson and two British pedagogues, severely questioned the exclusive nature of the conjugal bond, prescribing a sexual abstinence which brought Louisa's mother to the verge of divorce. Bronson's idealism, his extravagance and vulnerability, along with his many coed and interracial educational initiatives were socially ostracized, resulting in material difficulties that Louisa May felt obliged to compensate for. The toxic domesticity which finally brought Bronson's utopia to a close echoed the liberal private policies of the Fabian Society and of the Transcendentalist milieu in which Alcott was raised. The ideology of free love which flourished in the context of proto-Marxist utopias was notably embraced by Henry James Sr. who, unlike his more celebrated son, highly

praised *Moods* (1864), the book for adults in which Alcott depicted the family turbulences witnessed in Concord. The private afflictions and conjugal disasters experienced by those radical reformers are reported in *Transcendental Wild Oats*, the chapter from the fictionalized biography that Alcott planned to write of her parents in the mid-1870s but never finished. However, traces of her profound skepticism about marriage are scattered in a number of short stories which revive, in a tragicomic tone, many of the objections expressed by Nathaniel Hawthorne in *The Blithedale Romance* (1852). Alcott's acute study of mismatched couples started as early as July 1857 in the form of a book, tentatively titled "The Cost of an Idea," which she only partially developed in *Little Men* (Wilkins 64-65) and, in her typical mixture of fact and fiction, reappears in the restlessness of her "tomboys" and the related "gender troubles" which remain a lively force in her writing. It can also be argued that the essentially matriarchal structure of her family, aptly reproduced in *Little Women*, ultimately proved empowering and liberating for the four Alcott sisters, whose "four-girl" saga is endlessly perpetuated in popular TV series such as *Sex and the City*, *The L World* and *Girls*. These series reactualize on screen the Bildung of the energetic sisters who, in real life, grew into sturdy suffragists, convinced advocates of divorce, enthusiastic travelers and accomplished writers, never tired of claiming an equality in love which Alcott did not see sufficiently reflected in her personal relations.

JELENA ŠESNIĆ (UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB)

Margaret Fuller was one of the first transcendentalists to offer a sustaining critique of the degraded form of marital relations in the Western world, which she contrasts with contemporary cultural and mythological variants across different cultures. While she deplored the corruption of both the spiritual meaning of marriage and its liberal version that affirms the idea of marital union in which man and woman stand as sovereign individuals, Fuller envisioned the possibility of transformation in the rise of a new woman whose spiritual guidance might elevate both men and women to an enlightened form of union. Fuller employs and anticipates a plethora of

female-centered social and affective bonds and networks, on some of which Alcott profitably drew.

Alcott's novel *Work* (1873) points to a rethinking of the domestic sphere, of productive and affective labor for women, in a constant tension between the ties that foster their individual growth and those that reinforced the sentimentalist agenda of their feminine dependency. The narrative still gropes for viable ways of affirming new modes of connectivity for women in an (intimate) public sphere in which, according to Glenn Hendler (132), they may mobilize their (transcendentally infused) femininity into socially valuable and reforming charity work. Marriage thus continues to figure as an arena of women's growth and experience but is dethroned from its sentimentalist pedestal as the apex of women's existence. Rather, Alcott manages to portray a self-sustaining community of women, pursuing a truly transformative agenda bound by sentimental ties in order to affirm their independence. In that sense, her heroines mature as they take on new responsibilities and provide spiritual leaven to society.

Cécile Roudeau (Paris Diderot University)

If Christie Devon is in many ways a woman in love, she is actually in love with experience itself… it is *work* that enables the protagonist of *Work* to find herself. What saves Christie is, as she thought, and as the text leads us to believe, a man's love: her wedding is one of the shortest in the history of American literature, and the melodramatic hesitation between lovers reads like yet another parodic experiment with literary genres. Neither heterosexual love nor a simple reversal of gender roles and attributes within the domestic plot nor even a more audacious queering of desire that the narration introduces as one of the protagonist's experiments, can give Christie what she aspires to. In the novel her husband is conveniently killed, as befits the times and the genre of the sentimental war narrative, but Christie does not become the formulaic spinster nor the tomboy of later 19th-century New England regionalism. As the novel ends, she takes up another task, and is ready for yet another experience – that of mediator between the ladies and the workers, a task she can succeed in, the text insists, because of her past trials.

Written during Reconstruction, *Work* may be more profitably read, according to Epstein-Corbin, as performing, through her transcendentalism, the transition between antebellum sentimentalism and postbellum pragmatism (222). Trial after trial, the reader follows Christie Devon as she turns from actress to activist, from a girl in search of the love that will allow her to forget about herself into a woman in love with experience itself. By subjecting its protagonist's – and the reader's – self to a series of experiential tests, Louisa May Alcott's *Work* is a story of experience as self-regulation, a story, in other words, impelled by a love of (self-) reform indexed on the constant revision of one's adjustment to the social in the light of experience.

JULIA NITZ (MARTIN LUTHER UNIVERSITY OF HALLE-WITTENBERG)

In her 1873 short story, "Anna's Whim," Louisa May Alcott specifically engages intertextually with questions of conjugal love in conjunction with women's education. At the outset, the main protagonist, the young, rich, and beautiful Anna West, complains about upper class women, who are taught to be shallow and flirtatious (including herself) and about men who treat women as fools.

ASUNCIÓN LÓPEZ-VARELA (COMPLUTENSE UNIVERSITY OF MADRID)

Alcott's life was a continuous round of caring for her family, and in her stories – her "children," as she called them in her *Journals* (163) – her characters suffer a similar fate. This is also the case of "Love and Self-Love" (1860), an early reflection on marriage as a contract based on friendship and mutual understanding, rather than a condition that holds women back in their struggle for freedom and independence. "Psyche's Art" (1858) follows the path of two artists: a male (Paul) and a female (Psyche – a classical allusion and also the family's pet name for Elizabeth Sewall Alcott, Louisa's sister who died in 1858). While Paul achieves great success, Psyche sacrifices her ambitions for the sake of her family, and the author makes it clear that while selflessness makes people better persons as well as better artists, men must be prepared to sacrifice their "self-love" as much as women do.

"Love and Self-Love" begins with the interrogation: "Friendless, when you are gone?" Basil and Effie base their marriage on equality and can only be satisfied when both realize their self-worth and reach an emotional and economic balance, advancing a theme that continued to appear in Alcott's more popular fiction.

Julia Nitz

In "Anna's Whim," the restless protagonist wishes to be treated like a man: her wish is granted by Frank who coaches her in the ways of men, and Anna, in turn, teaches him manners. Put to the test here is the equality of men and women and the aims of an education reminiscent of Princess Ida's "whim" to found the women's college announced in Lord Tennyson's narrative poem *The Princess* (1847). Alcott establishes this inter-textual connection by having one of Anna's admirers read Tennyson to her. Both texts give evidence of the miseducation of women in patriarchal society and experiment with the idea of gender equality. They differ, however, in their final judgment of conjugal love and female education. In Tennyson, men and women are different by nature and the marriage vow between Princess Ida and her suitor is a noble union in which each sex fulfills its ascribed role and thereby creates an earthly paradise. Alcott questions such a notion of ascribed gender roles and has her female protagonist stop reading novels and "sentimental poetry," and shows her diligently reading "Buckle, Mill, and Social Science Reports to educate herself" (*Silver Pitchers* 55). As a consequence, Anna achieves self-reliance, confidence and a sense of undaunted affection, being ready to selflessly give up Frank in order to stand on her own two feet, until they relate to each other on an equal footing, sharing their "work as well as holiday" (59).

Daniela Daniele

In letting Anna and Frank part in order to achieve equality in love, Alcott reenacts Jo's puzzling separation from her best friend Laurie in *Little Women*. After that abrupt move, most readers continued to wonder why such a passionate equalitarian prevented her autobiographical heroine

from happily marrying her most devoted mate. Before returning to that crucial break-up and to Alcott's Victorian lack of passion, we explored the darker sides of Jo's unexpected marriage to a much older schoolmaster who reappears, under various Oedipal guises, in Alcott's anonymous and pseudonymous tales.

ASUNCIÓN LÓPEZ-VARELA

Alcott always sought a balance between sympathy (love for others) and self-respect, mobilizing attributes of the sentimental novel toward her pedagogical ends. In "Love and Self-Love," which is set in Scotland, the sixteen-year-old orphan Effie Home marries a man twice her age, Basil Ventnor, after being rejected by her rich grandfather. As Sarah Elbert clarifies: "Louisa developed attractions for her own 'older men' [...] above all for Thoreau and Emerson. They were safe objects for her adolescent fantasies, and later the father-lovers of her fiction" (76). Although young Effie develops a great affection for Basil, he does not return her feelings and remains attracted to a previous lover, Agnes, now a widow who regularly visits the couple. Basil is self-centered from the beginning, and Effie's high esteem for him only serves to reinforce his ego. In his uncontested power, Basil is totally oblivious to his wife's increasing depression and lack of self-esteem: "I meant no wrong to Effie, but, looking on her as a child, I forgot the higher claim I had given her as a wife, and, walking blindly on my selfish way, I crushed the little flower I should have cherished in my breast" (Alcott, *Love and Self-Love* 304).

The situation has many similarities to Alcott's own family life, particularly with regard to the emotional outbursts and psychological crisis she suffered in 1858, two years before the publication of this story, and after the horrific suicide of Bronson's brother in 1852 (Reisen 141). In a letter discussing her novel *Moods*, in 1865, Louisa explains:

Self-abnegation is a noble thing but I think there is a limit to it; & though in a few rare cases it may work well yet half the misery of the world seems to come from unmated pairs trying to live their lie decorously to the end, & bringing children into the world to inherit the unhappiness & discord out of which they were born. There is discipline enough in the

most perfect marriage & I don't agree to the doctrine of "marry in haste & repent at leisure" which seems to prevail. I [h]onor it too much not to want to see it all it should be & to try to help others to prepare for it that they may find it life's best lesson not its heaviest burden. (*Selected Letters* 108)

Daniela Daniele

This frustrating dilemma haunts the oppressive interiors of many of Alcott's sensational stories, often resulting in a domestic drama of duplicity and deception.

Mariana Net (University of Bucharest)

With Louisa May Alcott, love and acting are often related. Salons and ballrooms are where love is expressed, feigned or dissimulated. In the novellas *Behind a Mask* (1866), *A Modern Mephistopheles* (1877) and *The Marble Woman* (1865) love – a basic constituent of identity – is revealed through acting. Contrary to common expectation, acting does not conceal one's real feelings but brings them to the fore. In *Behind a Mask,* Jean Muir, an upstart former actress works as a governess in a genteel family in Victorian England and manages to make all the men in the family fall for her; although her schemes are eventually exposed, Jean Muir succeeds in marrying the elderly titled uncle. In Chapter V, "How the girl did it," Jean Muir plays a part in a pantomime. The only person to spot the real identity of the woman on the stage is Gerald Coventry, her employer's eldest son, who, through a double *anagnorisis,* also discovers his own love for her. Within the framework of the interpretation, it is not an insignificant detail that, on various occasions, Jean Muir is shown to summon up her courage by resorting to drinking.

A Modern Mephistopheles goes a step further: wine is replaced by hashish. As the title plainly indicates, this novella is a re-writing of the Faustian myth. The sophisticated elderly hedonist Jasper Helwyze (as Mephistopheles) endeavors to corrupt the innocent Gladys (as Gretchen), just as he had corrupted her husband Felix Canaris (as Faust). Gladys avoids all the traps Helwyze had laid for her and hides her confused feelings even from herself. Gladys' suppressed self and troubled sentiments are finally brought

to surface under the action of drugs (which Helwyze had surreptitiously administered to her). Then Gladys loses self-control; she acts and sings her part on the improvised stage "with a shrill, despairing power and passion which startled every listener" (Alcott, *A Modern Mephistopheles* 104). In this way, Gladys reveals her real identity but immediately afterwards she dies in childbirth along with her baby. Acting is always dangerous, as is the revelation of one's real self and even more so the use of drugs.

Drugs – more specifically, opium – are also at work in *A Marble Woman: or The Mysterious Model* (1865), the most complex of the three novellas. Cecil, the heroine, is deeply in love with Basil Yorke, her guardian and then husband, but has to hide her feelings and feign indifference. Yorke believes that she hides indifference behind the mask of the devoted wife, whereas Cecil only pretends to play a part and her simulation proves to be a real ordeal for her. In order to sustain her part, she has to resort to drugs and, in an attempt to give vent to her suppressed feelings, she takes opium. Only then does she dance "like a devotee" (Alcott, *A Marble Woman* 185) and gives a brilliant "performance" ("So well did she act her part"; 184) as a young woman overwhelmed by love. In this way, Cecil finally manages to establish a strong hold over her husband, who falls desperately in love with her. But the revelation of one's real feelings, as well as the discovery of self, as already mentioned, is always dangerous, as is resorting to drugs. In the novella, this combination of (dis)simulation and drugs leads to an overdose of opium which makes Cecil sleep for 24 hours. A whole day "disappears" from her calendar. "Then what became of yesterday?", she asks "with a troubled look" (215).

MICHAELA KECK (CARL VON OSSIETZKY UNIVERSITY OF OLDENBURG)

Cecil's playacting and authentic impersonation of the pretty, loving wife, which results in the obvious frustration of Yorke, draws on the ancient myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. Indeed, love and myth prominently figure in this early sensational novella. In *A Marble Woman*, Alcott adapts the famous love story of Pygmalion and amalgamates it with that of Psyche and Amor by duplicating the figure of Amor in the paternal figures of the sculptor Bazil Yorke and the mysterious Germain Stein, the former

being the legal guardian and the latter the biological father of the heroine. Both represent the legal authority of the *pater familias* over the young Cecil (short for Cecilia Stein), yet each stands for a different aspect of Eros: Yorke embodies a love that seeks to dominate Cecil's artistic creativity and procreativity. Here, Alcott ingeniously blends the Psyche myth with that of the sculptor Pygmalion, who desires to have his own creation, Galatea, come to life. While Germain embodies a love that is empowering and exhilarating to body and mind, in the context of the nineteenth-century American fiction of marital unity, the legal status of Cecil's husband is that of her "master" and owner. It is not until Yorke relinquishes his ownership over Cecil and acknowledges her sexual, intellectual, and artistic agency that Cecil succeeds in her quest. Her trials and tribulations run parallel to Yorke's gradual acknowledgment of her desires in body, mind, and art.

About the two father figures in the tale, Keyser has observed that "Germain mirrors the incestuous nature of Yorke's feelings for his adopted daughter" (37) and that, together, they "epitomize the way in which men simultaneously deny and gratify their sexual feelings and exercise power over those whom they need to treat as equals" (38).

Etti Gordon Ginzburg (Oranim College of Education, Kiryat Tiv'on, Israel)

A Marble Woman conveys a disconcerting image of a femininity that is both childlike and erotic. Cecil's mother is dead, and her biological father is a runaway convict. When Bazil Yorke comes to her rescue, he is conquered by her innocent charm and eventually marries her. But what starts as the sentimental plotline of an innocent damsel in distress later plays on the Victorian eroticization of childhood to chilling, Gothic, effect: "Unconsciously, I loved you long before I knew you," confesses Yorke to Cecil in the closing scene of the novella (233). Bazil's ambivalent (and inherently Victorian) attitude towards children is further emphasized in the story through the metaphor of the marble statue of Psyche that he sculpts in the image of Cecil. The statue freezes Cecil's beauty and plays down her emotional faculties, but simultaneously turns her into an object to be observed and inspected, subjected to Bazil's (male) gaze.

VERENA LASCHINGER, ANNEMARIE MÖNCH, SOPHIA KLEFISCH (UNIVERSITY OF ERFURT)

At first glance, *A Marble Woman* offers a standard marital plot in which the guardian overpowers the girl and confines her to his house and his exclusive companionship. Cecil withers in the process and changes "from a rosy child into a slender, deep-eyed girl. Colorless, like a plant deprived of sunshine" (144). In this respect, the heroine's name is symbolical, because "stein" translates from German as "stone." For the most part Yorke is, like the reader, under the impression that he was the one molding Cecil to his needs just like one of his sculptures. In this respect, *A Marble Woman* anticipates Alcott's novelistic masterpiece *Little Women*, in which the author marries off her fictional alter ego, the tomboyish Jo March, to a much older husband who does not condone her writing forays into the popular penny dreadful, thus smothering her rebellious nature and artistic passion.

However, read within a new materialist, theoretical framework, *A Marble Woman* employs the marriage theme toward a radically empowering understanding of female artistic agency, which reflects Alcott's own activity as a woman writer. Alcott, we claim, makes the heroine submit to the societal demands on the true woman and the marriage doctrine of her time to cunningly bend this most romanticized of traps into an unexpected new form. In fact, in the story's surprise twist, we learn that Cecil refuses to put up with a domineering husband and a passionless marriage and finally makes Yorke change his lifestyle and commit to her as his equal. Together they review their past, reveal to each other the actions that created the unexpected present situation and, in the final chapter, their dialogue foreshadows the course of their relationship in the future. From the delight of "the happy wife" and her husband who is no longer "a miserable man" (237) we can assume that from here on they will regulate their relationship by talking to each other openly and honestly, sharing their interests and negotiating a better married life. Eventually, as adult partners, even their age difference and the possible incestuous fantasy which cast a shadow on their relationship is nullified by the dead body of Cecil's father Germaine, as we learn that he never was, nor will be, Yorke's competitor.

Therefore, the story which starts off as the patriarchal fantasy of a young wife molded by and for her older husband's needs turns out to be a model marriage in which Cecil recasts herself as a happy woman artist.

Daniela Daniele

As we debated Alcott's "marble women," we were surrounded by the statues of the Palazzo Antici Mattei at the Centro Studi Americani, which provided an ideal art frame, in the Roman neighborhood where Louisa settled during her second European trip. Andrea Mariani lectured for us on the Graeco-Roman sculptures evoked in many of Alcott's art tales, constituting an unsurpassed model for the American literary sculptors trained by Bertel Thorvaldsen, whose creations prominently adorn Washington Capitol. On Saturday morning, we visited the art schools and studios attended by Alcott's sister May, mapped out by Daniele Pomilio, along with the other Roman landmarks of the community of sculptresses led by Charlotte Cushman. These women artists rivaled their male colleagues in securing commissions from both the Vatican and the American Congress, and elevated celibacy as a distinctive element of their creative freedom in the Eternal City.

Aušra Paulauskienė (LCC International University, Klaipėda, Lithuania)

In *A Marble Woman* the female protagonist is frequently compared to a nun and the male protagonist also leads a cloistered life. A similar pair of socially isolated or self-isolating characters can be found in *Work*. In Alcott, as well as in Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's "A New England Nun" (1891) and in her novel *Pembroke* (1894), isolation is often tied to a love relationship going wrong. And since both writers were New Englanders and Freeman only one generation ahead of Alcott, during the Seminar I found it significant to analyze the metaphorical ecclesiastic figures, both male and female, in *A Marble Woman* and *Work*.

H.J.E. CHAMPION (UNIVERSITÉ BORDEAUX MONTAIGNE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND)

Life-long resistance to heterosexual marriage did not stop Louisa May Alcott from writing of love, rather, her romantic passions seem to be channeled into her fiction. The author admitted that her own reasons for avoiding the altar were in fact because she had "fallen in love with so many pretty girls and never once the least bit with any man."[2] While her celibacy remains a subject of speculation, it can certainly be claimed that gender confusion and queer sexual feelings are to be found throughout her writing. These feelings are often peculiarly intertwined with sisterly love, as in the case of the delightfully genderqueer Jo March who "burn[s] to lay herself on the shrine of sisterly devotion" (Alcott, *Little Women Part II* 257). This homoerotic – borderline incestuous – yearning is explored further in the unfinished *Diana and Persis*. As criticism of Alcott's work is often framed using biographical details, closer consideration of the intimate relationship between Diana and Percy might allow one to raise questions over the possessive nature of Louisa's sisterly love for May.

Diana and Persis contains clear biographical parallels, the narrative breaking off abruptly when Alcott, grief-stricken at May's early death, stopped writing in 1879. Yet, if Diana and Percy are indeed fictional portraits of Louisa and May, what can the reader make of the tender and affectionate relationship between these two characters who kiss and hold one another, their words vibrating with sensual desire? Not only does Diana (Louisa) find Percy (May) "attractive and lovable," Percy declares her intimate faithfulness to Diana before she leaves for Paris (Alcott, *Diana and Persis* 385).

Similarly, the emotional description of Percy's departure could be read as one of heartbroken lovers, as she "clings" desperately to Diana, their hearts "swelled to overflowing" (393). Finally, how can the reader understand Diana's feelings of betrayal after Percy's marriage as well as her hostile rivalry with Percy's husband? One could ultimately question whether art and the notion of the artistic genius should be understood literally in the text or rather as a metaphor for something deeper, raising questions once again over the ambiguous nature of family bonds and of sisterly and artistic relationship.

Azelina Flint (University of East Anglia)

Compared to May's model of female artistry, the one embodied by Jo March in *Little Women* is a troubling one, for she sacrifices her literary aspirations to support her family by writing popular fiction. She viewed her artistic compromises as inevitable for any woman who attempted to combine art with married life. Many of her narratives contain a number of artist-heroines based on her sister in which the heroine is forced to choose between marriage and art, as if the author could not conceive of an integrated person who can be both a woman and an artist without letting her femininity be somehow diminished by her art. Yet, in her personal life, she was confronted with the alternative figure of her youngest sister, May Alcott Nieriker, whose female self-determination could encompass both professional and marital fulfillment. A married painter, May embodied a living challenge to the image of an artist of Louisa who, in the unfinished *Diana and Persis*, began to reconsider her earlier rejection of marriage for women artists, as well as the compromises forced upon heroines like Jo March. Art might beget marriage, but marriage could not beget art. Louisa May's "Happy Women" (1868) described literature as "a fond and faithful spouse" (285), but May's output seemed to refute her sister's cynicism. Despite May's assurances that her marriage enriched her artistic production, Louisa persisted in her assertion that some sort of renunciation is imperative for ambitious women and struggled to create a married heroine who was fulfilled in her artistic career. In *Diana and Persis*, Louisa entertained the feasibility of May's double vocation during the months leading up to her sister's death. In the novel, the key to Louisa's envisaged romantic union is the potential for artistic collaboration, as Diana's union with Stafford demonstrates.

Daniela Daniele

Collaboration seemed to offer an equal ground on which an alliance of peers could be secured. The "tomboy" is a perfect embodiment of the harmonious coexistence of opposites invoked by Fuller and incarnates a reversibility of sexual roles reflected, in real life, in the emasculation of Louisa's father and in her own extraordinary empowerment in a creative life devoid of love languors.

RALPH J. POOLE (UNIVERSITY OF SALZBURG)

Adolescent masculinities – which roughly coincide with Alcott's diminutive expression of "little men" – constitute an experimental ground of genderplay and masquerades at work in many of her stories. I am especially fascinated with the figure of the "lad" which oddly identifies Sylvia Yule in *Moods* (Alcott, *Moods* 20-21). Quite unconventionally, the same term identifies another female character in the 1864 "Enigmas," a detective story in which another "lad" ultimately turns out to be a woman, in a reversal of sexual roles confirmed by the young master who, in the same tale, "blushes like a shy girl" (Alcott, *Enigmas* 24) and displays a "feminine elegance" (22). There is a distinct homosocial if not homoerotic interest in the way in which the young man gazes on the lad. These moments of genderplay are the way in which the author conveys her genuine critique of patriarchal family life and of unequal marital roles, which ultimately questions and discards traditional gender norms. I would have personally preferred to see Sylvia more adventurous in her gender fluidity and, as Elbert concludes in her introduction to *Moods*, I found it rather disappointing that, as her story unravels, "equality within marriage could be accomplished by self-discipline and good faith" (xxxvi). I was, however, very much and pleasantly surprised by Alcott's short-story "My Mysterious Mademoiselle" (1869) which offers genderplay with much more radical potential. The bachelor-hero George Vane is tricked into believing that he is assisting a pretty young girl to elope by posing as her husband. Blatantly taking advantage of the situation, he eventually must realize that not only was he flirting with his long-lost nephew cross-dressed as a girl, but that he might harbor amorous feelings beyond the strictly heteronormative parameters. I take this story as an admirable attempt by Alcott to experiment with preconceived gender roles and to suggest spaces of erotic possibilities that have not yet been achieved.

DANIELA DANIELE

This playful cross-dressing brings me back to Laurie, who is the character most sincerely involved in the *Little Women*'s private theatricals. And yet, in "Dark Days," the 18th chapter of the novel, Jo rejects him. The episode,

in which Jo claims equality in love relationships, is wittily commented by Marlowe Daly-Galeano in *Little Women 150*, the blog conceived by Anne K. Phillips and Gregory Eiselein to celebrate the quincentennial anniversary of Alcott's masterpiece ((https://lw150.wordpress.com/2018/11/26/xviii-dark-days/)").

Marlowe Daly-Galeano (Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston, and editor of the *Newsletter* of the Louisa May Alcott Society)

This chapter revealed the chemistry between Jo and Laurie, the proof (in those few kisses) that they belong together. And yes, I know you may be rolling *your* eyes now, because you recognize something I didn't: Jo wants the comfort of a friend; she doesn't want to be kissed by Laurie. When Jane Eyre left Rochester because he already had a wife, I knew that she would go back to him. From these novels that shaped my vision of romantic love, I took away the misguided idea that women should say no to the first advance. How they feel is irrelevant: they should always say no. Next, I learned that saying no opens the door (and the expectation or demand) to say yes later on.

I now understand that these are bad lessons.

But the lesson Alcott teaches in "Dark Days" is much better: after "flying at" Laurie and being kissed by him, Jo clarifies that she does not want anything other than friendship. She will maintain this stance throughout the novel, and, later, when Laurie proposes, Jo will reiterate her position. She does not consent. I missed the message the first time I encountered it in *Little Women,* because I was saturated with romantic myths that obscure the value of consent. I now see how clearly Alcott negates the pervasive and pernicious idea that "no means yes." Jo says no to Laurie once, and she says no again, and again. And that's okay. No, actually, it's awesome.

Notes

[1] Our discussion was based on the following materials selected by Martha Saxton: Eve LaPlante's *Marmee & Louisa. The Untold Story of Louisa May Alcott and Her Mother*, 2012, 63-132; Hendrik Hartog, *Men and Wife in America. A History,* 2000, 93-135; Louisa May Alcott, "Anna's Whim" (1873), rpt. in *Silver Pitchers and Independence*, 1876, 47-78; "The Cross on The Church Tower" (1857), rpt. in *On Picket Duty*, 1864, 72-89; "A Marble Woman; or, The Mysterious Model," pseud. A. M. Barnard (1865), rpt. in *Plots and Counterplots*, 1976, 131-88; "Which?", chap. IV of *Work: A Story of Experience* (1873, 1994), 309-34.

[2] Louisa May Alcott's 1883 interview with friend and poet Louise Chandler Moulton, qtd. in Showalter xx.

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Articles

Lee Herrmann

"Pay For My Candy, [Non-White Person], or I'll Kick Your Ass": Trump, *Rocky*, and Representations of White American Identity

The election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States of America and the rhetoric of his administration with regard to national identity has been met with a certain surprise, even dismay, by some scholars and pundits of American culture, as if a mirror, in which one had always seen a reflection of a morally authoritative Henry Fonda, were suddenly to reflect an angrily dyspeptic Donald Duck.[1] Others have projected a variety of comparative representations on President Trump, including, perhaps curiously, the fictional character Rocky Balboa as in the YouTube video with the President's head placed on Rocky's body ("Trump Rocky"). The comparison, or invocation, is not merely created and uploaded by individuals in the abstract world of digital media but is popular enough to be sold as a t-shirt in four varieties by the veteran-run company American As Fuck; it is a representation, therefore, with a certain cash value and a physical identity, an idea made real. People produce and consume this representation, materially promoting a specific image of the President as a brand, a representation that they also "buy" in the sense that they believe it and identify with it. Although the superficial valences of masculine power and victory may seem sufficient to validate the comparison, a deeper reading of the original cinematic texts and their metatextual roots and ramifications reveals how Trump and Rocky create white American identity through historical continuities of cultural and political representation.

This paper insists on a critical reading of United States history and culture as structurally white supremacist, following, among others, philosopher Charles W. Mills and sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*; Mills, "White Supremacy" and

Blackness Visible), and following the latter particularly in his construction of the "new racism" as "color-blind racism," where discursive racialization is no longer explicit but implicit, referential through coded narratives (Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists* 213). Likewise, herein one prefers to avoid the emphasis on "actors' views as individual psychological dispositions," in favor of an analysis of the more broadly shared socio-political discourse of "ideological racism" (2-3). This ideology, white supremacy, which is a fundamental historical feature of what may be called the modern world-system (see Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists* 7, 9; Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System (I)* 88 n68, and *The Modern World-System (III)* 144-46, 145 n86; Rodney, 85, 104), should be thought of as a structured and structuring structure that perpetuates individual dispositions, to apply the vocabulary of Pierre Bourdieu, as Bonilla-Silva himself has in referring to a "white habitus [...] that shapes whites' cognitive, emotional, and aesthetic reading..." (Bourdieu 5; Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists* 146, 164 n15). Kristen Myers, Amanda Lewis, and Charles Gallagher have interpreted collections of individual interview statements to identify shared discursive strategies that express the features of this new racism without racists, and this paper will examine some intertextual commonalities in this discourse of the white American habitus.

The "communicative interaction" that Bonilla-Silva identifies as producing and reproducing ideology produces and reproduces specific discursive continuities and practical activities. The "rearticulation of some practices characteristic of the Jim Crow period" (Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists* 11, 26) that are part of his analysis have come with a discourse comparable to older, more direct expressions of racism, to the point that it has been suggested that Trump's slogan really should be understood as Make American White Again (Boag n. pag.). One such rearticulated practice, the increase in racist paramilitaries' activity under the Trump administration (Chen n. pag.), has come with a public language of white resentment where race and class intertwine in representation and self-representation, reinforcing the commonplace observation that his election was a white backlash to the presidency of Barack Obama – a practice and a discourse historically consistent with the previous political and cultural reactions to black access to political, social, and economic resources that

overlapped with surges of violence in the name of white security following Reconstruction and the Civil Rights Movement.

At the crudest level, this discourse of white habitus revolves around poles of violence and economic power, as expressed by President Trump in his commentary on the mooted border wall between the USA and Mexico, where campaign promises that Mexicans will pay for the wall meet Thanksgiving Day threats that military personnel will summarily execute undocumented migrants (Diamond and Sullivan n. pag.; Qiu n. pag.). In a more official context, in 2018 the Trump administration altered the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services office's mission statement to stress "adjudicating [. . .] benefits" and "protecting Americans" through "securing the Homeland [*sic*]" (Cissna n. pag.), highlighting the same poles of economic resource control and violent exclusion in more anodyne language. This anti-immigrant political line is a result of the changed demographics of immigration, which threatens white political and economic supremacy through the increasing Hispanic-Latino-Chicano population, as Bonilla-Silva argues, most of whom are not identified as white and do not identify themselves as white ("'The New Racism'" 279-281). Despite the lack of explicit racist invective, the congruity between Trump's tweets and the administration's boilerplate redefines a particularly white American identity in political and cultural speech with a specific shift that racializes the new immigrant.

In deleting the phrase celebrating "America's promise as a nation of immigrants" (qtd. in Arthur n. pag.), the new USCIS mission statement turns away from one of the major discourse conventions characteristic of political and cultural orthodoxy, and thus of the racialized social system, for over a half-century. Since Senator John Fitzgerald Kennedy published *A Nation of Immigrants* in 1958, that "new orthodoxy," as Francis Fitzgerald called it, very quickly supplanted the universalist "melting pot" ideology of modern socio-cultural homogenization as presented by postwar sociologists like Talcott Parsons, a new way of thinking helped along by state-functionary academic Daniel Moynihan's formulation of an ethnic "mosaic" in 1963. That definition of American identity was followed by the 1965 government-policy social-scientific study known as the Moynihan Report, "The Negro Family: The Case for National

Action," which claimed that black American families were "a tangle of pathology" (because they were "matriarchal" and "disorganized," among other things). Such ideological guidebooks kicked off what has been called the white-ethnic revival, analyzed by Matthew Frye Jacobson, whereby European-origin ethnicities celebrated their inclusion in the white mainstream of American Cold War cultural and political representation through the exclusion of African Americans. "The immigrant saga," as he points out, "supplied the normative version of the family, against which the 'pathologies' of Moynihan's black family might be highlighted"; the inverse proposition is also true: white ethnics became normed as Americans through the characteristics they projected onto the black American other (Jacobson 2-7; 12; 41; 204).

Culturally, the use of a white-imagined representation of blackness as a foil that defined an inclusive normative whiteness reaches back to antebellum minstrelsy, wherein an urban lower class, most visibly the New York's Irish working class audience, watched and participated in white actors' blackface performances. The grotesques of so-called "Ethiopian" dances and skits played a vital role in that audience's, and later audiences', identity construction as white Americans: T. D. Rice, the originator of the "Jim Crow" character and song, was the most profitable draw to the Bowery Theater in the first part of the nineteenth century. The fundamental communicative interaction of the form can be seen in a nostalgic remembrance of Rice's first blackface performance around 1830, that described the peak of the evening's entertainment, which produced "convulsive merriment" at the onstage appearance of a real black American, stripped of his possessions, begging Rice to return his clothes, which had been taken away by the performer for his costume (Lott 19; Rice 7-10). The performative fiction of Jim Crow, as structuring structure, gave its name to the later juridically codified practice of exclusion and segregation of black Americans in social, economic, and political life. The intertextual iconographic codes and metatextual communicative interactions that reify whiteness through violence and economic control appear more literally in an 1859 one-act minstrel play for bourgeois home performance in which a group of uninvited white ethnics finalize and justify their inclusion in a white Anglo-American social event by uniting and chasing out the

already-present black(face) American servant, with clearly implied violent consequences should they catch him (White) – an immigrant saga played at home, titled "The Hop of Fashion."

A psychologist has identified this minstrel dynamic in racialized discourse in sport cinema, describing it as the "dependence on the black other for the construction of white identity" (Free 27), which brings us to the Italian Stallion. Reading *Rocky* and *Rocky II* as narratives of resurgent white power, Matthew Jacobson uses the films to link the political and cultural discourse conventions that institutionalized the "nation of immigrants" narrative. He further describes how the films' depiction of white grievance encapsulates neoconservative discourse tropes. By extending Jacobson's reading of these films and examining popular responses to them, the discursive features that constitute *Rocky* as a representation of American identity reveal historical constants of white supremacy as a structured and structuring confluence of political and cultural speech. Trumpian anti-immigrant rhetoric conforms to the most fundamental elements of the *Rocky* films' racial triumphalism, with its roots in the nineteenth century, and that helps explain Trump's successful communicative interaction with the electorate in rearticulating a white nativist American identity.

In the first Rocky film, when the African American antagonist Apollo Creed enters the ring to begin the climactic fight scene, his American-flag trunks and George Washington and Uncle Sam costumes, in having a black American metaphorically represent the United States, signify that "the deck has been reshuffled since the 1960s and now the Apollo Creeds of the world hold all the social power" (Jacobson 108). This representation of Negro domination reinforces and historicizes itself in that the clownish black Uncle Sam is in fact a blackface minstrel conceit with a century of cultural representation. The figure is highlighted in Spike Lee's minstrel-show film *Bamboozled*, but first appeared in antebellum blackface minstrelsy as purveyor of the "stump speech" that ridiculed black political inclusion, and can be seen in late-nineteenth-century ephemera like "The Jolly Darkie Target Game," which requires players, like Rocky, to strike repeatedly a black face and mouth. A blackface Uncle Sam appears in an advertisement for prunes in the September 1941 issue of *Life* magazine, two pages after Henry Luce's celebrated "American Century"

article, paying for and framing political speech. Flag motifs and colors in decorative bunting were also ubiquitous in minstrel-show advertising, in the clothes of the blackface stereotypes but especially as the setting surrounding the drawings of the performers or performance (see the *Minstrel Poster Collection*). This discursive continuity codes the space of the film's climax more determinately than does the intratextual justification of the Philadelphia bicentennial gala: Rocky's wife Adrian's red-white-and-blue ensemble is one thing, but Creed's ridiculously oversized, floppy, flag-striped top-hat is quite another. This code also bleeds into early scenes of the sequel, where Adrian wears a red-white-and-blue scarf that marks her as the representation of the national pride that Rocky has "won" back for white America, and this motif repeats visually in the matching elastic on the championship belt that he wins at the end of *Rocky II*.

Yet the same coded space that informs the viewer of *Rocky* that he or she will be watching a classically racialized entertainment offers a dangerous and disturbing antagonist, who fights back. The way the nationalist imagery is subverted by Weathers's blackness and his performance as a cocky fighter reads in this context as anti-American, an insult to the flag, and the way his punches pulp Rocky's face increases the affect of white victimization communicated to the audience. This imagery is a transgressive and often forbidden imagery: in 1868 a point of white grievance had been a real-life stump speech where a Radical candidate had told a group of former slaves that they could now punch back if a white man punched them ("Louisiana Contested Elections" part 2, 92); in 1909 the defeat of white champion Tommy Burns by black challenger Jack Johnson led to the censoring of all future films of the black pugilist (Kendrick 36). Rocky does get the last blow in, however, and Creed is saved by the bell, making the final image of violence one of white domination and vindication if not entirely black defeat or humiliation. The virtuous white working-class immigrant does not technically win the match – indeed, there is a suggestion that he was robbed of victory in an unjust "handout" to his black antagonist – but he has gained back enough self-respect after going the full fifteen rounds so that he might possess his red-white-and-blue woman, conveyed by his climactic bellowing of her name and her scurrying to his side.

The sequel closes the redemptive loop with Rocky's victory and by

returning to the classic structure of narrative regeneration identified by Richard Slotkin in his seminal work, *Regeneration through Violence*. The challenger must "fight the enemy on his own terms and in his own manner, becoming in the process a reflection or double of his dark opponent" (Slotkin 563). The champ is more naturally gifted and technically superior, so the white underdog, at greater personal physical risk and through greater personal tragedy, must learn his ways and beat him through technique: by training harder, with true grit, and by training smarter, with a strategy. In *Rocky I*, *II*, and *III*, in keeping with traditionally racist imagery of the black body going back to Reconstruction, the black athlete is imagined as physically superior by nature, not by dint of practice and hard work, but as gifted, not self-made; in contrast, white athletes are characterized by "fortitude, intelligence, moral character, coachability, and good organization," as argued by a sociology of sports textbook (Coakley, qtd. in Ferber 20). When Balboa finally wins the championship, for example, it is through his strategic shift to his left hand at the end of the fight, brought about through his intelligence and coachability, but also through his fortitude and character, as he forces himself to his feet while Creed falters.

However, the display of these virtues reifies a distinctly ethnic whiteness. He is "a greasy-fast Italian monster," or "a greasy-fast, two-hundred-pound Italian titan," representing "his people" in the ring. In the first film, Rocky was a loner, running alone through the old neighborhood, characterized by trash and burning oil drums; in the second his highlighted ethnicity becomes a public identity, as he is joined by hundreds of children who run behind him, a scene helpfully coded for the viewer by receding flags running down the street behind the foregrounded Rocky and the mass of kids following him. First, he runs through a neighborhood market as in the original film, now free of signifiers of urban decay but marked by fluttering American flags; then, the children on the streets in the background drop what they are doing to run in his wake inside a virtual tunnel of flags, first Old Glory, and then an international array (part of the real landscape of Philadelphia), offering the viewer the clearest possible visual metaphor of the white ethnic as the representative of the nation of immigrants. *Rocky II* reaches its climax with Apollo Creed's bloody-faced collapse, semiotically linking the political orthodoxy of free-white-immigrant American identity

to the violent domination of African Americans; through that violence, this identity is thus confirmed in victory.

The immediate cultural consecration enjoyed by *Rocky* was matched by a Supreme Court decision that equally consecrated the neoconservative political line, ignoring the real history of white supremacist violence and economic exploitation and claiming that reparative government outreach oppressed whites. Norman Podhoretz had begun complaining about Negro domination in 1963 (Jacobson 193), even before the Voting Rights Act was passed, but the Court signaled the change in political line with the Bakke decision in 1976, the same year in which *Rocky* won an Oscar. As the Cornell University Legal Information Institute points out, the decision "began a circuitous route toward disfavoring affirmative action" ("'Affirmative Action'" n. pag.). Allan Bakke had been denied entry to the University of California at Davis Medical School despite minority applicants with similarly low scores having been admitted; the State of California ordered the University to admit Bakke and scrap their special admissions program, which set aside sixteen of one hundred openings for disadvantaged candidates, because it used race as a factor in admissions. The US Supreme Court upheld the decision, although a slim majority insisted that it was the quota system, not "race" per se, that made the admissions policy illegal. Though widely interpreted as a victory for affirmative action, the Court's actual decision only grudgingly admitted that discriminated-against minorities could have their racialized status positively evaluated by public institutions. Four justices insisted that only "color-blind" policies were appropriate, and all agreed that any policies that favored minorities could "adversely affect" whites (Regents of the University of California v. Bakke n. pag.). The Court's decision mirrored one of the major discursive continuities in the liberal and neoconservative movements by characterizing affirmative action as a response to past discrimination, not a counterweight to contemporary structural racism. As Jacobson puts it, from the Supreme Court's point of view, "Davis had unjustly created a class of victims in order to redress a prior injustice that had perhaps never even occurred" (Jacobson 99-101).

This highly politicized case, though not the real content of its adjudication of benefits, became a cultural shorthand for expressions of white

grievance, despite the victory for Bakke and the criminalization of the UC Davis special admissions program, as whites into the twenty-first century affect to believe African Americans are granted special privileges by the state or that "everything is, like, over and done with since like the sixties" (white interviewee, qtd. in Gallagher 153). The legal decision and *Rocky* merged in popular consciousness into a narrative of white victimization (Jacobson 98). The fictional boxer's working-class social position plays a key role in this narrative imaginary, just as the hardworking antebellum stage-persona of "Mose" set off the shiftless blackface stereotypes of Jim Crow and Zip Coon in defining audiences of that era as white (Lott 83-84), and just as post-World War II white-ethnic respondents set off their hard-working assimilationist family history with imagined lazy black welfare cheats (Gallagher 150). "The immigrants believed in hard work… they didn't come here for a handout," as Richard Nixon put it in his 1972 immigration museum dedication speech on Liberty Island, transparently "encoding a racial comparison," in Jacobson's words, that "redefines the legitimate national community itself to exclude the supposed welfare-mongers of the present-day ghetto" (65). Here one see the how ideas of adjudicating benefits codify a racializing discourse.

Thus, pervasive in the first two *Rocky* films is the contrast between the black champion Apollo Creed's athletic and financial success and Rocky Balboa's poverty and social marginalization. Even more granularly, it is a black foreman that lays Rocky off from his slaughterhouse job: these characters "invert the historical white-over-black power dynamics of American society" (Jacobson 101), and one must add contemporary power dynamics as well. Intratextually this world turned upside-down suggests that Creed's success is responsible for Rocky's failure simply through the protagonist/antagonist duality and through how Creed is cynically using Rocky to further his own career. Like Bakke, the virtuous hard-working white would fall victim to an upstart, or uppity, black. Creed's brash arrogance plays against Balboa's respectful self-effacement, character traits that white informants frequently condemn and extoll, respectively, when voicing grievances against black America (Gallagher 156): these onscreen roles directly refer to real-world codes of racialized conduct.

The white-victim conceit is further reinforced metatextually by the

parallel political arguments of neoconservative white-ethnic ideologues against affirmative-action and welfare programs, but it also goes back to Reconstruction, when civil rights for non-whites were characterized as coming at the cost of white progress or as bringing on the end of white civilization itself through "social equality," which meant "Negro domination" ("Louisiana Contested Elections" part 1, 542-46). This causal relationship is also communicated by the broader intertextual representations of Hollywood cinema where wealthy, powerful, and socially-acceptable black men were virtually absent, and where virtuous white ethnics in the 1970s were exploited by unscrupulous black stereotypes, as in Barry Levinson's *Avalon* (Jacobson 110-13). The conceit is replayed in 1990's *Rocky V*, where Rocky's innocent white protege Tommy Gunn is manipulated by an unscrupulous black promoter, George Washington Duke. Tommy is given an identity of marginalized white working-class poverty that contrasts with Duke's slick, corrupt wealth: the film's representative of blackness is "a vampire… living off your blood" who foments conflict between whites who should be "like brothers" (*Rocky V*).

Already by the third *Rocky* movie, only racialized relationships remain: the occasional departures from strictly racist discourse conventions in the protagonist/antagonist relationship disappear, while Carl Weathers's charisma is put to service in order to depict a "magical Negro" whose newly found affability accentuates the brutishness of the black bad-guy Clubber Lang, played by Mr. T. The contrast in the antagonists' names plainly enough demonstrates how racializing representation has been broadened and exaggerated. Lang is barely even a one-dimensional character, exhibiting only aggressive violence in threat and deed. His highly stylized "black" vocal mannerisms, one of which, "I pity the fool," became a 1980s catchphrase, are the aural equivalent to the "de," "ob," and "him am" littering white representations of black speech, which were ubiquitous in minstrel-song transcriptions and other derivative cultural forms, including a wide array of ephemera like postcards and advertisements (see Pilgrim), light fiction (Carleton 9), musicals like *Porgy and Bess* and *Carmen Jones* (Baldwin 38, 616), and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Ashmead Jr. 12; Railton n. pag.).

In the first film, the sexual threat of the uppity black man was abstractly

sublimated as Rocky's need to prove his (white) adequacy before claiming his (white) woman, and in the second Adrian's pregnancy-induced post-natal coma remains more structurally than literally related to the threat of Creed's dominance; in the third film, Clubber Lang crudely and publicly suggests that Adrian requires his (black) sexual prowess to feel real masculine power, a transparent threat both in the film's realist narrative depiction and the intertextual history of American racist discourse conventions. To quote scholar Abby Ferber, white-supremacist hate-group literature displays "a similar naturalization of racial difference [to that] in sports discourse," wherein "depictions of African American athletes may also reinforce the traditional hierarchy by reifying stereotypes of their animal-like nature, emphasizing their sexuality, aggressiveness, and physical power" (19).

When Rocky discovers that his number-one-in-the-world status might not have been due to his personal prowess alone, triggering yet another crisis of masculinity, he accepts Lang's challenge, only then to scorn those attributes of virtuous white athleticism like fortitude and coachability. He gets knocked out by the challenger, who embodies the stereotype of black male aggressive violence, including sexual threat, and whose unrestrained aggression causes the death of Rocky's inspirational Irish/Jewish trainer. The bodyguard-turned-actor Mr. T, who always appears as himself throughout his body of work, affects a mohawk-type hairstyle that he attributes, via *National Geographic*, to Mandinko warriors, and he wears it thus in a gesture of black pride toward African roots ("Don Rickles and Mr. T") congruent both with other black popular, artistic, and intellectual trends and with the political line of the white ethnic revival, in that Mr. T celebrates his African roots as Reagan or Kennedy would their Irish backgrounds; yet the African Mohican reverberates with other regenerative meanings when its role is to threaten and be vanquished.

As the Slotkinian narrative-form demands, the protagonist must go among the savages and learn their ways, so Creed becomes avuncular while he takes Rocky to train at a "black" gym in Los Angeles. In the ring, Balboa must learn to *dance*, practicing his footwork while Paulie holds the indispensable ghetto blaster, a racializing icon. Rocky repeats steps in time with Creed to the tune of the intertextually marketed "Eye of the Tiger" by the white pop/rock group Survivor, which song, through

overdubbing, undermines the formal pretension to realism more than any other element in the film. Fittingly, this formal break occurs when dealing with the material that most vitally expresses the racialized delusions of white discourse, Creed's desire to help the white boxer in the first place, the essence of the magical Negro cinematic archetype (Glenn and Cunningham 138). The function of the role was previously analyzed by James Baldwin, regarding *The Defiant Ones* (1958), and his critique of the archetype perfectly applies to the characterization of Creed in *Rocky III*: "No black man in such a situation would rise to the bait proffered by this dimwitted poor white child, whose only real complaint is that he is a bona-fide mediocrity who failed to make it in the American rat race" (525).

As friend in *Rocky III*, Creed discursively validates the assertion of white authority over the same dangerous and unruly black usurpers that he himself represented as foe in *Rocky* and *Rocky II*, but his transformation into an ally is a white fantasy. It is in this representational nexus that the appropriations of antebellum minstrelsy took place, audience and performer dancing "black" on-stage together (Lott 129) as a means of self-definition as working-class whites, or "mechanics," in the context of Jacksonian democratic inclusion in a distinctly American polity. Racial and class identities were intertwined with nativist nationalism, as can be seen in the riots of 1834 and 1849. In the first of these incidents, an anti-abolitionist mob stormed the Bowery Theater and demanded the firing of the English-born stage manager who had uttered un-American sentiments, but they also called for the deportation of African Americans. This crowd was quieted by the manager's apology, a display of American flags, and the blackface performance of the songs "Yankee Doodle" and "Zip Coon" (132). The representational display of racial power satisfied the crowd's demands for black social exclusion.

In the much larger Astor Place riot fifteen years later, a largely Irish white-ethnic mob attacked two different anti-slavery societies along with the high-society Opera House where the British rival to "Jacksonian hero" and Bowery Theater product Edwin Forrest was performing (66); Forrest has been credited as the first dramatic actor to don blackface and represent an African American onstage (Rice 23). The strongly emphasized working-class markers of this riot, like "Burn the damned den of the Aristocracy!"

(Lott 67), "stood in for deeper anxieties about displacement founded on racial and ethnic nativism," in the words of drama historian Joseph Roach; the violence was a "process of imagining a community by identifying what it must at all costs exclude" (361), hence the most powerful images by which that community defined itself were its white representations of black otherness. As Eric Lott sums up the relationship, "they ultimately assuaged an acute sense of class insecurity by indulging feelings of racial superiority" (64). This interdependence served the political and cultural construction of whiteness in similar ways for Irish working-class audiences of antebellum minstrelsy, for post-Civil Rights Movement white-ethnic political intellectuals, and for current Trumpian rearticulations of white nativism.

The nexus of class and racial grievance that Trump performs for his electoral audience can be understood through this historically consistent alchemy that creates a political identity through whiteness. Researchers Harris Beider and Kusminder Chahal have found that Trump's working-class support is not really working-class as a matter of economic demographics, in that his "typical core supporter" earns significantly more than the national average (50). The declining fortunes of the Rust Belt are about identification, then, more than social class in a Marxian sense, that is, they are about "working-class values" (63). This identification with a "hard-working" image is integral to the white habitus, an image itself frequently defined through opposition to that of a racialized other supposedly looking for a handout, as in Nixon's rhetoric quoted above. This class-values habitus also defined itself through an opposition to a dominant political class, a veritable den of aristocracy, as it were, epitomized in 2016 by Hillary Clinton, characterized as "establishment" and "elitist" (47-48). Interviewed Trump supporters were frequently critical of how elites acted out their status through "political correctness," a public stance that does not utilize a language of racial resentment but instead denigrates such language: "We feel muzzled … We feel there's a chokehold on [the] throat of white people and white working-class people. We can't even say what we feel" (56). Given the recent killing of George Floyd, one recognizes here what Jacobson has described as "a politics of white grievance that pitted itself against unfair *black* privilege […] often, ironically, couched in

a civil rights language poached from blacks themselves" (Jacobson 22) – a dynamic similar to the blackface singing of "Yankee Doodle" to satisfy the needs of white American identity.

Although some interviewees claimed to disapprove of Trump's posturing about Muslims, Mexicans, and Chinese, with no small number characterizing it as offensive, virtually all expressed approval of his "honesty": "They don't like it?! Too bad because this is how we all feel;" "he says what other people were thinking but they're too afraid to publicly speak;" "he's actually saying this stuff that many people across America are thinking" (qtd. in Harris and Chahal 55-56). Given their consistently stated contempt for political correctness, the racial coding of the feelings that these Trump supporters wish to see publicly expressed is clear, as with the steelworker who claims that under Democratic elites "blacks" are represented while "the working class" is not (57): black Americans are a priori excluded from this identity which, as indicated not just by the demographics of Trump's core supporters but also by the president's own wheeler-dealer background, is not about reality – certainly not about any realistically assessed opportunity for the economic recovery many supporters say they hope for (54) – but about performance. His persona successfully enacts, and allows supporters to communicatively engage in, the indulgence of feelings of racial superiority in order to assuage the insecurities of their class-values habitus.

Much as Forrest was for the theater, then, and Trump is on the political stage, Rocky has been recognized in scholarly work and the broader world of cultural consecration as a "folk-hero for white America" ("Rocky"), but not all academics interpret things so directly. Derek Catsam, of the University of Texas of the Permian Basin, for example, disputes Jacobson's interpretation of *Rocky*, proposing that the "racial aspect" may not be "divisive," that "surely choosing a black opponent was not of necessity a racial decision," and that a movie with a white antagonist could still be part of a "cinema of grievance" (n. pag.). The first assertion depends on the biological reality of race, the second begs the question and contains its own refutation, and both ignore that writer Sylvester Stallone based *Rocky* on the Muhammad Ali vs. Chuck Wepner match of 1975, billed as "Give the White Guy a Break" (Raskin n. pag.). The third proposal imagines

that a hypothetical film with a white antagonist might fit a different interpretative framework, which is irrelevant, especially since such a film was in fact made, the 1978 Stallone vehicle *Paradise Alley*, and it flopped; it was precisely the division between white and black, not white-ethnic success-through-hardship, that proved popular, profitable, and deserving of Academic recognition as Best Picture of 1976.

A more perspicacious though less academic commentary on the films has been offered, to popular acclaim, by the black American comedian Eddie Murphy. Here one cites the observation of Charles W. Mills, that the emergence of "critical race theory and critical white studies can thus be seen as a belated catching-up with the insights of black lay thought" (41). Murphy's routine about a white Italian who has just seen *Rocky* was a popular enough bit to have been chosen for inclusion in his second, extremely successful concert performance film of 1987 (which also features, in a different context, caricatures of a bestially stupid Mr. T). It breaks down the meaning of the films to the most fundamental dynamics of racialization as expressed by Trump: violent power and economic exploitation. The central joke of this routine is the exclamation of a white ethnic who has been inspired by Rocky/Stallone to demonstrate the truth of the film by establishing his economic and social power over a random black man at the cinema. Murphy's "Italian" goes to the concessions counter, cuts in line in front of a black customer, orders a few items, and then declares: "The nigger's going to pay for it… You heard what I said, Moolie, pay for my fuckin' candy, or I'll kick your ass!" (*Eddie Murphy: Raw*; see also Murphy's "Italians and Rocky.").

"Oh, you just saw *Rocky*," replies Murphy's black moviegoer: the comedian and his audience collapse the different storylines into one narrative of white entitlement based on the same terms of power presented by the Trump administration's revision of the USCIS mission statement and his border-defense posturing. The performer also presents this racist conflict of white grievance being enhanced through cyclic repetition of the regenerative-violence narrative: "Those are the worst white-people fights too… especially around *Rocky* time" (Murphy n. pag.). The essence of *Rocky* that Murphy presents as the motivating factor for the white-ethnic display

of masculine power is the film's depiction of a violent beating of a black man by a white. As his Italian character describes the film:

> "Sly [Stallone] comes right out, he breaks this big fuckin' nigger's face, he busts it fuckin' wide open, fuckin' *muligna'* lying on the floor fucked up. [Crowd cheers] It's fuckin' great [spoken through applause]! I fuckin' love him, man, *alright Rock-O*! [shouted]… You know what I like about Stallone's movies, it's the realism, you know? 'Cause, you know, that's how you have to fuckin' treat those fuckin' moolies. They think they can push you around. […] That's what I like about Sly, he comes in, and the moolies are beating him, and he fuckin', he don't fuckin' go down, he's not fuckin' going down. He cracks the fuckin' moolie's hole like this [making circle with hands], he falls on the ground, that's what I like – You know something, you can really do that, you can really fuckin' do that. You see that big fuckin' *muligna'* standing over there? You see that big black guy over there?…" (Murphy n. pag.)

Murphy's fixation on the film's violent enactment of white supremacy and the mostly white audience's enthusiastic reception of his parody, if that is the word, are all the more significant because the most recent installment in the franchise had been *Rocky IV*, a broadly jingoistic Cold War melodrama, wherein "Sly" and "the moolies" team up against the Soviet antagonist Ivan Drago, who beats Creed to death in the ring before Rocky goes on to defeat Drago in Russia. The most recent Rocky film, then, had not even featured a black antagonist, although it did feature the imagery of a white man beating a black man to death, yet the pop-culturally-recognized communicative significance of the films, going beyond the details of their plots to a simpler theme of redemptive white-supremacist violence, is identified as racist economic exploitation and physical violence. Through what he calls an "Italian white man," Murphy and his audience find the root of the films' racist effect in contemporary social features of black exclusion that are also specific historical realities of white inclusion, supporting Jacobson's interpretation. The performance artist and the academic analyst both understand racism not as a personal disposition but rather as a structural function. The various subtleties of white resentment at black civic equality collectively expressed as "they think they can push you around" lead directly to the violent assertion of a

specifically economic dominance empowered by the "realistic" depiction of black men being cracked, busted, and broken. The supposedly comic sketch ends with the white-ethnic in an ambulance – Murphy represents his black character as more naturally powerful – but the final punchline is muted and restrained compared to the pay-for-my-candy-or-I'll-kick-your-ass climax of the set-up, which is repeated three times.

These deeply rooted meanings are why the film franchise serves as an evolving distillation of the political line from the cold warriors Kennedy and Moynihan, the affirmation that white ethnics have the American identity of "just plain old American[s]" (white interviewee, qtd. in Gallagher 152), buttressed by the rhetorical exclusion of black Americans from the civic polity through the ideological pseudo-sociology that became the bedrock of neoconservative Reaganism. When Ronald Reagan went "back" to his "ancestral home" in Ireland in 1984, to honor his white-ethnic roots like J.F.K. before him, the Irish band at the central ceremony chose to play, among other selections, the theme from *Rocky*: the martial fanfares of an Italian-American boxer's training montages were the music considered appropriate to a message of Irish-American trans-Atlantic ethno-political unity. That theme also functions in the post-colonial context of a re-assertion of American power over non-whites: years later, one American soldier in Iraq contacted the composer of the *Rocky* films, Bill Conti, who reported pride in reading the soldier's account of how he would watch the series' training montages to hype himself up for combat.

Film scholar Peter Biskind has noted the correspondence between the ideology of the *Rocky* films and neoconservatism. He allows that it may be an exaggeration to claim that Rocky paved the way for Reagan but points out that the films' politics fit snugly with that movement's ideology, and further opines that their popularity addressed post-colonial malaise in the wake of the defeat in Vietnam (Biskind n. pag.). This general and vague conjunction is thoroughly supported by Stallone's metatextual representative quality as Rambo, unleashed in a cinematic Vietnam the year before the release of *Rocky IV*, by Stallone's frequent visits to the Reagan White House, and by the latter film's effect on Reagan himself; before reading a message from Camp David in 1986, President Reagan conversationally praised the film to the media technicians present,

particularly the realism: it was "so real." The German liberal magazine *Der Spiegel* characterized it in contrast as "Polit-Porno," a reading justified by the objectification of the actors' muscular physiques, which musculature Reagan also noted in his off-the-cuff remarks at his military residence, and by the film's promotional tagline of "Get ready for the next world war!" ("Ronald Reagan Talks About Rocky IV"; see also *Rocky: L'atomica di Reagan*). If under Carter the white-ethnic boxer reclaims American identity from Negro domination, under Reagan Rocky vanquishes the animalistic black Americans, then he wins the Cold War. Internationally identified in popular culture as the personification of the "American Dream,"[2] the character speaks as a synecdoche not only to the historical insecurities of threatened white supremacy from Reconstruction to the post-World War II white-ethnic resurgence, but also for the First World in both the Cold War and post-colonial senses of the phrase.

Reagan also used the fictional boxer as a symbol for American economic recovery in a press statement: "Like the fighter Rocky Balboa, America is getting stronger now" ("Rocky 4 Reagan"). One notes how this allusion, as a color-blind invocation of a highly racialized narrative, references a performance of the violent imposition of power over non-whites in the context of a would-be real economic growth: a politics governing the adjudication of economic benefits sells itself through the cultural affect of racialized regeneration through violence without explicitly mentioning race. The films also address the increasing financial marginalization of working-class Americans under de-industrialization and Reaganomics, for example when, confessing his fear of Clubber Lang in *Rocky III*, Rocky tells Adrian, "I'm afraid to lose what I got." The conflation of Trump and Rocky as an image that would make America great again visually restates Reagan's economic simile in the current context of would-be socio-economic recovery through xenophobic exclusion. In Trumpian terms, the bad hombre is coming to take away from whites the success they have achieved, the American Dream they think they deserve.

The inclusive immigrant narrative of white-ethnic bootstrappery has ignored the reality that such groups, whatever racist affect or economic hardships they may have suffered, were always juridically and politically white: as Jacobson points out, they were classified by US naturalization law

as "free white persons" and benefited from the anti-black "discriminatory practices in housing, hiring, and unionization" that were not applied to them (22, 64). They were never barred from voting. In housing, just to make two specific examples, only African Americans were explicitly banned in the deed covenant restrictions of the first half of the twentieth century that kept Baltimore's new neighborhoods white (Power 6), while Thomas Guglielmo reports finding no instance of Italians being banned in the similar white-only restrictive covenants controlling home ownership in Chicago, nor were their homes firebombed like those of black Americans (59). Racialized violence and economic exploitation could impact white-ethnics, as with Italians in Louisiana who suffered both lynching and peonage arrangements in the second half of the eighteenth century, but these events remained individually exceptional as opposed to institutionally codified (see Smith; Deaglio; Bauerlein).

During the 1868 election violence in that state, the Spanish and Sicilian populations of New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish were enthusiastic participants, literally identified as "white," in the Democratic Party clubs who murdered hundreds of black Americans in the name of so-called Home Rule (one might say Homeland security) – significantly, it was the white ethnics' strong work ethic and honesty that was singled out for praise – although this identification was qualified, as "white, that is, Spanish," ("Louisiana Contested Elections" part 1, 103, 247; part 2, 75, 84, 93, 260, 264). Italians and other white-ethnic immigrants may have been represented as insufficiently Anglo-Saxon for everyone's comfort – "greasy," as Rocky's coach would have it – but in 1936, Joe DiMaggio could play in the all-white professional baseball leagues, unlike African Americans, and he could later marry a white woman, Marilyn Monroe no less, without being lynched in effigy, provoking anti-miscegenation legislation, or representing non-white domination, unlike black championship boxer Jack Johnson. As Guglielmo sums it up, "European immigrant groups… faced differing degrees of racial discrimination and prejudice," but they "were still white on arrival" (56, 59).

The rhetoric of Trump and his supporters reflects the very different condition of the majority of present-day immigrants to the United States. The strident denials of racism are frequently undermined by the

content of the language itself (Boag n. pag.; Harris and Chahal 58), but even more strongly contradicted by the historical continuities with the discursive conventions in the communicative interactions of cultural representation through which white Americans have defined themselves as such. Yet interpreting the election of President Trump merely as a backlash to the election of President Obama does not satisfyingly explain why immigration should become the bête noire of dominant political discourse, nor why Rocky as symbol can serve the "'white' David who slew the 'politically correct' Goliath" (Harris and Chahal 57). Might not the historical continuities discussed above equally suggest that present-day immigrants could also be politically constituted and culturally represented as, more or less, white on arrival? The answer may be that the socio-political reaction generated by Barack Obama's transgression of a racialized barrier led to a specific shift away from the nation-of-immigrants narrative in political orthodoxy precisely because his blackness could be represented in the terms of the white-ethnic revival. Obama conforms to that immigrant narrative: had his father been, say, an Irish, Greek, or Italian diplomat, he would be just another Kennedy, Dukakis, or LaGuardia. Following the restructuring of race along the tripartite lines theorized by Bonilla-Silva ("From Bi-racial to Tri-racial", 224-30), in 2008 and 2012 whites voted for a "multiracial" immigrant of the middle category, not a "black" of the lowest one. Thus Barack Obama's presence at the summit of American political power represents the danger of the immigrant-inclusive white-ethnic narrative to American white supremacy. That structured and structuring structure reacts by producing a new discourse of exclusion to define American identity as white, resembling its forefathers but addressing the present. That is why the clownish politician's stated policies of adjudicating benefits and protecting America are identical to the comedic hyperbole of the professional clown: pay for our border wall, Mexicans, or we'll kick your ass. Once again in American history, it's Rocky Time.

Notes

[1] "Life for him is full of delusions, caused by his ethical error, his incapacity for moral judgment, and his deviation from paternal standards [...] Donald is a dual figure here because he retains the obligations of adulthood on the one hand, while behaving like a child on the other" (Dorfman and Mattelart 37).

[2] "They come [to the Rocky steps and statue at the Philadelphia Museum of Art] to pay homage to one of the proudest ambassadors of the American Dream" ["vengono per rendere omaggio a uno dei più fieri ambasciatori del Sogno americano"] (*Rocky: L'atomica di Reagan*). Director Dimitri Kourtchine also claims that the character personifies the American Dream.

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Ludovico Isoldo

"Bartleby, the Scrivener": An *excusatio non petita* in the "Court of Conscience"

Consciousness of an internal court *in man*
(before which his thoughts accuse or excuse one another) is conscience.
(Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*)

Adler and Taylor came into my room…
We had an extraordinary time & did not break up till after two in the morning…
We talked metaphysics continually, & Hegel, Schlegel, Kant, &c
were discussed under the influence of whiskey.
(Herman Melville, *Journal, 1849-1850*)

From the very first pages of the lawyer's narrative in Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1853), his setting out the facts, one cannot fail to sense the presence of a sort of *excusatio non petita.* It is as if he were seeking, *a priori*, to justify his behavior toward his former employee. The attorney, who by the nature of his office had never pleaded a case, finds himself in the paradoxical position of taking on his own defense, as Thomas Dilworth has noted (50), and he does so by appealing, to use Kant's expression, to "the court of conscience" (*The Metaphysics of Morals* 27). However, in doing so, with his irrepressible need to rehash his past without ever being able to come to terms with it, he gives the reader the feeling that he is seeking refuge, self-redemption, even though he never actually manages to find some peace of mind. In other words, it is as if he would like to purify himself, lighten his sense of guilt, blunting the pricks of his restless conscience.[1] His testimony arises out of an inner unease and, together with an understandable need to defend himself, a sincere spiritual suffering. It is as if the attorney, strangely enough, felt himself to be

"under investigation," increasingly convinced that an inscrutable design of Providence had assigned the scrivener to test his moral integrity, which he in his advanced age cherishes and, with some difficulty, is determined to defend tenaciously. Following this lead, the present essay seeks to read "Bartleby"in the light of Kantian ethics and its categories, which Melville was familiar with,[2] convinced as we are that the tale is built around questions of moral judgment and on the fulfillment of moral obligations. Basically the ethical dimension of the tale consists in a conflict between "*jus* and *lex*," i.e., the juridical norm and moral law, which in fact is a salient part of Kantian ethics.[3] Appealing to "the court of conscience," with his "defensive memorial," his meticulously prepared self-justification, the attorney, with doubtful legitimacy, sets himself before the reader as an interested ethical interpreter of his brief, troubling encounter with Bartleby.[4] Consequently, he of course reports his experience from his own point of view, with many highly self-referential meta-narrative reflections,[5] aimed at strengthening the trustworthiness of his testimony, but above all at signaling his concern to present himself to his reader with a high ethical profile. This aim is reinforced rather than gainsaid by his occasional pathetic, opportunistic self-criticisms, suspended between *ethos* and *pathos*.

This subtle, persuasive, and at times rhetorical strategy is propped up with consensus-seeking sophisms, and supported by a *captatio benevolentiae* and hence by a never explicitly formulated request by the author for the reader's solidarity. In other words, he asks the reader to empathize with his discomfort[6] and his sense of frustration at having to deal with his scrivener's disconcerting emotional indifference, his robot-like otherness.[7] The lawyer also likes to present himself as a man obsessed by the fear of making a mistake, who interrogates his conscience ceaselessly, one who, before taking any action towards his eccentric employee, scrupulously weighs the emotional impact it might have upon him, as well as its compatibility with his own religious principles and, finally, the ethical legitimacy of his behavior, never fully convinced that his course of action is right. This is why every time he screws up his resolve to free himself of the scrivener, he never fails to stress the fact that he has undergone a crisis of conscience, a painful moral conflict. This is often set forth with a quotation from the Gospels as a further support, if need be, to his rhetoric.

The lawyer's chief concern, although apparently he never unlinks his own destiny from that of his employee, is to convince the reader that he is inspired both by Christian ethics, which requires him to shoulder moral responsibility towards his employee, and by ethics deriving from his juridical duty. But if in Christian ethics free will has a determining role due to the importance of the *libera voluntas* of the believer, the ethics of juridical duty imposes an objective and categorical "external constraint" (Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* 148), the obligation to abide by the inexorability of the *dura lex,* to the observance of which the lawyer summons Bartleby and, in a self-serving fashion, himself as well. Admittedly the lawyer's behavior is not consistent with what he himself considers to be a dutiful assumption of responsibility.

One can note that the lawyer's rhetoric often rests clearly on a sort of juridical logic; in other words, he appeals to law or what he emphatically refers to as common understanding and universally accepted behavior. On several occasions he feels justified by morality and law to demand that the scrivener do his job. From the lawyer's standpoint, in a relationship of subordination, disobedience is unimaginable. In other words, his reasoning is substantially this: *do ut facies.* Thus, from his point of view, to demand obedience in this context is tantamount to claiming a natural and legal right. This is why he is so grievously stupefied and mortified the first time the scrivener responds to an order with his polite but unfathomable refusal. The lawyer's disorientation is due above all to the fact that his employee is unwilling to adhere to a reality that the lawyer holds to be incontrovertible. On the other hand, the lawyer has no understanding of the fact that his demand that the scrivener conform, almost always uttered in an admonitory tone, could be taken by his dependant as a form of coercion, and that Bartleby's mental horizon ranges far beyond those limits of common sense to which the lawyer continually makes his appeal. On the other hand, on several occasions he expresses his conviction that he will be able to establish a normal dialectical relationship with the scrivener, aimed however only at understanding and above all influencing his behavior. It is for this reason that he is so patient in waiting for his employee to yield sooner or later and to accommodate himself to the *pactum subiectionis*, given that the lawyer cannot give up what he considers a universally shared

rationality that legitimates hierarchies, roles, duties, and above all the sacredness of property rights. One recalls that Bartleby, in the last analysis, can get away with refusing to check copy, although it is a normal practice that is part of his official duties, benefiting from his employer's tolerance, but when the latter "invites" him to vacate his premises, and the scrivener responds with his usual mantra, the lawyer answers back for the first time in an absolutely peremptory tone: "You *must*" (Melville, "Bartleby" 85). In this instance the lawyer is obviously acting within a legal framework; the scrivener is being required to conform to a categorical imperative, a duty he must not shirk. But the employee remains completely impervious to his employer's logic, perhaps not even sharing his postulates.[8] The tale, moreover, hangs on this juridical conflict between those who, like the lawyer, claim categorically the legitimacy of dependence in labor relations, and those, like Bartleby who do not acknowledge that legitimacy, but instead lay claim to a discretionary "principle" of "preference" which, in the case in point, is not contemplated by the law. Thus the scrivener refuses, or rather "prefers" not to conform to the logic of his patient but increasingly dismayed interlocutor.

The lawyer, from his point of view, is convinced that his dependant, in so doing, places himself outside the social covenant. With his refusal, it is as if the scrivener were assaulting the fabric of society, bringing it back to a "state of nature," whereas the lawyer supports the "civil state." It may be that the lawful reasons that legitimize and protect private property which the lawyer cites are not shared by the scrivener, who sets himself outside the law; he is *contra legem* in that he has a *nomos* of his own that sets him at odds with the *nomos* of his interlocutor, the lawyer, who, like Creon in *Antigone,* in any case legitimately – but also self-servingly – appeals to the "rule of law," a concept going back to Aristotle (*Politics* 1287a).[9] But, as Kant prescribes, in order for an action to attain full justification, it must "contain morality and not merely legality" (*Critique of Practical Reason* 126). This principle, which we come back to repeatedly, and which the lawyer does not in the least conform to, is valid for both ethical and legal duties – "ethical duties, duties of right" (Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* 156). If the lawyer's actions are read in the light of Kantian ethics, one can note that at certain moments his behavior "might chance to be such as the

law prescribes, yet as it does not proceed from duty, the intention [...] is not moral" (Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* 87).[10]

The lawyer, ever more firmly convinced that his own conduct is legitimized by legal norms and apodictic ethics, feels therefore that Bartleby's stubborn refusal to obey orders could be due to some kind of mental disorder, a feeling that has often moved critics to subject Bartleby to a neuro-psychiatric examination. The request the lawyer makes to his employee consists explicitly in an ordinary "linguistic act" that falls within universally accepted social conventions. Indeed, the order, although almost always given in a mild tone, contains an "act" that linguists call "directive" or "imperative"; it is a legitimate act on the lawyer's part – and not only because its legitimacy is universally acknowledged – because it is performed in a suitable context and justified by what he considers to be a normal hierarchical relationship. Hence arises his bewilderment and the conviction that the scrivener's behavior can only be explained, and in a sense justified, by some sort of mental disorder. But Bartleby is by no means "a demented man" (Melville, "Bartleby" 84) and certainly not a "ghost" (91). He shows himself capable of discernment, and is quite attuned to reality. The lawyer seeks to reconcile Bartleby to his present circumstances, prisoner in the Tombs: "It is not so sad a place as one might think. Look, there is the sky, and here is the grass" –"I know where I am" (96), the scrivener retorts, reacting against the lawyer's hypocritical attempt to play down the grimness of his incarceration. So Bartleby can hardly be seen as alienated and emotionless, abiding in a perennial condition of *apònos* and ataraxy. In any case, he is not our "other." Unlike what his employer thinks of him, he is no "ghost"; his "humanity" is our own. In the rare moments when he does not shield himself with his disorienting phrase, the scrivener, with no less dignity than any other tragic hero, shows that he is fully aware of the devastating force of his refusal. Like Antigone, he knows that his transgression – which is not just his refusal to write but above all his disinclination, after repeated injunctions, to dislodge from premises he has illegally occupied – will have grave consequences.

According to Deleuze, who is paraphrasing Aristotle, the lawyer allows the cold reasons of legality to prevail. In so doing, he becomes the immovable guardian of the law, "gardien des lois divines et humaines": he cannot spare

his dependent, "l'innocent, l'irresponsable"; instead he sacrifices him "au nom de la loi" (189). Contrary to what one might think, Deleuze is not pronouncing a moral condemnation of the lawyer here, but simply taking note of the fact that he is appealing to what Kant defines as "external laws" (*The Metaphysics of Morals* 17), i.e. civil law,[11] laying claim to what is juridically his undeniable right. Besides, finding himself unable to force his employee to obey him *de facto,* the lawyer seeks to do so *de jure*; after all, who could deny the justness of his claim? In the relationship between the lawyer and his dependant an "ethics of reciprocity" ought to prevail; the duty of one side should correspond to the right of the other, and vice versa. Strangely, however, if the reader is drawn to read the lawyer's behavior from an ethical standpoint, making a moral judgment, it is precisely because the narrator himself, or rather Melville himself, invites him to do so.[12] The man of law wants to show that he has always been faithful to both religious and legal principles. Hence the obsessive need, albeit never openly stated, to prove that he had acted according to ethical as well as theological and cardinal virtues: Prudence, "my first grand point,"[13] (66) Faith, Hope, Temperance, Liberality, Justice and in the end the greatest of the three theological virtues, Charity, the one Augustine defines as the *ordo amoris.* Still, as we shall see, he ignores the teaching that Prudence "only advises; the love of morality commands" (*Critique of Practical Reason* 38). One thing is clear: a virtue he could never lay claim to is Fortitude, one of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, the lack of which marks his main ethical shortcoming.[14] In any case, the lawyer spontaneously lays himself open to judgment, to an examination of conscience, presenting himself before his "inner judge," the *forum poli* (Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* 161, 27). Perhaps the narrator's "inner judge" will ultimately exonerate him, but this is not enough for him; he seeks exoneration from his reader as well, who is free to concede it or not, according to his ethical sensitivity.

The "trial" the lawyer subjects himself to, and in which he hopes his moral fiber will not be judged wanting, does not call for a jury, the hearing of witnesses, or a true examination and debate; indeed, it takes place without the presence of Bartleby. The lawyer's detailed self-defense is not followed by any deuterology; in other words, there can be no presentation of the case by the other party: Bartleby has no lawyer to plead

his case. Paradoxically, the lawyer takes on Bartleby's defense at times, but at other times acts as his prosecutor.[15] In his former role, he vehemently accuses the scrivener, forgetting the Christian resolutions his conscience had moved him to make. In his second role, with a patently hypocritical admonishment from within, a severe remonstration from his conscience, he defends him, going so far as to assert that the accusations that would lead to a condemnation of Bartleby's behavior would be inconsistent, "too absurd" (Melville, "Bartleby" 91).

It is to be noted that paradoxically, in his pseudo-defence of the scrivener, the lawyer cites ethical and legal arguments that might persuade almost anyone not to file a charge. In any case, as usual, in the narrator's view Bartleby is a figure suspended between two opposite moral poles. Now he is a defenseless, innocent creature to be pitied; now instead he is a homeless wastrel with no visible means of support who could be easily gotten rid of. But when the lawyer is peremptorily required to take responsibility, i.e., when he is summoned by a colleague in his profession to fulfill his legal duty, "duty of right" ("you are responsible for the man you left there"; 92), he forgets all his good resolutions and religious principles and quickly denies any connection with the scrivener.[16] Now, more than ever, the narrator is concerned only to safeguard his moral status, stressing that he had acted in compliance with the ethics of Christianity – he had taken care of Bartleby – and the ethics of right, having collaborated with his lawyer colleague to safeguard property rights. In sum, he is at peace with his conscience: "I now strove to be entirely care-free and quiescent; and my conscience justified me" (94-95). Bartleby's incarceration does indeed prove to be the final solution, although the narrator awkwardly dissociates himself from it, even though he ends up by tacitly accepting that this measure, however severe, "seemed the only plan" (95).

Persistently defending his moral status, the lawyer would also like to demonstrate to the reader that he has always accepted the moral and juridical responsibilities that come with his role, which is the *argumentum crucis* of his rhetoric. It is rather Bartleby, according to the lawyer, who has fallen short of the ethics of duty because of his insubordination and ingratitude, where the accusation of ingratitude is tantamount to a moral condemnation. This is why the lawyer does not put only himself on trial,

but his employee as well; he does so by making use of a contradictory, self-serving rhetorical strategy. In effect, as is inevitable when one is tried in the "court of conscience," "he finds that the advocate who speaks in his favour can by no means silence the accuser within" (Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* 104). By the same token, in accusing the scrivener he occasionally gives him the benefit of attenuating circumstances. As always, the lawyer dearly wants to persuade the reader that his spirit is in conflict, torn between compassion and firmness. Perhaps it is this contradiction that causes a schizophrenic switching back and forth between his opposed feelings towards Bartleby. Indeed his repeated accusations and threats of dismissal are usually followed by a hypocritical rhetoric of compensation, a sort of repentance, a false compassion that inevitably implies an unwitting negation of Christian ethics.[17] And this is perhaps the reason why the whole second part of the tale is marked by this recurrent clash of sentiments, apparently heart-rending, which, as in a medieval morality play, brings out the narrator's "vices" and "virtues", ultimately allowing his true moral identity to emerge, in spite of the hypocritical strategy of contrition he adopts that paradoxically justifies his repeated betrayals of Christian ethics.

In this regard, one may note what an egregiously utilitarian use the narrator makes of the Augustinian "ethics of Charity" the quintessence of theological virtue, which clearly forms his attitudes throughout the course of events – and also how paroxysmal the lawyer's natural instinct for utilitarianism is: his benevolence toward the scrivener is not exactly finalized to the remission of sins, but is seen as an advantageous ethical investment, expressed in a figuratively cynical language that clearly brings out how the unfortunate Bartleby is being used. Taking responsibility for the scrivener might well turn out to be "a sweet morsel for my conscience" (Melville, "Bartleby" 76), and therefore "a valuable acquisition" (78).

To so blatantly turn Bartleby into an instrument for his own ends, the lawyer clearly trespasses the sacrality of a fundamental, Kantian, moral law which is universally acknowledged: "man [...] exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will [...]. So act as to treat humanity [...] in every case as an end withal, never as a means only" (Kant, *The Metaphysical Elements of Ethics* 60).[18] As we have already seen and will see again below, one senses how the ethics of Christianity are

being turned into an instrument for attaining the lawyer's own ends. "Mere self-interest, then, if no better motive can be enlisted, should [. . .] prompt all beings to charity and philanthropy" (89).

From this state of mind come the many promises and resolutions in favor of Bartleby that the lawyer makes to assuage his conscience. The lawyer cannot help but know that these promises, although prompted only by his conscience, and uttered only to himself, are still morally binding, "a law of duty, of moral constraint" (Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* 87). Instead, he rather basely shuffles out of these obligations, incompatible with the dignity of his role and such as to expose him to the criticism of his colleagues.

Given these considerations, it would seem almost rhetorical to ask whether the lawyer acts in a moral fashion or not. With his paltry excuse he prefers, or it might be more accurate to say that he finds it to his advantage, to assume what might be called a heteronomous position, one intellectually dependent on others, thus bringing out his inability to live up autonomously not only to his moral responsibilities but to his civil responsibilities as well. Paradoxically, though, with this flawed strategy the narrator would like to defend his moral high ground and unhesitatingly challenge that of his employee.

This is not to say that his remorse and anguish over Bartleby's cruel incarceration are not heartfelt. Indeed it is his remorse about his own behavior that justifies the narrator's concern to at least alleviate the scrivener's suffering, to arrange for him the best prison conditions possible. Bartleby's imprisonment signals the climax of the whole affair. He was turned over to the judiciary, and the one who reported him, along with the lawyer, who morally went along with this act, abided only by civil law. The latter shielded his action behind the law; in so doing, he followed the ethics of duty. This is a lay principle considered fundamental by the lawyer, from which therefore he cannot swerve since it goes beyond his will and is even stronger than his repeated, although never sincere, adherence to the spirit of the Gospels. Ultimately, he appeals, not disinterestedly, to his own robust "sense of duty" (Melville, "Bartleby" 95), the principle which, he says, has inspired his behavior and which his employee, on the contrary, has totally disregarded.[19]

As the lawyer himself points out, the ethics of duty requires honoring

an obligation that is binding on both parties, the employer and the employee. But although the lawyer's action may be judicially legitimate, is it morally right? This is Melville's core question, as we have stressed above, and one that the reader cannot but ask himself, especially if enlightened by the Kantian ethics on which it is founded. Of course, no one can deny the importance of legal duties, but "human morality" cannot be reduced to the mere strict observance of these duties; if it could, "a great moral adornment, benevolence, would then be missing from the world. This is, accordingly, required by itself, in order to present the world as a beautiful moral whole in its full perfection" (Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* 205-06). On the other hand, is the lawyer quite sure that he has not in some measure compromised his moral identity by consenting to his colleague's recourse to "external law"? The procedure, which actually bears out that "the law is reason unaffected by passion" (Aristotle 1287a-b), or rather without compassion, betrays the very essence of Christian ethics, the essence of *pietas*, that virtue the narrator would like the reader to believe he possesses. Was it not the lawyer himself who reminded us that Bartleby was no criminal, not socially dangerous, but, as he later states, "a perfectly honest man," a person deserving "to be compassioned"? (Melville, "Bartleby" 95).[20] Besides, we can hardly ignore the fact that the lawyer himself had earlier stressed the moral rectitude of his dependent. Neither can the reader, in this circumstance, ignore the echo of the solemn moral obligations the narrator had earlier taken upon himself, nor forget the forceful appeal to the Gospels, which he makes while he is engaged in betraying the very foundations of Christian ethics, viz., *pietas* and *caritas*.[21]

In the lawyer's behavior, still keeping Kantian ethics in mind, a "lack of moral strength (*defectus moralis*)" (Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* 153), of the courage of one's convictions, can be detected. This is shown by his behavior from the outset, but especially towards the end when he makes a last, pathetically abject and inadequate self-defense, declining responsibility for Bartleby's arrest and incarceration. Apart from this embarrassing attempt the lawyer makes to justify himself as if to pass off the prison sentence, that he himself had in any case brought about, as a sort of "heterogenesis of ends," an unintended consequence, the narrator may find it hard to persuade his reader that the recourse to positive law is anything other than a tactic

that he has always kept up his sleeve, an option to be used when the time is right, and that only his lack of mettle kept him from using it from the start. Hence, his action, as has already been noted, respects "legality but not morality" (Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* 76): the lawyer refuses to acknowledge Bartleby's diversity, his "strange wilfulness" (Melville, "Bartleby" 76).[22] The lawyer's religious qualms, far from expressing any *charitas socialis*, are only a screen behind which to hide an inexorable and opportunistic secular logic; he has a basically Senecan conception of power; he is willing to show *clementia* but can never countenance protracted insubordination nor a manifest transgression against property rights. The lawyer heatedly complains that he has been deprived of certain inalienable rights for having allowed his employer too much freedom, "to dictate to him, and order him away from his own premises" (Melville, "Bartleby" 79).

Besides betraying Christian ethics and turning it to his own ends, the lawyer acts against lay moral principles that could be universally shared, whatever one's religious persuasion. This is one of the many limits that Melville brings out in the lawyer's ethical profile. In accord with Kant, already in *Typee* Melville develops the idea that rightful moral conduct is not necessarily tied to revealed religion (it is conscience, according to Kant, that dictates morality to the individual, independently of cultural prescriptions). Hence, correct behavior is based on a "tacit common-sense law" (Melville, *Typee* 294), a "natural religion," unequivocally connected to Kant's rational practical reason, which is supposed to be universally acknowledged and instinctively perceived, apart from one's faith, education, or culture.

In *Typee* Melville so describes the social and political organization in the Marquesan Islands:

> The grand principles of virtue and honour, however they may be distorted by arbitrary codes, are the same all the world over: and where these principles are concerned, the right or wrong of any action appears the same to the uncultivated as to the enlightened mind. It is to this indwelling, this universally diffused perception of what is just and noble, that the integrity of the Marquesans in their intercourse with each other, is to be attributed. (294)

Here we may note a significant adhesion to Kant's natural religion

and religious rationalism, and indirectly to those original natural laws that Plato and Aristotle refer to. In following both religious and juridical precepts, the lawyer accepts a heteronomous ethics, as if he did not want to make use of the option of free will. In other words, whether he conforms to Christian morals or to the secular ethics of juridical duty, his will is conditioned from "outside." His decisions, contrary to what he would have us believe, are never dictated by his conscience (the seat where true morality is safeguarded so that it can never be displaced or conditioned, according to Kant, by any religious principle).From this point of view, the lawyer is far from Kantian practical reason. At the crucial moment of this story, when he has to make up his mind about the scrivener's destiny, he relies upon the rule of law.[23] But is a juridical rule always in compliance with moral law? Melville, with Kant and Augustine, is unconvinced. It is possible to act in full observance of the law but to fall short of moral behavior. With "Bartleby the Scrivener" Melville confirms that a conflict between *jus* and *lex* can arise, and this conflict between ethics and law is at the heart of Melville's text. In fact, correct moral behavior can well be conditioned by those "arbitrary codes" Melville refers to in *Typee*. In "Bartleby, the Scrivener" Melville confirms his mistrust, as he will also do in *Billy Budd,* of any legal system. On the other hand the Marquesans, doing without a juridical system, as their social and political organization does not provide for "established law and courts of law or equity," have an innate "ethical code" – that very moral code, based on the "principle of honesty and charity," which according to Kant is present in each of us, if one only applies it. They have their natural laws, or in other words a "natural religion" they refer to. Even though it is a colleague of his who reports Bartleby to the police, the lawyer too acts in accordance with a merely juridical obligation, and therefore his action is clearly in compliance with the law and hence in compliance with the will of a legislator. However, he acts "by the choice of another," only on the basis of an "external law." Instead, he should have taken moral law into account and relied on pure reason. He should perhaps have emulated Antigone who followed that primordial instinct that guides her to naturally adhere to immutable and universal "unwritten laws."

Moral law, according to Kant, unlike "external laws," has a subjective

element, "an incentive," that determines the will, and hence the action, of an individual. In the lawyer's behavior there is an ethical deficit: he acts in perfect conformity to an "external law" and "irrespective of the incentive to it" (*The Metaphysics of Morals* 20). He follows mere lawfulness. Morality is quite a different matter for Kant, and Melville too believes that law is only fulfilled when "the idea of duty arising from the law is also the incentive to the action" (20). In moral law there is a perfect harmony between "duty" and "incentive," while in civil law these two elements are not at all convergent. The lawyer, contrary to what he says, never sincerely questions his conscience; he seems to conform to Hobbes more than to Kant, since he is convinced that an "external law," a juridical duty, is a moral obligation in itself. It is for this reason that it will be a utilitarian and consequentialist logic to decide the scrivener's destiny. In other words, between Augustine and Bentham, the latter will prevail.

Kantian ethics is fundamentally secular and always refers to correct moral behavior. Whilst not in contradiction with Christian principles, it can act independently of them. The scrivener's destiny could have been different if the lawyer had adhered, like the Marquesan natives, to that "tacit common-sense law," that kind of "natural law or religion" that has "its precepts graven on every breast" (Melville, *Typee* 294), a clearly Kantian concept. This is undoubtedly the most severe criticism Melville makes of his character. Beyond Christian ethics and revealed religion, to which he partly keeps faith if only to exploit them in order to obtain some kind of moral leverage, the lawyer should have relied upon the universally acknowledged principles of "natural religion," to follow the categorical dictates of the "duty law" that comes from conscience, all the more so since in his working years he had been a member of the Court of Equity.[24]

He claims that his behavior follows divine commandments, imposed upon him by faith and conscience but, as William Bysshe Stein rightly stresses, "the voice of conscience in the story is silenced, with the laws of man superseding the laws of God" (111). In any case correct moral behavior or ethical duty should first be recognized as such and carried out even without reference to religion, before considering it as a divine injunction. Thus Kant in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* specifies

the difference, which Melville knew well, between a divine commandment and an ethical duty, between revealed religion and natural religion:

> Religion is (subjectively regarded) the recognition of all duties as divine commands. That religion in which I must know in advance that something is a divine command in order to recognize it as my duty, is the *revealed* religion (or the one standing in need of a revelation); in contrast, that religion in which I must first know that something is my duty before I can accept it as a divine injunction is the *natural* religion. (142-43)

This is the Kantian thesis, the one Melville adheres to, as we have seen in *Typee*, according to which religion depends on morality and not the other way around. But if Kant seeks in any case to reconcile Christian morals with natural religion, the lawyer is opportunistically angling for a sort of compromise between Christian ethics and the ethics of juridical duty in a utilitarian and Machiavellian sense.

This weighty judicial provision lacks any moral or juridical foundation at all: "And upon what ground could you procure such a thing to be done?" (Melville, "Bartleby" 91) – if, as the lawyer himself asserts, Bartleby "[is] under no disgraceful charge" (95). In any case it is evident that the scrivener has been a victim of injustice and has been offended in his dignity. This is something the lawyer knows all too well. *Alterum non ledere* is of course a fundamentally juridical principle which has in turn a moral basis that the lawyer can scarcely be unaware of. Going beyond this question, which each reader will decide according to his ethical views (and this is perhaps the essence of the writerly game Melville is playing with us), it remains to be stressed that the lawyer's worst moral limitation lies in his incapacity to act responsibly, his pusillanimity, the sin of "those who lived without infamy or praise" (Dante, *Inferno*, l. 36),[25] those who are eternally undecided and passive, concerned only with looking out for their own interests,[26] always involved in preserving their peace and quiet, basically reluctant to take sides because he is evidently unwilling to take up a stand. In the last analysis, this is the narrator's true moral profile. As Thomas Dilworth maintains, basically the lawyer is "morally and psychologically weak" (72). John the Divine is hard on the *ignavi*: "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Apostles 3:16). It is undeniable that

even years later the lawyer hears ringing in his ears that terrible litany, "I would prefer not to," which continually sends him back to the past to which he is enchained, his only remaining temporal dimension. The lawyer almost never speaks of the present and never of the future.

He has tried in every way to free himself from an obsessive memory but "an agony constantly 'burns' within his heart" (Forst 269) that acts on him like a sort of *contrappasso* and weighs heavily on his conscience, frustrating his every attempt to get beyond it and free himself at last from the feeling of guilt that torments him and never abandons him. He fails to reach, to quote Cicero, that "tranquillitas animi et securitas" (*De Officis* 1:69) to which he aspires. In fact, although years have passed, the lawyer still has to live with the phantom of that weird, cadaverous presence, which had become "a fixture in my chamber" (Melville, "Bartleby" 85). As he put it earlier: "I can see that figure now – pallidly neat, pitiably respectable, incurably forlorn!" (71). This is a terrible, terrifyingly Dantesque vision.[27] The image of the scrivener "sentenced" to stand in the lawyer's room year after year, clearly a metaphor for conscience, recalls a tragic purgatorial punishment which strangely applies to both the lawyer and Bartleby. The obsessive presence of Bartleby in the lawyer's life has to be interpreted as a kind of nemesis. Years after the narrated events took place, the lawyer is still moodily obsessed with them, compulsively turning them over in his mind, and composing a lawyerly brief in his defense. His solitude is not unlike that of his long-dead scrivener, and the reader understands that he, like his former employee, probably does not have a family: however if one knows very little about Bartleby's life, one knows just as little about the lawyer's. Is the punishment inflicted upon the lawyer too severe? Possibly. To partially justify him one should recognize that he, as he himself claims, was summoned by Providence for a test that was arduous and full of snares. To test his moral principles, he was assigned a difficult and unexpected interlocutor, who came out of nowhere and ended ignominiously, an oxymoronic figure: devil (tempter) and angel wrapped up in one. And maybe this is how he is seen by the lawyer and the reader. However, he is a crystal silhouette, a ghost, inert and helpless, fragile and strong at the same time. Bolstered by the inexorable strength of his "preferences," yet helplessly fragile.

This can be weighed on one plate of a hypothetical scale of justice. It is only right to take the "extenuating circumstances" of the lawyer's behavior into account. However, there is much that weighs on the other plate of the scale. He fails the test of Kantian ethics and solves none of his lacerating internal conflicts. If it is spiritual redemption he is after, a forgiveness of sins, it is clear that he does not achieve his goal. In the end, as with the Protestant Pierre and the Catholic slave-driver Benito Cereno, there is neither catharsis nor redemption. According to William Bysshe Stein the lawyer "is incapable of a moral regeneration" (105). If we are right in seeing the lawyer's tale as a brief, a petition for justification and salvation, the reader is left with no certainty that he will ever be so graced. He knows that Bartleby's particular condition required an act of mercy, a sincere sharing of pain, in the words of Schopenhauer (*The World as Will and Representation*), hence an act of true Christian solidarity, that very lofty moral value which, opportunistically, he has evoked from the outset, "my fellow-feeling" (Melville, "Bartleby" 68), but which unfortunately he withheld from the scrivener. Here the declaration of friendship towards his employee the lawyer had made at the beginning sounds still more Pharisaic: "I feel friendly towards you" (82). Therefore the *excusatio non petita* ultimately becomes an *accusatio manifesta*, a self-incrimination which is perhaps the most obvious evidence of his false conscience.

Notes

[1] That the lawyer feels the need to redeem himself, purify his soul, all the more so now that his advanced age brings him close to death, is brought out by John Matteson (22).

[2] Traces of Kantian philosophy are not only present in "Bartleby": what Bruce Rosenstock writes of Pierre ("Pierre is suffused with Kantian transcendental themes," 28) is certainly valid for other Melville novels. Not unlike Rosenstock, Hiroki Yoshikuni argues that the characterization of Bartleby is inspired by the "Kantian idea of freedom," which "plays critical roles in Melville's writings" (45, 62).

[3] The moral implications of "Bartleby the Scrivener" have been discussed by a number of critics, but none has sought to subject the attorney's behavior to "verification" according to Kantian morality. Such a "test" is all the more timely considering that over the years two factions, so to speak, have formed: one of these, very numerous, tends to stigmatize the lawyer's behavior, whereas the other would justify it. In addition to the two

articles by Bruce Rosenstock and Hiroki Yoshikuni mentioned above, there are, of course, many references to Kant in Melville criticism. Among these is Fritz Oehlschlaeger, who reaches some interesting conclusions; working mainly from a theological hermeneutic viewpoint, the author elaborates "a Christian ethical reflection," locating "Melville in a variety of appropriate historical, literary, and ethical contexts" in order to utilize "his insight to suggest the consequences of Kant's means-end distinction" (59). There is also a discerning reference to the *Critique of Pure Reason* by Todd F. Davis (188). Interesting references to Kantian philosophy are to be found also in Pochmann (436-40; 755-60), and L. Ra'ad (180-83). Finally, *Pursuing Melville, 1940-1980*, by Merton M. Sealts, Jr., remains a noteworthy guide for whoever wishes to continue to research the Melville-Kant connection.

[4] On this connection, Merton M. Sealts Jr. poses a fully legitimate question: "The attorney is [...] the lens through which the reader must view everything in the story, the attorney himself included. Does he speak clearly and fairly, or must the reader make allowances for his disposition or temperament, for his point of view as a legal specialist, for his worldly success, for his age... ?"(*Pursuing Melville* 17).

[5] As Sealts rightly notes, the lawyer, in his vain attempt to get to the cause of "the scrivener's recalcitrance, manages to reveal more of his own character to the reader than he does that of Bartleby" (*Resources* 3).

[6] Undoubtedly the attorney's rhetoric is favored by the fact that the confrontation between himself and his fractious employee, marked by insurmountable difficulties, turns out to be an unequal struggle, given that one of the two has no trouble in making his feelings known, revealing his subjectivity, giving utterance to his anxieties, worries, and moral uncertainties, while the other, who can do no more than express his polite refusal to obey any order given to him, does not expose himself and hides his private self – an obscure, unreachable inner world. It is precisely in Bartelby's imperceptibility, his "unaccountableness," that Hiroki Yoshikuni perceives that "Kantian idea of freedom" (62), mentioned above, that in his opinion connotes the scrivener's character.

[7] Gilles Deleuze suggests that the same definition Melville gave for Ahab, "une 'coquille vide'" (191), might fit the scrivener. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri also tend to frame ontologically their interpretation of Bartleby: he "appears completely blank, a man without qualities or, as Renaissance philosophers would say, *homo tantum*, mere man and nothing more" (203). Considerations like those of Deleuze and Hardt and Negri would reinforce the critical orientation of those who see in Bartleby's bizarre behavior the expression of an empty conscience, incapable of introspection, devoid of sensitivity. As Richard Chase wrote long ago, "Bartleby has no will" (144).

[8] It takes the lawyer some time to realize that Bartleby, as Deleuze maintains, is not guided by "une *logique des présupposés*" – according to which it would go without saying that an employee cannot shirk the duties attendant upon the role assigned to him by his employer – but rather by a "une nouvelle *logique de la preference*," of his own invention, "qui suffit à miner le présupposés du langage" (179). Several scholars have dealt with

the scrivener's disorienting use of language. To stay with recent years, Jacques Derrida advances the notion that Bartleby, like Abraham, speaks in a different language; like the Biblical patriarch, who "speaks in tongues or in a language that is foreign to every other human language," the scrivener produces an enigmatic refrain which would seem to belong to "a nonlanguage or a secret language"(*The Gift of Death* 75).In an earlier publication Derrida had discussed Bartleby as well (*Resistances of Psychoanalysis* 24).

[9] On Bartleby's non-acceptance of ordinary law, Giorgio Agamben states: "Bartleby is a 'law-copist,' a scribe in the evangelical sense of the term, and his renunciation of copying is also a renunciation of Law, a liberation from the 'oldness of the letter'" (270).

[10] Kant insists on the same concept in *The Metaphysics of Morals*: "An action in conformity with duty must also be done from duty" (148).

[11] On this issue, Allan L'Etoile offers some interesting considerations: for a case like the one regarding Bartleby, the "courts of common law would be singularly unequipped to decide" (5), especially since "Melville did [...] model 'Bartleby' after the Master's Report" (3).

[12] Allan L'Etoile maintains that, by "writing 'Bartleby' as a Master's Report, Melville puts us in the position of judge. We must decide if the narrator did all he could for Bartleby" (6).

[13] According to John Matteson "the story exposes the lawyer's prudence as a failed moral principle that impairs his ability to understand and practice charity" ("'A New Race Has Sprung Up': 'Bartleby' and the Prudent Person Standard", 15). Matteson comes back to prudence as a value in "'A New Race Has Sprung Up': Prudence, Social Consensus and the Law in 'Bartleby the Scrivener.'"

[14] In William Bysshe Stein's words: "And when in retrospect, the lawyer's practice of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance is remembered, the moral law of Christianity based on the seven virtues is found to have no authority. In short, Christ is dead in the human conscience" (112).

[15] In *Billy Budd, Sailor* Captain Vere too takes on the double role; in fact he is judge and witness for the prosecution, rendering his case anomalous. On the analogies between Captain Vere and the lawyer, Maurice Friedman holds interestingly that "both men stand in a kind, fatherly relationship to the young men whom they cut off, and both find it necessary to sacrifice the heart to impersonal duty or business respectability" (74).

[16] The lawyer's denial of the scrivener, along with other clues, has moved several critics to see Bartleby as a sort of *alter Christus*. H. Bruce Franklin argues this hypothesis quite effectively (127-28).It is certainly undeniable that Bartleby's final sufferings are a sort of calvary. Like Christ, the scrivener is not of this world, the laws and norms of which he does not acknowledge; his anomalous behavior is, as we have already noted, *extra lege*.

[17] H. Bruce Franklin asks: "Can the narrator [...] act in terms of Christ's ethics?" – and offers this answer: "the answer is yes and no"; if it is true that in some circumstances he "fulfills the letter of Christ's injunction point by point," it is no less true that in others

"he hardly fulfills the spirit of Christ's message" (127-28).

[18] Allan L'Etoile points out as well that the lawyer, however fond he may be of his employees, "values them primarily insofar as they are 'useful' to him" (3). A systematic analysis of this Kantian dictum in relation to Bartleby is in Fritz Oehlschlaeger (74-75; 79-80).

[19] What ultimately prevails over the scrivener is the force of law. It is his inexplicable preference not to, says Derrida, "that will lead him to death, a death given by the law"; and this act, he adds, is perpetrated "by a society that doesn't even know why it is acting the way it does" (*The Gift of Death* 76).

[20] Unfortunately, the lawyer lacks the spirit of the Good Samaritan: "We see that what he lacks is the Samaritan's compassionate initiative, his spontaneously active and unqualified expression of love for his 'neighbor'" (Doloff 359).

[21] In these statements by the lawyer, according to William Bysshe Stein, there is clear evidence "of a diseased conscience"; in effect, here and elsewhere he shows himself incapable of translating this feeling of solidarity towards the scrivener "into a moral action – into an appropriate response of conscience" (107).

[22] In this regard I am intrigued by the connection Peter Norberg makes between the scrivener's peculiar attitude and the brand of "traditional liberal pluralism" advanced by Emerson and Thoreau. The latter, according to Norberg, "directs individualism to the proliferation of possible modes of being" and argues for the possibility of legitimizing alternative individual behavior, albeit out of line with majority opinion: "I desire that there may be as many persons in the world as possible; but I would have each one be very careful to find out and pursue his own way, and not his father's or his mother's or his neighbor's instead" (93). Indeed, may one not sense, in Thoreau's remarks, an ideological justification of the ethics of dissent or, perhaps, of Bartleby's preference? Might Bartleby's refusal be seen as ethical, in some way linked to the lawyer's activity, his office in the High Court of Chancery? At least one of the documents he is called upon to copy would fall within the activities of this office, viz., a "foreclosure to which Bartleby morally objects"; in other words, "Bartleby may be declining further complicity in the suffering of those losing homes and property" (Dilworth 73). Michael Hardt and Tony Negri see instead the scrivener's persistent refusal as an extension of Etienne de La Boétie's "politics of the refusal of voluntary servitude, carrying it to the absolute" (204). As a matter of fact, Hardt and Negri, like Slavoj Zizek (*In Defense of Lost Causes* 353; *The Parallax View* 381-83), seize on Barleby's enigmatic mantra as a pretext to develop political considerations which, interesting as they may be, are extraneous to Melville's tale. Maurice Blanchot (17) offers further interesting considerations on the scrivener's refusal, bringing out the complex ontological dimension of this character.

[23] According to Todd F. Davis the lawyer "seems to be caught in the very dilemma that the narrator of *Pierre* speaks of [...] the dilemma between earthly law and heavenly law," and it can "have no clear resolution" (184, 189).

[24] In effect in his role as Master in Chancery, the lawyer would be concerned only abiding by the laws attendant on his office, not by morality. One recalls that the lawyer is called to a greater moral responsibility, an exemplary ethical behavior, precisely on account of his having served in the Court of Equity, an institution which, by its nature, as William Bysshe Stein has brought out, "seeks to temper the law with mercy and justice," since it is a tribunal where "conscience and equity are supposed to prevail over abstract legalism" (105). Indeed, according to Thomas Dilworth, the lawyer actually betrays both the moral and the judicial principles of this tribunal by having favored the land speculations of John Jacob Astor, whose friendship he so highly prizes: "the lawyer narrator had been instrumental in dispossessing people and transferring to Astor the land on which they lived or had done business and the buildings they had erected on that land" (66-67).

[25] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's translation (1867). "Without or praise or blame" is Henry Francis Cary's translation (1814), which is the one Melville used.

[26] The lawyer himself unguardedly confesses that nothing can take priority over his profession and interests: "At length, necessities connected with my business tyrannized over all other considerations" (Melville, "Bartleby" 85). Indeed, "before the appearance of Bartleby, by the narrator's own admission, he has not struggled with the ethics of justice, of good and evil; rather, he makes his way in this world comfortable by dealing with the physical, the tangible, that which he can know" (Davis 185-86). Moreover, as regards the role he had at the Court of Equity, the lawyer stressed its economic advantages rather than any question of prestige – "It was not a very arduous office, but very pleasantly remunerative" – and is bitter over having lost this income: "I had counted upon a life-lease of the profits, whereas I only received those of a few short years" (66). On this aspect see also Stein (105).

[27] Dante's influence on some of Melville's works (specifically *Mardi*, *Clarel*, *Pierre* and *Moby-Dick*) was recently studied by Dennis Berthold.

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L'inedito

Lorenzo Costaguta, Johannes S. Lotze

Multilingualism and Transnationalism in the Study of Socialist Movements: a Letter from Friedrich A. Sorge to Karl Marx[1]

Speaking at a public gathering in Amsterdam some days after the end of the 1872 Congress of the International Workingmen's Association (IWA), Karl Marx commented on the controversial decision taken by the assembly to move the headquarters of the organization from London to New York. The days when European and American workers heralded the International as an innovative solution to growing exclusionary nationalism and labor exploitation were long gone. The 1872 assembly had spent most of its time dealing with in-fighting. Marx acknowledged that "many, even over friends, are not best pleased at this decision" (qtd. in Stekloff n. pag.), but he invited them to consider the issue more closely. Drawing on his extensive knowledge of US history and his expertise on US politics – cultivated during his time as a correspondent on European affairs for the *New York Tribune* and on US affairs for the Vienna paper *Die Presse* – Marx stressed that those opposing the move to New York "forget that the United States is pre-eminently becoming the land of the workers; that, year by year, half-a-million workers migrate to this new world, and that the International must perforce strike deep roots in this soil upon which the workers are supreme" (n. pag.).[2]

It is widely known that Marx had specific reasons to encourage the move of the IWA headquarters to New York. Observing the level that internal conflicts had reached in the organization, and fearing that anarchists could take control of it, Marx had arrived in the Hague (for the first and only congress he ever attended in person) animated by a firm conviction: that the International in Europe had run its course. From this conviction sprang

the unexpected proposal to move the IWA headquarters to the USA (Musto 36-51).

At the same time, there is no reason to suppose that Marx was not genuine in his hope that the IWA could blossom in the United States. In 1864, Marx had written a message on behalf of the International celebrating as "an earnest of the epoch to come" that "the single-minded son of the working class" Abraham Lincoln had been re-elected and would lead "his country through matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained race and the reconstruction of the social world" ("Address of the International" n. pag.). Some years later, in *Capital*, he had celebrated the end of slavery and expressed his wholehearted endorsement of "the first fruit of the Civil War, the agitation for the eight-hour day, running with the seven-league-boot-speed of the locomotive from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California."[3] Marx identified the United States as the quintessential land of capitalism, a country where "the capitalist economy and the corresponding enslavement of the working class have developed more *rapidly* and *shamelessly* than in any other country," as he would write in 1881 (qtd. in Morais 6).[4] Perhaps the social and economic conditions were not yet ripe, but the development of a powerful working class movement was a possibility that Marx had no reason to exclude.

The move of the headquarters to New York City gave an unexpected twist to the political career of a German American leader of the IWA who so far had played a crucial albeit controversial role in the American branch of the organization: Friedrich A. Sorge. A native of Bethau, Saxony, Sorge had landed in the United States in 1852. He established himself in Hoboken, an industrial town facing Manhattan on the New Jersey shore of the Hudson river, a place where he would remain until his death in 1905. Like thousands of Germans, he was forced to leave Europe after taking a proactive role in the 1848-1849 Springtime of Peoples. On his arrival in the United States, Sorge was a radical atheist with no links to the socialist movement. In 1857 he took part in the foundation of New York City's "Communist Club" which, despite its name, had no links with the communist and socialist movement erupting in Europe (Herreshoff 68-70).[5] Still after the Civil War Sorge was best described as a Free Thinker with little interest in labor issues (Herreshoff 70; Foner 8). Nonetheless,

by the time the newly established New York City IWA General Council proposed him as the General Secretary of the organization in 1872, Sorge had become one of the fiercest supporters of Marx and Engels's historical materialism in the United States. Trusted by the two leaders, who considered him as one of the main sources of information on American matters for years to come, and through his leadership in the International and his role in the foundation of the Workingmen's Party of the United States in 1876, Sorge rose to the status of "father of modern socialism in America" (Foner 3-41).[6]

The letter that we publish in this issue of *RSAJournal* provides an insight into the process that turned Sorge into one of the founding leaders of Marxism in the US.[7] Long considered an offshoot of a story centered in Europe, in recent years the history of nineteenth-century American Marxism has found a new centrality. The use of transnational and global approaches has recast the US as one hub of a broad transatlantic network in which new ideas, practices and approaches were formed (see Bensimon et al.; Keil; Zimmerman). Moreover, the US and its specific socio-economic problems have acquired a new relevance in analyses of nineteenth-century conceptualizations of Marxist thought, not only by Karl Marx, but also by his followers, especially as regards race and class.[8]

This letter shows the enduring potential of using transnational approaches and multilingual sources in the study of nineteenth-century social movements. While transnational approaches have been adopted for at least three decades, much remains to be done. This is the case for Marxist studies as well, a field that very early promoted multinational approaches and the use of multilingual sources. The letter comes from the Marx-Engels archive at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam. While all the outgoing correspondence of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels has been published and translated into English in at least two editions, their incoming correspondence has only rarely been subjected to a similar degree of research, editing, and publication. In 1953, International Publishers edited *Letters to Americans, 1848-1895*, a selection of the correspondence that Marx and Engels sent to socialists, radicals and persons of interest in the USA. The Amsterdam Marx-Engels archive contains much of the correspondence that the two socialists were answering. However, since none

of these letters have been edited or translated, one is left with a one-sided dialogue where it requires imagination to fill in the gaps and reconstruct the ongoing conversations between socialists and activists on both sides of the Atlantic.

Sorge was one of the most frequent American correspondents of Marx and Engels. The Amsterdam archive houses 71 letters sent by Sorge to Marx between 1867 and 1883 and 219 sent by Sorge to Engels between 1872 and 1895.[9] The letter we have transcribed, translated and commented upon is the first that Sorge sent to Marx. By means of this document we aim to reveal the potential of this archive while, at the same time, highlighting the technical and practical difficulties that researchers have to cope with in order to make these documents usable for historical analysis.

One fundamental technical difficulty in dealing with this correspondence is Sorge's use of a script known as *Kurrent*. When Sorge penned his first letter to Marx, two basic scripts were used in German-speaking lands, a situation that had existed since around the sixteenth century. One of them was called "Kurrentschrift" (running script), "German script," or simply *Kurrent*.[10] The other basic style was "Schulschrift" (school script), which, being written in "Latin" or "Roman" lettering, was also known as "Lateinschrift" (Latin script). Both scripts were in cursive writing, as opposed to the printed forms *Fraktur* (mirroring *Kurrent* in print, as it were) and *Antiqua* (the printed counterpart of Latin script). Educated German-language writers would use either *Kurrent* or Latin script, depending on the context. If they used *Kurrent*, they would often employ a particular form of "script switching," using *Kurrent* for German-language text but switching to Latin script whenever "foreign" words or names popped up in the text. This peculiarity can also be seen in Sorge's letter which uses *Kurrent* throughout but shifts to Latin script for the English sentence "It would be bad policy" as well as for the Italian phrase "E pur si muove."

Kurrent was used across a wide geographical range of German-speaking lands, such as Prussia or Saxony (where Sorge was born in 1828), and more linguistically mixed territories, such as the multilingual Habsburg Empire or the Kingdom of Bohemia.[11] Franz Kafka's father Hermann Kafka (1852-1931), for example, used *Kurrent* in the letters he wrote to his future wife Julie Löwy in 1882, a clear indication that he attended the German schools

of his time and place (which taught *Kurrent*) and not the Czech ones which taught a modified form of Latin script (Nekula 46-47). And while *Kurrent* is often simply referred to as "German script," its use actually transcended the German-speaking lands. Scandinavians used an only slightly revised form, called *Gotiskskrift* (Gothic script), to write Norwegian and Danish. With numerous Germans emigrating to the USA in the nineteenth century (some in danger of their lives in Europe due to their revolutionary activities), *Kurrent* crossed the Atlantic and was used by emerging socialist US organizations – many of which remained rather limitedly German in membership, leadership, and language until at least the 1880s (Holmes 268).

In the historical ups and downs of *Kurrent* and Latin script in the German-speaking lands, language and politics were always intertwined. Most infamously, Nazi Germany proclaimed *Antiqua* and Latin script "un-German" (only to overturn this proclamation in 1941 due to the realization that people in Nazi-occupied countries could not decipher *Kurrent* or *Fraktur*). But already in Sorge's days, script use was often highly politicized, with German nationalists ridiculing the use of *Antiqua* as "un-German," culminating in Otto von Bismarck's scornful remark that he would never read "German books in Latin letters" (qtd. in Shanley 232): "Deutsche Bücher in lateinischen Buchstaben lese ich nicht!" *Antiqua*, on the contrary, became associated with attributes such as "international," "educated," and "scientific": more cosmopolitan Germans often favored *Antiqua* over the "national" style. Nevertheless, in terms of handwritten correspondence *Kurrent* remained the standard form, and both nationalists and international Marxists would use it, as Sorge's letter demonstrates.

It should be pointed out that the technical difficulties intrinsic to Sorge's letter are negligible in comparison to the problems one encounters when deciphering Marx's own handwriting. After all, *Kurrent* is simply another symbol system to write German and other languages. And while some *Kurrent* letters (such as *e* or *h*) look different from their Latin counterparts, others (such as *m* or *u*) do not: given some practical archival training, researchers should be able to learn *Kurrent* without any particular problem. Transcriptions are especially unproblematic if the writing in question is clear and regular (which is the case with Sorge), without overly eccentric

features. Marx's handwriting, on the contrary (and no matter whether he writes in *Kurrent* or Latin script!), is highly idiosyncratic and its notorious illegibility has presented obstacles to generations of scholars. In Marx's lifetime, Jenny von Westphalen and Friedrich Engels were probably the only two people on earth who could make sense of his scrawls. During a particularly disturbing period of financial distress, Marx applied for work in a railroad office, but, as he wrote to Louis Kugelmann in Hanover on 28 December 1862, "I did not get the post because of my bad handwriting."[12] Already in 1835, Marx's teachers praised his knowledge of history and Latin but also remarked (in Latin!): "verum quam turpis littera", *what atrocious handwriting!* (qtd. in Heinrich 102). The elderly Engels taught a kind of Marxist palaeography to Social Democrats, such as Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein, who were to inherit Marx's voluminous papers. Thus, while some visual characteristics of *Kurrent* might seem odd to the untrained eye, Sorge's letter does not present any of these more severe palaeographic problems.

A similarity between this letter by Sorge and Marx's letters, however, is their multilingual nature. Sorge is writing in German but elegantly slips in an English sentence here, an Italian sentence there, and additional English words in between. Both Marx's and Engels's letters are known for their unusually high level of code-switching, especially from German to French to English, sometimes sprinting through all three languages in a single sentence.[13] That the multilingual Marx-Engels correspondence is still relatively understudied can partly be explained by this fact: any reader has to be *at least* trilingual. In addition to German, English, and French, there are numerous expressions from Latin, Italian, Spanish, and Russian. Marx effortlessly employed up to four languages in a single sentence (e.g. French, English, Latin, and German in this magnificent example): "Pauvre Moses, so egregiously *post festum* noch zum Märtyrer *in partibus infidelium* zu werden!" (qtd. in Bebel and Bernstein 316). *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx* in Lawrence Krader's transcription (1972), rightly described as a "pathbreaking multilingual volume" (Anderson 197), thankfully left Marx's notes in their original languages, including passages in English, German, and Greek ("diese *demotae* wählten einen δήμαρχος who had the *custody of the public register*" (qtd. in Krader 214). While the exact relation of

these notes to *Capital* is unclear, they might be seen as evidence of Marx's attempt to give his critique of political economy a more global scope that included non-European societies (Anderson 197).

Such multilingualism reflected Marx and Engels's cosmopolitan outlook. Furthermore, it was the practical consequence of their emigrant experience (Marx's code-switching from German to French to English mirrors his movement from Bonn and Jena through Paris and Brussels to London). Finally, Marx and Engels, as committed promoters of an international and at least potentially *anti*-national movement ("The working men have no country," *Communist Manifesto*), simply *had to be* multilingual. Engels, one year before his death in 1895, had newspapers in eight different languages on his desk (written in German, English, Italian, French, Polish, Bulgarian, Spanish, and Czech) to keep himself updated about socialist movements around the globe (Derfler 153). Although Sorge's letter does not reach these heights of multilingualism or the degree of code-switching seen in the Marx-Engels correspondence, its polyglot features nevertheless remind us of an important aspect of working-class internationalism of the late nineteenth century.

Sorge's "conversion" to Marxism started at some point after the American Civil War. Despite the unprecedented consequences of that deadly conflict, in 1865 Sorge's eyes were still fixed on the cause of German unification. Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox found Sorge amongst the leaders of the League for German Freedom and Unity, a group of revolutionary exiles ready to jump on the first boat to Europe as soon as social unrest against German rulers was about to start. However, when the end of the 1866 Six Week's War between Prussia and Austria made it clear that the unification of Germany would not happen through popular revolt but under Bismarck's iron fist, Sorge decided to abandon European matters for good and dedicate himself to American radical politics (Foner 8-9; Herreshoff 70-71).

The Communist Club, which resumed activities after the Civil War, was trying to forge links with the IWA. In July 1867, Sorge took matters into his own hands and sent a letter to Karl Marx, Corresponding Secretary of the German-language sections of the International, to ask permission to officially start a recruitment campaign amongst English-language

workers. The content of the letter offers insights into the beginning of militant Marxism in the USA through the perspective of one of its key protagonists. At first glance Sorge's letter seemed to stem from a merely practical necessity. The preparatory work for the German American section was under way, Sorge reassured Marx, but if the International was "to thrive and be successful here" it was necessary to take measures to "involve the more substantial part of the Anglo-American, English-speaking workers and like-minded persons and arouse their interest" in the project started in London. With this goal in mind, Sorge wrote Marx to ask for propaganda material in English to distribute to English-speaking workers. "Please do not be sparing with the number of papers and manuscripts to be sent," specified Sorge. Much work was needed to spread the word about working class internationalism in the land of the free.

Yet by reading between the lines it is possible to observe Sorge's attempt to forge a personal bond with the most important leader of the International. For a start, this letter was actually addressed to the wrong person – there were more appropriate addressees for a request for information on English-language material, such as Johann Eccarius, who from 1869 took the role of English correspondence Secretary.[14] But more importantly, the letter clearly betrayed the not so veiled attempt by Sorge to credit himself as a member of the transatlantic German-American socialist community that animated the International, of which Marx was the putative if not fully acknowledged leader. In this light it is necessary to interpret not only Sorge's numerous mentions of the several acquaintances that he and Marx had in common (Berlin shoemaker and member of the IWA August Vogt; Sigfried Meyer, arguably the American contact who gave Marx's address to Sorge; and Wilhelm Liebknecht, German socialist leader and future co-founder of the Social Democratic Party of Germany); but also his mention of the order he had already placed for Marx's long-awaited "work," the forthcoming first volume of *Capital*.

It is interesting to note that Sorge's overture fell flat. Marx, adopting his usual wary and suspicious approach, never replied to the former's letter. In fact, it took him more than a year to send the requested credentials to Sorge, and he did it in a reply to Meyer, probably under pressure from

Meyer himself. As for Sorge's requests for pamphlets and other English-language materials, apparently they went unanswered for good.[15] Marx explicitly confirmed that Sorge was *not* in his trusted circle some months later, when, replying to Meyer's complaints on the excessive freedom with which Sorge had used his credentials, he retorted in anger that "it is your fault, if *Sorge* (who is *quite unknown* to me) received credentials… The way you put it in your letter, I was under the impression that Sorge was *your and A. Vogt's man*. So be more careful in the future!" (qtd. in Marx and Engels, *Werke* 560).[16] The relationship between Sorge and Marx did not really pick up until the summer of 1870, during which time Sorge sent *eight* letters to Marx within the span of a couple of months. Only at that point did Marx reply to Sorge with a short but polite letter. From then on, the correspondence continued unabated for the following decade and a half.[17]

A more thorough analysis of the Sorge-Marx correspondence would provide details of the controversial political role that Sorge played in the history of the First International in the USA before his appointment as General Secretary in 1872. The IWA did not really start to exist in the USA until 1869, two years after Sorge had sent his first letter to Marx. From that moment, the organization flourished both in immigrant and American circles. But before long two factions emerged. On the one hand, Sorge led a group of mostly German-American members inspired by a strict pro-trade unionist doctrine. Seeking a close alliance with organized American labor, this faction wanted to restrict the organization to wage workers only and gain a strong foothold among Irish workers, the largest immigrant community in the USA at the time. On the other hand, a composite group of English-speaking radicals sought to marry socialist-inspired labor activism with US-bred radical doctrines, from Spiritualism to democratic individualism to republicanism. Sorge's stubbornness in imposing a specific trade unionist-focused strategy played a part in causing an irreparable fracture between these two factions. Recent historiography has made a decisive contribution to correcting early Marxist histories of the International (see Lause; Messer-Kruse; Perrier; Cordillot).[18] Yet much continues to be the object of scholarly controversy, from the approach of German-American internationalists towards non-

white workers and women to their legacy in the history of American radicalism and trade unionism.[19] The correspondence of Sorge and of other German leaders of the International could further our understanding of this crucial period in the history of the American left.

Letter by Friedrich A. Sorge to Karl Marx, 10 July 1867

Diplomatic transcription

Page 1

Hoboken, 10 Juli 1867.

Werther Herr!

Es wird Ihnen durch den „Vorboten“ bekanntgeworden sein, daß wir hier in New York, von dem Hoboken ein Vorstädtchen ist, eine Section der International W. A. zu bilden im Begriff sind, u. hat der New Yorker Kommunistenklub die Vorarbeiten begonnen, so daß die Begründung einer amerikanischen Zweigassociation, wenn auch in nuce, als gesichert zu betrachten ist. Da dieses Unter= nehmen vorläufig nur auf Deutsche Amerikaner berechnet ist, haben wir uns mit J. Ph. Becker, unserm alten Kämpen in Genf, in Verbindung gesetzt u. werden uns vorerst der dortigen Sektionsgruppe deutscher Sprache anschließen. Doch hoffe ich, daß die S. A. hier so stark werde, daß in nicht zu ferner Zeit wir eine eigne deutsch=amerikanische Sektionsgruppe bilden u. dann direkt mit dem Generalrath in Beziehungen treten. Etwa bei Ihnen anfragende amerikanische Interessenten mögen Sie direkt an mich reichen, u. bitten wir um Ihre freundliche Förderung der Sache auch in der Neuen Welt, um den Kampf gegen die von der Alten Welt ererbten Erwerbs= u. Besitzverhältnisse aufzunehmen.

Doch zu dem Hauptpunkte meines Schreibens: Es ist, wenn die Internationale hier gedeihen u. erfreulich wirken soll, nothwendig

daß das gewichtigere Element der anglo=amerikanischen, englisch
redenden Arbeiter u. Gesinnungsgenossen hereingezogen u. dafür
interessirt [*sic*] werde. Dieserhalb habe ich schon mit einigen meiner
Freunde englischer Zunge Rücksprache genommen u. will sie veran=
lassen, eine Sektion zu bilden. Dazu aber sind mir die Schrift=
stücke der I.W.A. unentbehrlich, als da sind: Manifeste,
Statuten, Beitrittsbedingungen u. vor allem das Organ
derselben

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derselben in englischer Sprache. Es ist mir augenblicklich keine andre Adresse von Beamten der Ass. in London bekannt, u. darum richte ich an Sie, werther Herr, hiermit die Bitte, die Uebersendung der gewünschten u. benöthigten Schriftstücke, wo möglich mit begleitender Instruction (gleichviel ob in englischer oder deutscher Sprache), schleunig zu vermitteln. Mit der Anzahl der zu übersendenden Blätter u. Papiere bitte nicht zu knausern. It would be bad policy.

Wenn möglich senden Sie die Sachen unfrankirt. Wenn das nicht geht, so belasten Sie mich damit, u. ich werde es dann übersenden, sobald es der Mühe lohnt. Doch werde ich, sobald die Sache in Gang, Andre für mich in die Arbeitsstelle eintreten lassen, da mir die deutschamerikanische Sektion genug Arbeit machen wird. Veranlassen Sie ja die möglichst detaillirte Uebersendung von Instructionen.

Es rührt sich auch in Amerika. Die Arbeiter fangen an, sich ein Wenig zu fühlen u. ihre Bestrebungen ziehen jetzt die Augen aller Politiker auf sich, u. das ist eben in den Vereinigten Staaten schlimm, da es keine nichtswürdigere Sorte von Menschen giebt, als die amerikanischen Fachpolitiker. "Es geschehen Zeichen und Wunder", möchte man sagen, denn kürzlich hat Einer der einflußreichsten Politiker, Senator Wade von Ohio, eine Rede gehalten die fast kommunistisch klang. Das Geschrei der (bourgeois) Presse wurde darob auch so heftig, daß man sich beeilte, explanations u. interpretations folgen zu lassen. E pur si muove!!

Mit aufrichtiger Hochachtung

Ihr
F.A. Sorge
Bez. 101, Hoboken, N.J.
via New York, USA.

Herrn Karl Marx
London.

Page 3

P.S. Meine Wohnung ist für ein Jahr bis zum nächsten May N. 54 Fifth Street Hoboken. A. Vogt aus Berlin ist seit 2 Wochen hier bei mir u. bedauert sehr, Sie nicht in Hannover aufgesucht zu haben. Dem wackern Liebknecht geht es sehr schlecht in Leipzig, wie Sie d[ur]ch Meyer werden erfahren haben. Ich habe ihm empfohlen, auch zu uns nach Amerika zu kommen, schon seiner Kinder wegen. Auf Ihr Werk (bei O. Meissner) freuen wir uns sehr u. haben bereits nicht unansehnliche Bestellungen d[ur]ch Buchhändler L. W. Schmidt von hier gemacht. Unser alter braver Fr. Kamm ist letzten Mai gestorben. Ueberhaupt hat uns der Tod seit wenigen Jahren viele der bravsten, bewährtesten Kämpfer hinweggerafft. Es ist Zeit, daß ein neues, junges Geschlecht erstehe. Es ist vielleicht von Interesse für Sie, ein Statut unsers [*sic*] Komm. Kl. zu besitzen, u. lege ich zu diesem Zwecke ein Exemplar bei. Mit herzlichen Wünschen für Ihr u. Ihrer Familie Wohlergehen

d. I.
A Sorge

Letter by Friedrich A. Sorge to Karl Marx, 10 July 1867

Annotated translation[20]

Dear Sir!

As you will have seen from the *Vorbote*,[21] we are currently involved in forming a section of the International W. A.[22] in New York, of which Hoboken is a little suburb. The Communist Club [*Kommunistenklub*] of New York has started the preparatory work, so that the founding of an American branch organization, even if only *in nuce*, can be seen as secured. Since this project is, for the time being, only aimed at German-Americans [*Deutsche Amerikaner*], we got into contact with our old fighter J. Ph. Becker[23] in Geneva; and we will, for the moment, associate ourselves with the German-language section group [*Sektionsgruppe deutscher Sprache*] there. I hope, however, that the S.A.[24] will become so strong here that we will form our own German-American section group in the near future and contact the General Council [*Generalrath*] directly. Should interested parties from America make enquiries to you, refer them directly to me. Moreover, we ask for your kind support of the cause in the New World, too, in order to take up the fight against the work and property relationships [*Erwerbs= u. Besitzverhältnisse*] inherited from the Old World.

But let me proceed to the main point of my letter: if the International is to thrive and to be successful here, it is necessary to involve the more substantial part of the Anglo-American, English-speaking workers and like-minded persons and arouse their interest in it. Therefore, I have already conferred with some of my English tongue friends [*Freunde englischer Zunge*], with a view to prompting them to form a section [*Sektion*]. For that purpose, however, the papers of the I.W.A.[25] are indispensable to me, in particular: manifestos, statutes, membership conditions, and most of all its English-language organ [*das Organ derselben in englischer Sprache*]. I currently do not

know of any other [postal] address of officials of the Ass.[26] in London, and so I address the request to you, dear Sir, to arrange the shipment of the desired and required papers, if possible with accompanying commentary (no matter whether in English or in German), as soon as possible. Please do not be sparing with the number of papers and manuscripts to be sent. *It would be bad policy*.[27]

If possible, send the items under pre-paid postage. If that doesn't work, charge me with it, and I will transfer it [the money] to you, at your convenience [*sobald es der Mühe lohnt*]. As soon as the matter is under way, however, I will [step aside and] appoint someone else to this position, because the German-American section will give me plenty of work.[28] Make sure to send instructions which should be as detailed as possible.

Things are moving in America, too. The workers are beginning to "feel themselves" a little [*fangen an, sich ein Wenig zu fühlen*; i.e., feel or realize their existence as members of a class] and their endeavours are now attracting the attention of all politicians. Well, and this is fatal in the United States, as there is no more worthless sort of people than the American professional politicians [*Fachpolitiker*].[29] "Behold the signs and miracles",[30] one might say, as recently one of the most influential politicians, Senator Wade from Ohio,[31] delivered a speech that sounded almost communist. The resulting outcry of the (bourgeois) press became so furious that one hastened to follow up with *explanations* and *interpretations*.[32] *E pur si muove*!![33]

With sincere respect

Your[34]
F.A. Sorge
District[35] 101, Hoboken, N.J.
via New York, USA.

Mr Karl Marx
London.

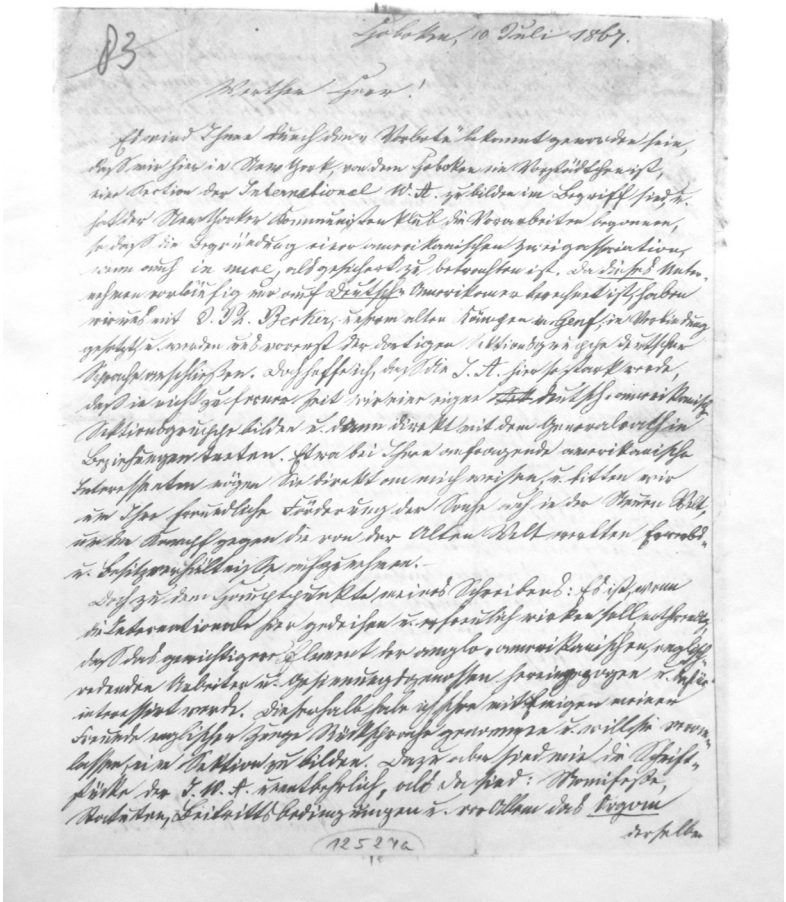
P.S. My accommodation will be for one year, until next May, no. 54 Fifth Street Hoboken. A. Vogt[36] from Berlin has been here with me for

the last 2 weeks and is sorry for not having called on you in Hannover. The brave [*wacker*] Liebknecht[37] is doing very miserably in Leipzig, as you will have learnt from Meyer.[38] I have recommended to him to come to us to America, too, for the sake of his children if nothing else. We are much looking forward to your work[39] (with O. Meissner[40]) and have already placed orders with book dealer L. W. Schmidt from around here.[41] Our old honest [*brav*] Fr. Kamm[42] died last May. As a matter of fact, death has carried off many of our bravest [*bravsten*], most reliable fighters. It is about time that a new, young generation arises. It might be of interest to you to possess a statute of our Communist Club [*Komm. Kl.*] and I enclose one exemplar to this purpose. With cordial wishes for your welfare and that of your family

Yours
F A Sorge

Letter by Friedrich A. Sorge to Karl Marx, 10 July 1867
in facsimile[43]

Page 1:



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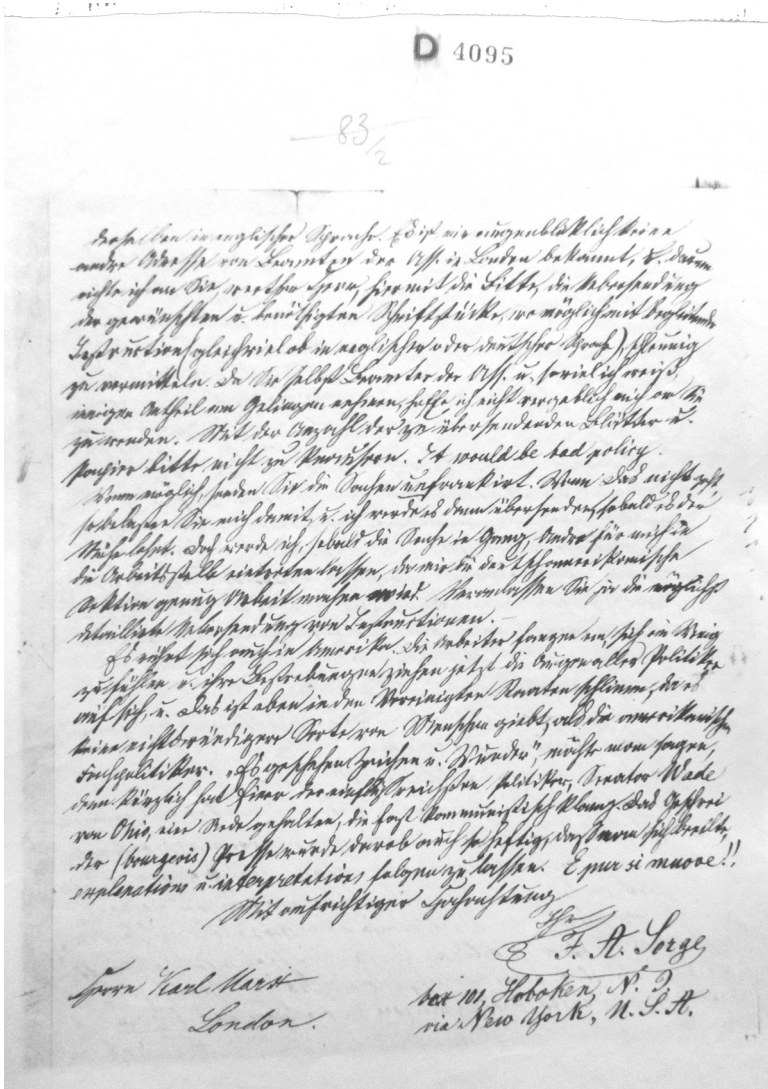
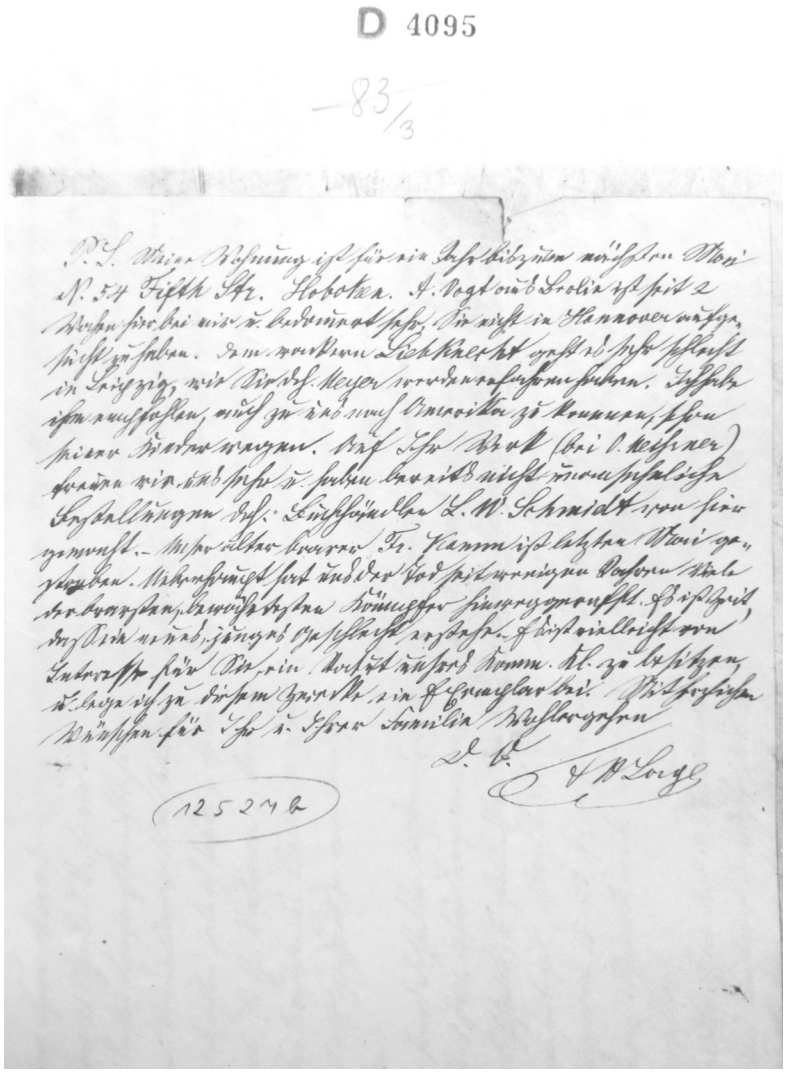


Page 3:



Notes

[1] The authors wish to thank Alex Bryne and the board of *RSAJournal* for the support received in the preparation of this article.

[2] On Marx and the USA, see Blackburn, and Zimmerman.

[3] Our translation. Original in Marx, *Das Kapital: Zweite verbesserte Auflage* 306: "Die erste Frucht des Bürgerkriegs war die Achtstundenagitation, mit den Siebenmeilenstiefeln der Lokomotive vom Atlantischen bis zum stillen Ocean ausschreitend, von Neuengland bis nach Kalifornien."

[4] Karl Marx to Friedrich A. Sorge, 30 June 1881.

[5] August H. Nimtz emphatically defines the club as "arguably the first Marxist organization in the Western hemisphere." But other sources seem to suggest that the links with the European movement were limited to say the least. In 1868, the Marxist pioneer Joseph Weydemeyer sent a letter to Karl Marx introducing the vicepresident of the club, Albert Komp, and giving a mild endorsement of the club's activities ("something good might come out of it," wrote Weydemeyer, qtd. in Obermann 181). It is not clear if Marx ever picked up Weydemeyer's suggestion to establish a link with the club. See Nimtz.

[6] This phrase comes from Selig Perlman. Philip S. Foner uses it as the title for his essay on Sorge. See Commons et.al 2: 207; Foner 3.

[7] Full bibliographic details of the letter in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels Papers, inventory numbers D4095, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

[8] See Anderson; Blackburn; Costaguta; Kulikoff; Mezzadra and Samaddar; Pradella, "Postcolonial Theory;" Pradella, "Marx and the Global South".

[9] Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels Papers, inventory numbers D4095-4165, L5762-5980, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam. The majority of these letters have been digitized and are accessible at <http://search.iisg.amsterdam/Record/ARCH00860>.

[10] A good sociolinguistic introduction to the *Kurrent* script and its political implications is Augst.

[11] See Prokopovych et al.; an example on *Kurrent* and Latin script use can be found on p. 230.

[12] Marx and Engels, *Werke* (30): 309: "Meine schlechte Handschrift war der Grund, daß ich die Stelle nicht erhielt."

[13] The most comprehensive study from a linguistic viewpoint is probably still Ferguson, discussing numerous writers but keeping a strong focus on Marx and Engels.

[14] Even though Sorge endeavored to pre-empt this possible objection by specifying he knew no other addresses in London of people connected to the International.

[15] Karl Marx to Sigfrid Meyer, 4 July 1868, in Marx and Engels, *Werke*, vol. 32, 550-51.

[16] The letter in which Meyer complains about Sorge's behaviour is not present in Marx's

archive. Its content, however, can clearly be inferred from Marx's replies. Quoted passage (our translation) from Karl Marx to Sigfrid Meyer, 4 July 1868: "so ist es Ihre Schuld, wenn *Sorge* (der mir *durchaus unbekannt* ist) die Vollmacht erhalten. […] Nach der Fassung Ihres Briefs glaubte ich, Sorge sei *Ihr und A. Vogts Mann*." Also in Zukunft mehr Vorsicht. And see also Karl Marx to Sigfrid Meyer and August Vogt, October 28, 1868: "As for Sorge, no further action is necessary. My letter to [William] Jessup clarifies the temporary character of the credentials" (our translation; in Marx and Engels, *Werke*, vol. 32, 575: "Was den *Sorge* betrifft, ist keine weitere Aktion nötig. Meine Zeilen an Jessup erklären den temporary Charakter der Vollmachten").

[17] Friedrich A. Sorge to Karl Marx, May; July 9, 11, 21; August, 4, 19, 1870; Karl Marx to Friedrich A. Sorge, September 1, 1870. These letters can be found in Marx and Engels, *Werke*, vol. 33.

[18] Schlüter established the "Marxist canon" on the history of the First International in the USA.

[19] For contrasting views on the legacy of Sorge's trade unionism, see Messer-Kruse 1998 and Costaguta 2019.

[20] Translators' additions in brackets. Original German words in brackets and italics. Parentheses in the original.

[21] *Vorbote* (or *Der Vorbote*, "The Harbinger"): monthly central organ of the German section of the First International, published in Geneva from 1866 to 1871.

[22] Workingmen's Association.

[23] Johann Philipp Becker (1809-1886), who, in the 1860s, became a prominent figure in the IWA (International Workingmen's Association), or First International, founded in London in 1864. He became a close friend of Karl Marx and especially Friedrich Engels.

[24] "Socialist Association"?

[25] International Workingmen's Association, or First International. See above.

[26] *Ass.*: abbreviation for (International Workingmen's) Association.

[27] This sentence in italics is not a translation; it is inserted *in English* in the original.

[28] *Andre für mich in die Arbeitsstelle eintreten lassen*: lit. "make other people enter this position on my behalf." Apparently this refers to the position or general task of dealing with the German-language and/or English-language papers that Marx is asked to send.

[29] *Fachpolitiker*: this term is certainly meant in a derogatory sense.

[30] *Es geschehen (noch) Zeichen und Wunder*: biblical phrase popularised by Luther's translation. "Zeichen und Wunder" (signs and wonders/miracles) appears several times throughout the Lutheran Bible, e.g. in Exodus 7:3: "Aber ich will das Herz des Pharao verhärten und viele Zeichen und Wunder tun in Ägyptenland." King James version: "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt."

[31] Benjamin F. Wade (1800-1878) was a Radical Republican from Ohio, very influential

in this early phase of Reconstruction. See Trefousse.

[32] The two words in italics are not translated but inserted *in English* in the original.

[33] Italian in the original. "And yet it moves!" Phrase attributed to Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) in the context of his being forced to renounce his claim that the Earth moves around the Sun, rather than vice versa.

[34] Original has "d.I.", an abbreviated closing formula: "der Ihrige."

[35] The original apparently has "Bez," which could be an abbreviated form of "Bezirk," "district."

[36] August Vogt, shoemaker from Berlin, formerly member of *Bund der Kommunisten* and since January 1866 a member of the *Berliner Sektion der Internationalen Arbeiterassoziation*. Sigfrid Meyer (var. Siegfried, Siegfrid, Sigfried) was another member of this new Berlin section (Eichhoff 84). There are letters by Marx to both Vogt and Meyer.

[37] Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826-1900), one of the principal founders of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), father of Karl Liebknecht (born 1871, murdered in 1919 by paramilitary Freikorps troops who worked in cooperation with the new German SPD government under Friedrich Ebert).

[38] Sigfrid Meyer. See footnote on August Vogt above.

[39] This certainly refers to Marx's anticipated publication of the first volume of *Das Kapital* which was indeed published by Otto Meissner shortly after this letter by Sorge was written. (The letter is from July 1867; the first edition of *Das Kapital* came out in September 1867.)

[40] Otto Meissner (var. Otto Carl Meißner; born 1819 in Quedlinburg, died 1902 in Hamburg) founded the publishing house Otto Meissner Verlag. He published the first edition of Marx's *Das Kapital* in 1867.

[41] *Buchhändler L. W. Schmidt*: compare the cover page of the first German-language edition (and first edition *per se*) of *Das Kapital* which reads: "*Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*. Von Karl Marx. Erster Band. *Buch I: Der Produktionsprocess des Kapitals.* Hamburg / Verlag von Otto Meissner. 1867. New York: L. W. Schmidt, 24 Barclay-Street." Barclay Street is in downtown Manhattan, a few steps from City Hall Park.

[42] This can only be Fritz Kamm who co-founded, in 1857, the *Kommunistenklub* of New York.

[43] The authors wish to thank the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, for the authorization to reproduce these images.

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Abstracts

Abtracts

Todd A. Hanson, Islands of the Bomb: (Re)Imagining Cold War Bikini Atoll in the Nuclear Imaginary through Archaeologies of Cold War Occupation and Destruction

With the approach in 2021 of the 75th anniversary of Operation Crossroads – America's first atomic tests in the Marshall Islands – the Bikini Atoll finds itself in a contested place in the global nuclear imaginary. Introduced into the world's consciousness in 1946 as an atomic bomb testing site, Bikini was used to test the United States' most powerful nuclear weapons until 1958. Littered with monumental concrete ruins when relinquished back to its indigenous inhabitants, the Bikini islandscape had endured unprecedented misuse during the twelve-year nuclear occupation. Exploring the constructive/destructive duality of America's Cold War occupation of Bikini Atoll, this paper employs archaeological evidence to reveal the profound transformation that construction and nuclear violence had upon the Bikini islandscape as it seeks to support the Bikini people's ongoing efforts to authenticate, demythologize, and safeguard their homeland in the real world and the current and future nuclear imaginary. Dispossessed of their ancestral home by nuclear hegemony, the Bikini people have sought to reimagine their Atoll in the nuclear imaginary as both the birthplace of the hydrogen bomb and a physical manifestation of twentieth-century nuclear imperialism.

Misria Shaik Ali, Memorializing Decommissioning: A Nuclear Culture Approach to Safety Culture

The Indian Point Energy Centre (IPEC), New York's first ever nuclear power plant owned by Entergy Corporation, is located midway along the Hudson – a river that bears thick histories of colonization and industrialism in the USA. With the Algonquin Incremental Market's natural gas pipeline intersecting IPEC under its ground, Indian Point (IP) is a complex spatiality of danger. In January 2017, the Riverkeepers signed an agreement with

Entergy and New York State calling for the decommissioning of IPEC. The article discusses the findings from a recent sensory ethnographic fieldwork and explicates the nuclearity of a space that is fraught with histories of American national desires. In doing so, the article juxtaposes the material-mnemonic semiotic of the Hudson with that of nuclear decommissioning technologies and advocacy at IP to discuss regimes of perceptibility, memory-making and heritage in American nuclear culture. It traces the IP's decommissioning advocacy as an effort to remember, make oddkins and usher a situated technical practice in contrast to demiurgic imaginaries of technofixes and techno-apocalypses that defines practices of nuclear safety culture. The article argues for the need to tweak safety culture with a nuclear culture approach and situates nuclear culture for future research.

Dibyadyuti Roy, Apocalyptic Allegories: Resisting Strategic Nuclear Imaginaries through Critical Literacy

Eschatological expressions underwent an epistemic shift with the Trinity tests on July 16, 1945 from an imaginative practice of predicting futurity to a cataclysmic vision of complete annihilation. Motifs of literacy, while seldom discussed, share a self-reflexive relation with nuclearization and cultural productions of the apocalypse, since the specialized nature of nuclear technology transforms nuclear discourses into signifiers of power: a form of cultural capital that emerges from and simultaneously legitimizes nuclear weapons. This intervention emphasizes how the epistemic violence of strategic nuclear imaginaries – employed through the constant anxiety of an anticipated nuclear catastrophe – can be countered through a critical literacy opposed to both martial ideologies as well as the instrumentalization of weaponized nuclear technology. Considering the current turbulence of an always already global nuclear landscape, this article examines two contemporary cinematic renderings of post-nuclear apocalyptic spaces, *The Book of Eli* (2010) and *The Matrix* (1999), to argue that any act of culturally representing/articulating the nuclear disaster is always an act of tangible recovery. In conclusion, I note that by uncovering the terrible realities of nuclear conflict and the dehumanization implicit in sophisticated techno-strategic paradigms, these artifacts from American nuclear culture, which are also coextensive with nuclear countercultures

everywhere, show the emancipatory possibilities of humane community-oriented critical literacies.

Marco Petrelli, Southern Wastelands: *Alas, Babylon*, *The Road*, and the A-Bomb in the Garden

The southern United States have historically been depicted as a quintessential American Eden. In foundational works like John Smith's *Generall Historie of Virginia* and Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* the southern states elicit comparison with a luxuriant natural paradise and, after Jefferson's treatise, an eco-democratic utopia. Not until recently literature has adopted the region as a post-apocalyptic locale, with some (still sporadic) examples in which the image of the garden has been replaced with that of a deathscape. When it comes to specifically post-atomic backgrounds, instances are even scarcer. About the only novels that investigate the collapse of the South's Edenic imagination through bomb-related scenarios are Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon* and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. While Frank's novel is a classic (and stereotypical) Cold-War apocalyptic novel from the 1950s, McCarthy's re-inscribes that psychological atmosphere into a contemporary ecological, existentialist, and political narrative, reviving the A-Bomb milieu without making any clear reference to an actual atomic aftermath. Drawing equally from post-apocalyptic culture, social criticism, and the theory of narrative spaces, this essay compares these two depictions of the American South as a dystopian post-atomic wasteland in order to map the evolution of southern literature's relationship with the bomb.

William M. Knoblauch, *Spaceship Earth: Nuclear Age Representations of Life After the Apocalypse*

Over two decades into the atomic age, a group of futurists, science fiction writers and forward-thinking environmentalists began to consider how humanity might survive after earth. Their plans ranged from ecologically-safe spaceships to satellite-based societies. They were inspired by the real possibility of an earth left inhabitable, either by nuclear war or ecological devastation. From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, a small number of visionaries established tropes and plans that remained in popular culture

well after the Cold War. This essay examines those ideas and their representations in film, television, and literature, and shows the staying power of "spaceship earth" from the 1960s up to the present day.

Sandra Becker, Beyond the (Ka)Boom: Nostalgia, Gender and Moral Concerns in the Quality TV Series *Manhattan*

2019 has seen the celebration of HBO's nuclear disaster miniseries *Chernobyl*, breaking any series' rating records. However, *Chernobyl* is far from the only twenty-first-century fictional TV series addressing a nuclear topic. Central to series including *Jericho*, *24*, and *The Man in the High Castle*, narratives involving nuclear bombs have been booming in the widely celebrated age of Quality TV. Less well-known though are the close cultural-historic relations of television and nuclear weaponry in the United States. This article sheds light on the connection between the A-bomb and the medium of television, exposing how the two technologies historically promoted whiteness and male greatness that echo in today's atomic nostalgia and the longing for a lost past of US nuclear power and unquestioned white, male dominance. It argues that *Manhattan*, a short-run period drama series telling the story of a team of scientists in the race to build the first US nuclear bomb in Los Alamos in the 1940s, differs from other nostalgic period dramas due to its critical take on questions about (toxic) masculinity and on what defines "great men" in history. The series therefore represents an exceptional case of anti-nostalgic, transgressive Quality TV in a time of regressive, polarized politics in the United States.

Lee Hermann, "Pay For My Candy, [Non-White Person], or I'll Kick Your Ass": Trump, *Rocky*, and Representations of White American Identity

The election of Donald Trump has brought a widely-recognized emphasis on racializing discourse and policies, especially directed toward immigrants, and his support is commonly understood to derive from white racial and economic resentment. This paper compares discursive continuities between the President's rhetoric and previous cultural representations that used race to define American identity through a white habitus, especially the *Rocky* series of films, the narratives of which distill linked racial and economic

resentment into their titular hero's struggle for victory. The roots of these representations are traced to Jacksonian blackface minstrelsy, where they fulfilled a similar function of defining audiences as white Americans through patriotic dramatizations of racial exclusion and class pride. Yet while Rocky symbolized the virtuous hard-working immigrant celebrated and canonized as the essence of the American, the Trump administration and those who voted for it employ that shared discursive tradition of racialized power and economic bootstrappery to exclude present-day immigrants from the American polity. This shift re-emphasizes the central role of whiteness in representational and subjective definitions of American identity.

Ludovico Isoldo, "Bartleby the Scrivener": An *excusatio non petita* in the "Court of Conscience"

In "Bartleby the Scrivener," from the very first pages of the lawyer's narrative, his setting out the facts, one cannot fail to sense the presence of a sort of *excusatio non petita.* It is as if he were seeking, *a priori*, to justify his behavior toward his former employee. The attorney, who by the nature of his office had never plead a case, finds himself in the paradoxical position of taking on his own defense and he does so by appealing, to use Kant's expression, to "the court of conscience." Following this lead, the present essay seeks to read "Bartleby" in the light of Kantian ethics and its categories, which Melville was familiar with, convinced as we are that the tale is built around questions of moral judgment and on the observance of moral obligations. Basically the ethical dimension of the tale consists in a conflict between "*jus* and *lex*," i.e., the juridical norm and moral law, which in fact is a salient part of Kantian ethics.

Notes on Contributors

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Elisabetta Bini is Assistant Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Naples Federico II. Her research focuses on the history of the Cold War and the history of international energy policies. She is the author of *La potente benzina italiana: Guerra fredda e consumi di massa tra Italia, Stati Uniti e Terzo mondo (1945-1973)* (2013), and the editor of *Oil Shock: The Crisis of 1973 and its Economic Legacy*, with Federico Romero and Giuliano Garavini (2016), *Nuclear Italy: An International History of Italian Nuclear Policies during the Cold War* (2017), and *Working for Oil: Comparative Social Histories of Labor in the Global Oil Industry*, with Touraj Atabaki and Kaveh Ehsani (2018). She is currently working on a book on the history of Italian nuclear policies during the Cold War.

Thomas Bishop is Senior Lecturer in American History and the Programmes leader in American Studies at the University of Lincoln in the United Kingdom. His research focuses on the social impact of nuclear technologies in the United States. He is the author of *Every Home A Fortress: Cold War Fatherhood and the Family Fallout Shelter* (2020). He has recently published with *Modern American History* and the *Journal of American Studies*. He has written on the topic of civil defense, presidential communication and consumerism and nuclear survival for the *Washington Post* and *Zócalo Public Square*. In 2019 he was awarded a Kluge Fellowship at the Library of Congress to begin his next book on the labor politics of nuclear power in the United States.

Dario Fazzi is Senior Research Fellow at the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies in Middelburg, the Netherlands. His research focuses on the interplay between US social and foreign policy history. He is interested in social movements' impact on US Cold War relations as well as on US empire's global environmental footprint. His main fields of expertise are in peace history, transnational history, and environmental history, but he

also enjoys envirotech and political ecology approaches. He is the author of *Eleanor Roosevelt and the Anti-Nuclear Movement: The Voice of Conscience* (2016) and has edited collections, published articles, contributed chapters, and written reviews on nuclear culture and policymaking, peace movements, youth protests, modern environmentalism, base politics, and transatlantic crossings. He is currently working on a book on ocean incineration.

TODD A. HANSON is an occupational ethnographer at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, whose research focuses on the cultural practices, occupational folklore, material culture, and built landscapes of science. He received his PhD in American Studies from the University of New Mexico in 2007 for research expertise in ethnography and archaeology. His most recent book is *The Archaeology of the Cold War* (2016).

MISRIA SHAIK ALI is PhD candidate at the Department of Science and Technology Studies, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, New York. Her doctoral research focuses on India's uranium-based nuclear fuel cycle, the politics of knowledge production about irradiation, the postcolonial politics of making India a self-reliant Hindu nation and their effects on radiation protection. She is an ardent critic of Hindu nationalism and contributes regularly to newspapers on violence and alterity in India.

DIBYADYUTI ROY is Assistant Professor in Communication at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Indore, India. Informed by his experience of working in multidisciplinary academic environments across the USA, UK and India for over a decade, his wide-ranging scholarship involves core research specializations in the Indian digital humanities, new media studies, and theories of masculinity and gender. His current book project deploys the materiality of gender as a heuristic to recover minority histories of the unexploded nuclear bomb across the USA and India.

MARCO PETRELLI is adjunct professor of Anglo-American literature at the universities of Bologna and Turin. His research interests include the literature and culture of the Southern United States, American Gothic, space in literature, and graphic fiction. He has published a number of

essays in Italian and international journals, and a book-length study of Cormac McCarthy's novels, *Paradiso in nero* (2020). He collaborates with the newspaper *Il manifesto* as a literary critic.

William Knoblauch is Associate Professor of History at Finlandia University (Hancock, Michigan, USA). He is the author of *Nuclear Freeze in a Cold War* (2016) and co-editor of *The Routledge History of World Peace since 1750* (2018).

Sandra Becker is PhD candidate in American Studies at the University of Groningen. In her research project *Fathers of the Nation: White Masculinities and Fatherhood in Contemporary US-American TV Series (2001-2015)*, she analyzes the depiction of white father protagonists in series like *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men* against the backdrop of socio-economic and political developments and gendered discourses that paved the way for the election of "Daddy Trump."

Lee Herrmann teaches part-time at the University of Torino. He received a PhD in Comparative Social and Political History from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, his dissertation discussing dynamic parallels between totalitarian regimes' labor exploitation and racial policies and white supremacy in the postbellum US South. Previous publications include "'Bothersome Forms, of Course, Were Mechanically Exterminated': Colonialism, Science, Racial Dysgenia, and Extermination in the Work of H.P. Lovecraft, Intertextually and Beyond," in *Comparative Studies in Modernism*, No. 14 (2019), and "Cinematic Violence and Ideological Transgression: The Family in Crisis in the 1977 Horror Film *The Hills Have Eyes*," in *The Family in Crisis?: Crossing Borders, Crossing Narratives*, edited by Eva-Sabine Zehelein et al. (2020).

Ludovico Isoldo has taught American Literature at the Università degli studi di Napoli l'Orientale and the Università degli Sudi dell'Aquila, and has been a Research Associate in American Literature at the University of California at Santa Cruz. He is the author of two books: *L'immaginario sociale di William Dean Howells* and Hills and Big Halls*: Spazialità e scrittura in*

Henry James. He has published articles on Herman Melville, Henry James, William Dean Howells, Francis Marion Crawford, Sarah Orne Jewett, Arthur Miller, William Styron and Norman Mailer.

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