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GOLDEN APPLES OF THE MONKEY HOUSE

A POST-JUNGIAN INTERPRETATION OF MYTH IN THE SHORT STORIES OF KURT VONNEGUT AND RAY BRADBURY

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A Thesis submitted to the School of English,
University of Dublin, Trinity College,
in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

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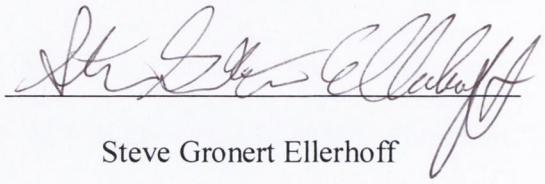

Steve Gronert Ellerhoff

ABBREVIATIONS

Quotations from the following books appear often enough to garner parenthetical abbreviations. Full bibliographic entries can be found for each in the Bibliography. Also, all citations of C. G. Jung follow the format drawing from his twenty-volume *Collected Works*, which is universally used by scholars of Jungian studies.

BSB	*Bagombo Snuff Box*. Kurt Vonnegut.
BTN	*Behind The Name: The Etymology and History of First Names*. Web.
CDJA	*A Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis*. Andrew Samuels, Bani Shorter and Fred Plaut.
CSRB	*The Collected Stories of Ray Bradbury, A Critical Edition: Vol. I: 1938-1943*. Ray Bradbury.
IROS	*The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*. Joseph Campbell.
MDR	*Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. C. G. Jung.
MGC	*The Masks of God Vol IV Creative Mythology*. Joseph Campbell.
MGOC	*The Masks of God Vol III Occidental Mythology*. Joseph Campbell.
MGOM	*The Masks of God Vol II Oriental Mythology*. Joseph Campbell.
NS	*Novels & Stories 1963-1973*. Kurt Vonnegut.
NSST	*New Short Story Theories*. Ed. Charles E. May.
POM	*The Power of Myth*. Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers.
SC	*The Soul's Code*. James Hillman.
SFKV	*The Short Fiction of Kurt Vonnegut*. Peter J. Reed.
TGLT1	*Turtle Was Gone a Long Time, Vol. I: Crossing the Kedron*. John Moriarty.
TGLT2	*Turtle Was Gone a Long Time, Vol. II: Horsehead Nebula Neighing*. John Moriarty.
TGLT3	*Turtle Was Gone a Long Time, Vol. III: Anaconda Canoe*. John Moriarty.
TLW	*A Terrible Love of War*. James Hillman.

Note: American spellings are used throughout this study.

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INTRODUCTION

> "I love you sons of bitches," Eliot said in Milford. "You're all I read any more. You're the only ones who'll talk about the *really* terrific changes going on, the only ones crazy enough to know that life is a space voyage, and not a short one, either, but one that'll last for billions of years. You're the only ones with guts enough to *really* care about the future, who *really* notice what machines do to us, what wars do to us, what cities do to us, what big, simple ideas do to us, what tremendous misunderstandings, mistakes, accidents and catastrophes do to us. You're the only ones zany enough to agonize over time and distances without limit, over mysteries that will never die, over the fact that we are right now determining whether the space voyage for the next billion years or so is going to be Heaven or Hell."
>
> Kurt Vonnegut
> *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*
> (*NS* 201-202)

In 1999, Peter Reed published the remainder of Kurt Vonnegut's uncollected short stories in *Bagombo Snuff Box*. Prior to this, in 1977, Jerome Klinkowitz encouraged readers to uncover these short works, "a lost art" long out of print and decades from seeing it again (54), at libraries with his "instructions for an entire book of undiscovered Kurt Vonnegut stories, never collected except in this homemade work you can assemble for yourself" (53). In his Introduction to *Bagombo*, Vonnegut, assessing the "mildness and innocence and clumsiness" of the stories, claims "there is no greatness in this or my other collection, nor was there meant to be" (*BSB* 2, 3). In writing the short stories of his early career, "All I wanted to do," he tells us, "was support a family" (*BSB* 1). To date, only one full-length study on his short stories has appeared, Reed's *The Short Fiction of Kurt Vonnegut*. Short stories by the other author examined in this study, Ray Bradbury, have a similarly meager place in literary criticism, although in recent years Jonathan R. Eller has thankfully been laying the groundwork by editing authoritative critical editions. This dissertation is cast with hope of drawing scholarly attention to these writers' short fiction, arguing in the affirmative that there is plenty to be found in these critically neglected works.

Though Vonnegut abandoned the form, he offers in that same Introduction his own rules for writing short stories, what he, experienced at leading graduate workshops, calls "Creative Writing 101":

1. Use the time of a total stranger in such a way that he or she will not feel the time was wasted.
2. Give the reader at least one character he or she can root for.
3. Every character should want something, even if it is only a glass of water.
4. Every sentence must do one of two things—reveal character or advance the action.
5. Start as close to the end as possible.
6. Be a sadist. No matter how sweet and innocent your leading character, make awful things happen to them—in order that the reader may see what they are made of.
7. Write to please just one person. If you open a window and make love to the world, so to speak, your story will get pneumonia.
8. Give your readers as much information as possible as soon as possible. To heck with suspense. Readers should have such complete understanding of what is going on, where and why, that they could finish the story themselves, should cockroaches eat the last few pages. (*BSB* 9-10)

Vonnegut also praises Flannery O'Connor, "the greatest American short story writer of my generation" (*BSB* 10), and Ray Bradbury, who he deems "sure as heck prescient" in his future-focused stories (*BSB* 8). Bradbury never taught creative writing but often guest lectured on the craft. In 1990 he published an exuberant manifesto of collected essays, written between 1961 and 1990, titled *Zen and the Art of Writing*. His advice is dogmatic, evangelizing enjoyment and the creation of short stories in great quantity:

> [T]he first thing a writer should be is—excited. He should be a thing of fevers and enthusiasms. Without such vigor, he might as well be out picking peaches or digging ditches; God knows it'd be better for his health. [...]
>
> [Write one]-thousand or two-thousand words every day for the next twenty years. At the start, you might shoot for one short story a week, fifty-two stories a year, for five years. You will have to write and put away or burn a lot of material before you are comfortable in this medium. You might as well start now and get the necessary work done.
>
> For I believe that eventually quantity will make for quality. (4, 130-131)

Differences individualize these writers' mature positions on advice for those beginning to write. Differences also individualize the stories they wrote.

My study spins a handful of threads through stories by both authors: periodical studies, post-Jungian theories of myth, short story theories, American culture and history. I use initial publications of stories by both authors throughout the dissertation because they offer glimpses of their own individual historical moments by being printed alongside other stories and advertisements—and in publication formats ranging from pulps to "slicks." As Eller said when I met him at the Center for Ray Bradbury Studies at Indiana University Indianapolis, "You are looking at versions of these stories that hardly anybody has seen since they first appeared." Agreeing with Kasia Boddy that "Where we read the story shapes the expectations we bring to our reading of it, and thus the effect it has on us" (117), I also take artwork published with these stories into account. Vonnegut says, "Illustrators during the golden age of American magazine fiction used to get as much money as the authors whose stories they illustrated. They were often as famous as, or even more famous than, the authors" (*BSB* 4). The art and ads are examined for context and surprising juxtapositions as they arise in striking ways with each story. Another reason for relying on original publications has to do with Bradbury's tendency of tweaking or heavily revising stories when later collected, changing details as first presented in the era in question.

Bradbury published over four hundred short stories in his lifetime; Vonnegut published forty-seven. Selection pools differing in quantity by ten times, with analyses of many stories left on the cutting room floor, I worked to attempt something like balance in selecting Vonnegut's stories while sifting through Bradbury's catalog. Only through this process did I realize the stories I wanted to talk about, save a couple outliers, were published between WWII and the Kennedy assassination. Thus, this study focuses by and large on two decades of American culture, ranging from 1943 to 1963, a time when pulps and "slicks" alike started out thriving and ended up nearly perishing with the spread of television. Reflecting on the health benefits, mental and restful, Vonnegut likened the short story form as

akin to a "Buddhist catnap": "[A] short story, because of its physiological and psychological effects on a human being, is more closely related to Buddhist styles of meditation than it is to any other form of narrative entertainment" (5). Sharing an interest in the psychology of stories, research led me to short story theorists and psychoanalysts from Charles E. May to Rollo May. My initial question, prior to applying for this course of study, busy writing my own fiction, was whether or not short stories behave like myths. Sensing a correlation, I sought a way of expressing some ways in which they do.

Vonnegut and Bradbury have received attention for writing myths from the earliest days of scholarship on their work.[1] This continues to this day, for instance in Gilbert McInnis's exciting contribution to Vonnegut studies: *Evolutionary Mythology in the Writings of Kurt Vonnegut* (2011). What has been missing from these studies is a comprehensive presentation of a theoretical framework for talking about myth. Chapter 1 exists in this study for the sole reason of laying out just such a methodology. There are many theories of myth, so many that Robert Segal has built his scholarship on identifying and differentiating them. It is precarious to speak of myth in academia by defining terms on the go, simply because theorists use the same terms in differing ways. Those who have studied theories of myth do not take this for granted and will hopefully appreciate the effort. Having chosen a post-Jungian perspective on myth, particularly that put forth by Joseph Campbell (1904-1987), great care has been taken in presenting it and supporting its application to the interpretation of literature, specifically short stories. Campbell's work, contemporaneous with what Donald E. Pease calls the Myth and Symbol school of American studies, also developed out of the same temporal and cultural context that informed the writing of Bradbury and Vonnegut's

[1] See Willis McNelly, "Science Fiction: The Modern Mythology." *America* 123.5 (1970): 125; Gail Landsman, "Science Fiction: The Rebirth of Mythology." *Journal of Popular Culture* 5.4 (1972): 989-992; Robert Nadeau, "Physics and Metaphysics in the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut." *Mosaic* 13 (1980): 37-47; Gary K. Wolfe, "The Frontier Myth in Ray Bradbury." *Ray Bradbury*. Ed. Greenberg and Olander. New York: Taplinger, 1980. 33-54; Sallye Sheppeard, "Kurt Vonnegut and the Myth of Scientific Progress." *Journal of the American Studies Association of Texas* 16.1 (1985): 14-19; "The Survival of Myth in Science Fiction." Mindscapes. Ed. Slusser and Rabkin. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1989. 16-33.

short stories. The theoretical pairing with the texts examined is not accidental. It does not, however, pretend to offer anything approaching a final word on how to interpret myths, which I regard as an impossibility.

Vonnegut and Bradbury, each given two chapters of analysis, are *not* set in opposition with one another. Central to the theoretical premise of this dissertation is the idea that binary ideologies can be transcended beyond A vs. B, self vs. other, etc. The focus, rather, is the inflection of four archetypes as inflected in stories by the writers. Chapter 2 traces the experience and effects of War through four of Vonnegut's stories; Chapter 3 analyzes critiques of American Independence through five more Vonnegut stories; Chapter 4 addresses seven of Bradbury's iterations of the white American Family; Chapter 5 traces the sun as a symbol of Wholeness across five of Bradbury's tales. The decision to focus on what these stories tell us about these four archetypes in an American historical context may seem haphazard when any one archetype as constellated by any number of writers could fill out a work of this scale. In hindsight, I suppose it may point back to an influential book extracting essays from C. G. Jung's *Collected Works* (*9.I*), first published by Princeton/Bollingen in 1959: *Four Archetypes*, in which Jung essays Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, and Trickster. The archetypes in my study have been chosen on purpose, as explained in Chapter 1.[2] Varying threads of the same archetypes stuck out, so to speak, and with no picture of what unraveling them would reveal, I started to work.

What occurs to me now, with the project complete, is that these stories can indeed be read as mythic narratives, especially when approached from a post-Jungian depth psychological angle. They present opportunities to reflect on and experience aspects of myths—the archetypes—both finding expression in a society, conditioned specifically in time, place, and culture(s), *and* being lived in the broadest universal conditions of life for

[2] See pages 55-56.

human beings. We will all, for instance, live and die but how and why are nuanced individually by all of these factors. Stories, great and crummy, also act as time capsules for the hopes and anxieties of their own eras. In delving into my selection of Vonnegut and Bradbury's stories we can see American myths, new and old, packaged and repackaged, in a historical context, in action.

Finally, a question: why did I conduct this study in Ireland? *Everyone* I have met the past few years has asked me that question. At the outset I knew I was, as a white Midwestern American man, prone to taking Bradbury and Vonnegut's American-ness for granted, susceptible to approaching these stories from the American myth of selfhood, of which I am afflicted. By physically removing myself from the U.S.A. and accepting the offer of scholarly sanctuary in Ireland, a country with cultures and histories I knew embarrassingly little about, a place where I had never imagined myself living, I have met and learned from people whose relationships to the U.S.A. are vastly different from my own, who have shone light on writers and theorists I may not have found otherwise (such as Trinity alumnus James Hillman and the Irish mystic John Moriarty), who appreciate and acknowledge mythology in a variety of ways immediate to their lives, and encouraged me to carve out the psychological distance I sensed was necessary to read these short stories by two Midwestern white men of my grandparents' generation. This dissertation would have manifested in vastly different ways had I written it anywhere else, and I, a prairie-born fellow who was nearly thirteen before seeing the sea, thank Ireland, which Hillman calls "land of the free and home of the aesthetic brave" (*TLW* 121), for what it has given and taken from me.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT MYTH

1.1 A Post-Jungian Mythodology

> The West is preparing to add its fables to those of the East. The valleys of the Ganges, the Nile, and the Rhine having yielded their crop, it remains to be seen what the valleys of the Amazon, the Platte, the Orinoco, the St. Lawrence, and the Mississippi will produce. Perchance, when in the course of ages, American liberty has become a fiction of the past—as it is to some extent a fiction of the present—the poets of the world will be inspired by American mythology.
>
> Henry David Thoreau
> ("Walking" 527)

Listen for the word 'myth' and you will often hear it taking the fall for others, words like 'bunkus', 'hooey', and 'lies'. Today myth is popularly synonymous with falsehood. Despite the success of mythic works like *Star Wars* and *The Lord of the Rings*, the widespread understanding of myth syncs with C. S. Lewis's opinion "that myths [are] lies and therefore worthless, even though 'breathed through silver'" (Tolkien 85). Take, for instance, the subtitle of a book by David Barton: *The Jefferson Lies: Exposing the Myths You've Always Believed About Thomas Jefferson* (2012); complicating matters, this same book was later withdrawn by its publisher for its factual inaccuracies.

Psychiatrist Rollo May (1909-1994), who called the last "our mainly mythless century" (*Cry for Myth* 47), objected to myth's denigration, saying, "This is an error that could be committed only by a society that has become so inebriated with adding up empirical facts that it seals off the deeper wisdom of human history" (*Courage to Create* 28). The twentieth century saw some thinkers, particularly those in the fields of psychology and comparative mythology, arguing against the nineteenth century's intellectual placement of

science over myth and the idea that rationality made myth irrelevant. Living amid the collective denial of myth, Carl Jung (1875-1961), Joseph Campbell (1904-1987), Rollo May, James Hillman (1926-2011), John Moriarty (1938-2007), and others sought to reawaken westerners' appreciation of myth for its therapeutic, vitalizing properties. They believed rationalism's widespread appeal since the Enlightenment had thrown the western psyche off balance by showing mystery the back door.

Consider the following extract from the definition of 'myth' in *A Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis*:

> Myths are stories of archetypal encounters. [...] Like his ancestors [...] modern man is a myth-maker; he re-enacts age-old dramas based upon archetypal themes and, through his capacity for consciousness, can release himself from their compulsive hold.
> [...] Mythic tales illustrate what happens when an archetype has free rein and there is no conscious intervention on the part of man. [...]
> Modern psychology [...] must treat the products of unconscious fantasy, including mythological motifs, as statements of psyche about itself. We do not invent myths; we experience them. (*CDJA* 95)

Not at all meant as a reference guide for the general reader, unlike the *OED* and Merriam-Webster's dictionary, here myth is not equated with lies but respected as a force of human nature. Stories that behave mythically have a dynamism thought to possess a "compulsive hold" that, like feeling and emotion, is not chosen but experienced. In "The Psychology of the Child Archetype" (1951), Jung, in his most concise definition of myth, wrote: "Myths are original revelations of the preconscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings, and anything but allegories of physical processes" (1940/1968, *CW 9.I*, ¶261). That idea of revelation is integral to depth psychology, which holds myth as abetting mental and spiritual health. Hillman, astudent of Jung's who broke away to found the field of archetypal psychology, disagreed on this point with his own polycentric perspective in the nineteen-seventies:

> We moderns have no mythology, properly speaking, but we have psychological systems, the speculative theories about humans in relation with

> more-than-human forces and images, today called fields, instincts, drives, complexes. This tenet of archetypal psychology [...] offers the opportunity to reflect every psychological position as a fantasy or mythologem. It works as a self-critique of positivisms by means of myths. Our tenet also operates upon every mythic tale and figure, removing them from the realm of story only and pulling them down and in, showing how a myth precisely works in the psyche, in its habits of mind and heart. We seek to reflect back and forth between the two, myth and psyche, using them to provide insights for each other, preventing either from being taken on its own terms only. (*Dream and the Underworld* 24)

For Hillman, those figures and presences that rise up from the unconscious in dreams, the imagination, and mythic narrative do not default to beneficence. Their mien can operate under every possible condition of life, and beyond if we allow for metaphysics. The millennial Irish mystic John Moriarty is closer to Hillman in this respect: "I don't go all the way with Jung. I don't accept that life in harmony with these images is fullest life. I don't accept that life in harmony with them is wisdom" (*TGLT3* XLIV). Campbell, a comparative mythologist and the central theorist in this study, is more optimistic in his appraisal of the potential for our relationship with unconscious contents:

> Fantasy and imagination is a product of the body. The energies that bring forth the fantasies derive from the organs of the body. The organs of the body are the source of our life and of our intentions for life. And they conflict with each other. Among these organs, of course, is the brain, and then you must think of the various impulses that dominate our life systems—the erotic impulse, the impulse to conquer and conquest and all that, self-preservation—and then certain thoughts that have to do with ideals and things that are held up before us as aims worth living for, and giving life its value, and so forth. All of these different forces come into conflict within us and the function of mythological imagery is to harmonize them, coordinate the energies of our body, so that we will live a harmonious and fruitful life in accord with our society and with the new mystery that emerges with every human being, namely what are the possibilities of this particular human life? ("Understanding Mythology with Joseph Campbell")

Literary scholar Loree Rackstraw agrees: "[I]t is through our conscious creativity that we may manifest and experience a mythic sense of our participation in the generative processes inherent in the cosmos. When we are in accord with these universal processes we, too, may recognize our sense of awareness as a sacred aspect of the universe" ("Quantum" 59). But the

Jungian approach is not purely positive; Jung believed that a modern manifestation of the Germanic storm god Wotan had possessed the Nazis, destroying not only much of Europe but the Nazis themselves.[3]

Key to a post-Jungian approach is the recognition of myth as *dynamic*. Lucy Huskinson has argued for the relevance of Jungian and post-Jungian concepts of myth:

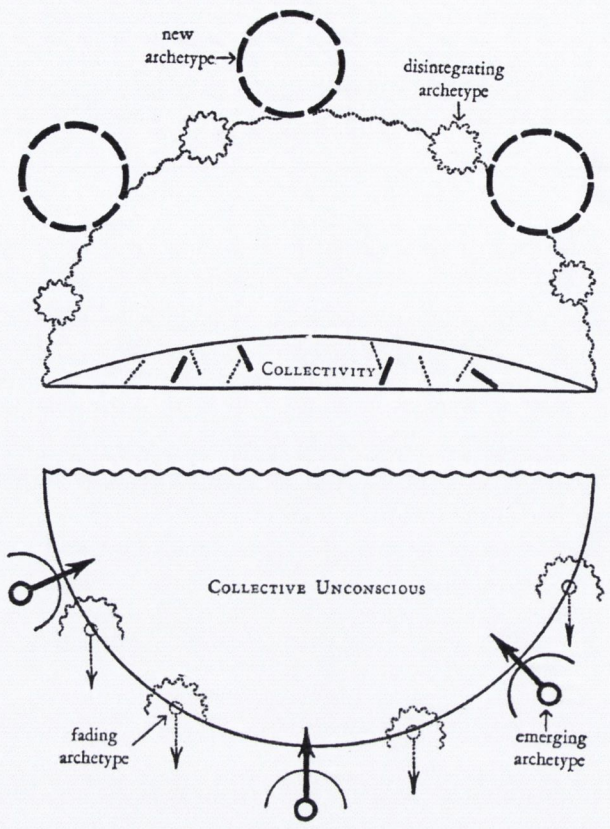
> [M]yth is a discovery of the collective within the individual. Myth is construed through imagery, but this imagery is not to be conceived as static narrative applicable for all time. Rather, it is dynamic, and is continually reshaped according to the living experiences and subjective orientation of its recipient [...] Myth is a story of human behavior, which is continually retold in line with the developing behaviours of the human race, society, or individual personality with which it is concerned. (4)

We will soon take into account Campbell's perspective on myth, and how it grows out of and builds upon this Jungian foundation, but Huskinson's definition, owing to its clarity and scope, is carried forth. Jung saw the artist as instructing his or her own society by providing narratives in which the myths find expression:

> [Art] is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up forms in which the age is most lacking. The unsatisfied yearning of the artist reaches back to the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequacy and one-sidedness of the present. (1922/1966, *CW 15*, ¶130)

In his essay "Art and Time" (1957), psychologist Erich Neumann (1905-1960) offers a helpful diagram that "represents the disintegration of the canon, characteristic of our time ..." (107). The supporting arch of Western culture, represented by the top semicircle, is changing. As the old values fall, shown as disintegrating archetypes, new ones are manifesting, emerging, taking their own places in a new cultural arch. This balancing act plays out unconsciously, spanning eras, and Campbell, at the end of a life devoted to the study of mythology, admitted that he could not say what the next great myth will be. Moriarty, not a depth psychologist but a mystic, also sees this process of change: "Transformed archetypes

[3] See "Wotan" (1936/1970, *CW 10*, ¶371-99).



[Fig. i: Neumann's diagram of the modern collective psyche (107)]

imply the possibility of an alternative culture" (*TGLT3* XV). From a post-Jungian perspective, as some archetypes dissolve and others crystallize in the psyche of a civilization, myths perpetuate or arise and are expressed, among other places, in narratives.

The history of the modern schism between science and myth goes back at least to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Moriarty points to Sir Isaac Newton's (1642-1727) corpuscular theory of light (1690): "Newton de-superimposed the colour that Homer had superimposed on the sea. Newton de-superimposed the colour that Homer had superimposed on the dawn" (*TGLT3* XLVIII). Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), in his 1784 essay "What is Enlightenment?," did not call for the outright rejection of religion and spiritual insight, but championed the rise of individual thought and action, a responsibility of freedom he then saw only as a dawning possibility. A century later Max Müller (1823-1900), who translated Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* into English (1881), said, "Depend upon it, there is mythology now as there was in the time of Homer, only we do not perceive it, because we

ourselves live in the very shadow of it, and because we all shrink from the full meridian light of truth" (66). Nevertheless, many who took up the Enlightenment's call touted the superiority of the sciences to spiritual traditions. English anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) led the charge with works like *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* (1865) and *Primitive Culture* (1871). "To rationalists [like Tylor]," myth studies historian Robert A. Segal writes, "myth is a wholly primitive explanation of the physical world. It is the primitive counterpart to science, which is exclusively modern. Science makes myth both unnecessary and impossible for moderns, who by definition are scientific" (*Theorizing About Myth* 136). Tylor, a practicing social scientist, read myth literally, granted it no poetic reach. It belonged to "savages" who, by his Victorian estimation, could not differentiate between objectivity and subjectivity. From Tylor's empirical point of view, since it does not hold up as a mode of explanation when read literally, myth serves no purpose to moderns.

Influenced by Tylor's work, Scottish anthropologist Sir James George Frazer (1854-1941) devoted his own career to the study of myth and ritual, notably producing *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. Frazer revised it into a single abridged volume (1922), which is still in print and influenced critics such as Jessie Weston (1850-1928), Lord Raglan (1885-1964), Stanley Edgar Hyman (1919-1970), and Northrop Frye (1912-1991). Frazer's theory of myth ties it to ritual, specifically in relation to vegetation rites that he studied in primitive cultures and traced back to pre-Celtic traditions in Europe. His emphasis on physical processes are the same ones Jung would refer to and reject in his own definition of myth. Frazer believed that myth gave rise to ritual and, when combined, produced meaning surpassing both. "Myth for Frazer," Segal states, "is the ancient and primitive counterpart to modern science, but for Frazer it is the counterpart to applied science and not primarily, as for Tylor, to scientific theory" (*Theorizing About Myth* 41).

Twentieth-century literary criticism is itself indebted to Frazer's work, as Segal points out: "For literary myth-ritualists, myth becomes literature when it is severed from ritual. Myth tied to ritual is religious literature; myth cut off from ritual is secular literature, or just literature" (*Theorizing About Myth* 44). The influence of these critics was in turn felt by the Modernists. Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, cited ironically or not, appears in the notes to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922). Defending James Joyce (1882-1941) in his essay "'Ulysses', Order, and Myth," Eliot (1888-1965) invokes W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) and reveals his own debt to Frazer and the field of psychology:

> In using myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. It is a method already adumbrated by Mr. Yeats, and of the need for which I believe Mr. Yeats to have been the first contemporary to be conscious. It is a method for which the horoscope is auspicious. Psychology (such as it is, and whether our reaction to it be comic or serious), ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art… And only those who have won their own discipline in secret and without aid, in a world which offers very little assistance to that end, can be of any use in furthering this advance. (177-178)

And here we see a rather confounding arc reaching from staunch rationalist Tylor to the mythically methodizing Modernists. Is not the pursuit of one's "own, independent, further investigations … in a world which offers very little assistance to that end" an actualization of Kant's definition of Enlightenment? That calling is at the center of Jungian psychology, where individuation—defined as "a person's becoming himself, whole, indivisible and distinct from other people or collective psychology (though also in relation to those)" (*CDJA* 76)—is touted as a modern, and perhaps modernist, way of becoming oneself in a secularized world.

Today Jung and Campbell after him stand branded as romantics. Campbell came to prominence, with *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), at a time when many scholars in America were consciously reframing the nation's myths. Henry Nash Smith (1906-1986) represented the myth of the American West in *Virgin Land* (1950), R. W. B. Lewis (1917-2002) uncovered nineteenth-century American examples of the first man in *The American Adam* (1955), and Perry Miller (1905-1963) humanized the country's Puritan forbears in *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956). Donald E. Pease has called this movement, which includes literary critics Leslie Fiedler (1917-2003) and Leo Marx (1919-), "the Myth and Symbol school of American studies" (162): "The symbolic national tradition that Myth and Symbol scholars invented enabled the symbolic engineers responsible for the forging of the nation's foreign policy to fashion imaginary resolutions for the seemingly intractable political dilemmas that confronted Americans throughout the cold war" (165). Pease, a student of it, once condemned this school with what he describes as "excoriating" rhetoric but has since softened his position: "My real though utterly displaced target was, as I have now come to realize, the myth symbol pedagogy in which Jim Miller had trained me" ("American Studies: An Interview with Donald Pease"). As he conceives it, this school, spanning the forties into the sixties, lost its relevance when the United States faced the crisis of violence in Vietnam. Campbell—and Frye, as a Canadian—stand in relation to the Myth and Symbol school of literary studies in a curious way. Where Frye sought to unify the human creation of literature under a single theory, Campbell endeavored to look at myths beyond American borders and in the stories of the country's indigenous peoples to deliver to secular Americans a sense of connection with life everywhere on the planet. And yet Frye's project inevitably carries Canadian inflections, just as Campbell's globalizing humanism is born out of an American context. Where other Myth and Symbol scholars concerned themselves with national mythology, Frye and Campbell courted the metanarrative of human myth.

Glen Robert Gill, a devotee of Frye, has recently argued that Jung's "orientations and intentions [toward existential empowerment and affirmation] did not prevent him from making certain metaphysical assertions that dilute the phenomenological basis from which he hoped his theories would derive their authority" (48). Hazard Adams, in *Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic* (1983), finds Campbell to be a reductionist reliant on mysticism: "In this theory we find an unconscious return to romantic 'religious' allegory even as the rhetoric of the presentation denigrates allegory in favor of the 'miraculous' symbol" (248). The myth scholar most critical of Campbell is Segal, who sees Campbell as dogmatic, "an evangelist for myth" (*Theorizing About Myth* 137). Segal's worry in "The Romantic Appeal of Joseph Campbell" (1990) is that Campbell's popularity would lead others to see his as the *only* theory of myth: "Campbell's work is an important introduction to myth. It is simply not the last word" (*Theorizing About Myth* 141). Contrast that to the attitude put forth in "The Dilettante Among Symbols," the introduction to Indologist Heinrich Zimmer's *The King and the Corpse: Tales of the Soul's Conquest of Evil* (1948), edited by Campbell after Zimmer's death:

> What [symbols and stories] demand of us is not the monologue of a coroner's report, but the dialogue of a living conversation. [...]They have to be questioned and consulted anew, with every age, each age approaching them with its own variety of ignorance and understanding, its own set of problems, and its own inevitable questions. [...] We can never exhaust the depths—of that we may be certain; but then neither can anyone else. And a cupped handful of the fresh waters of life is sweeter than a whole reservoir of dogma, piped and guaranteed. [...] No matter what the reading accessible to our present vision, it cannot be final. It can only be a preliminary glimpse. And we should regard it as an inspiration and a stimulation, not as a final definition precluding further insights and differing approaches. (3-6)

Campbell credited Zimmer (1890-1943) above Jung in his own intellectual development, saying, "If I do have a guru [...] it would be Zimmer—the one who really gave me the courage to interpret myths out of what I knew of their common symbol" (Toms 123). The

passage above expresses the focus running throughout Campbell's work, so that if he could be accused of being dogmatic, perhaps his is a dogma against dogmatism.

Bernard DeVoto (1897-1955), historian of the American West, once noted, "It is a little hard to know what romantic means to those who use the word umbrageously" (Robertson 345). The sense one gets in reading this criticism of their work is that the critics are themselves uncomfortable with Jung and Campbell's reliance on metaphysics. Ritske Rensma presents a concise reading of Campbell's metaphysics in *The Innateness of Myth* (2009):

> Campbell felt that when one goes deeply enough into the unconscious one begins to make contact with layers that are truly transpersonal, that connect one to more than just the individual psyche. This is already true for dream consciousness, which contains the collective unconscious: this layer is transpersonal in the sense that it is the same in all of us, and because it is instinctual also connects us to the world of nature. The layer of deep dreamless sleep, however, is even more transpersonal, as it is a layer of which it is no longer possible to say whether it is inside of us or outside of us: as a 'ground of being' it lies at the root of both matter and psyche. Dreams and myths arise from it, and by getting in touch with dreams and myths we connect to this source. (169)

For Jung it manifested in his concept of synchronicity, for Campbell the notion of a transparence to transcendence. Their crime appears to be spiritual belief, something hardly peculiar to them. In a practical way, Kevin Schilbrack defends metaphysical interpretation, arguing that "to assume that myths cannot involve metaphysics blinds one to the possibility that a myth attempts to describe a culture's understanding of reality as such" (95). Huskinson clarifies this distinction: "Whether the transcendent is itself a myth or a source and composite of myth is [...] not a matter of dispute for Jungians, who readily accept its influence. The nature of the transcendent, however, is a matter for dispute for post-Jungians" (3). Campbell championed the influence of a transcendent source for life. If such belief is concomitant with romanticism, it does not render their approaches to myth invalid, though it does present the opportunity to explore its role.

These modern, secular spiritual stances on myth can be taken as reactionary against the rationalism upheld by earlier scholars like Tylor and Frazer; perhaps rationalism's assumption of superiority over spirituality spurred romantic points of view to arise anew. Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Jung, Zimmer, Campbell, Rollo May, Hillman, Moriarty, and others understood pure reason to be incapable of explaining everything there is to know about human beings. They did not reject the scientific advances of their day, but felt the acute lacking, the empty spaces within and without, resulting from a complete reliance on rationalism for the difficult and dynamic explanations of one's individual existence. The emotional depths of life's subjective experiences cannot be neatly mapped out like our genome, but their expressions do manifest in works of art, which can then be studied in a plethora of ways, most formally under the umbrella field we call the humanities.

The modernists at the beginning of the twentieth century, exemplified in literature by Yeats, Woolf, Joyce, H.D., Eliot, Lawrence, and Faulkner, sought to remythicize a West bound to realism. When they rejected convention, they invited symbol and metaphor back into the artistic realm. Campbell may even be read as a late modernist, his scholarship lacking the irony that marks postmodernism. He championed the modernist writers and painters, referring to the works of Mann, Joyce, and Picasso from the beginning to the end of his career; his first book, co-written with Henry Morton Robinson, was *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake* (1944), which deciphers some of the book's broader aspects for those readers in want of a Virgil guiding them through Joyce's infernal text. The book was born out of criticisms Campbell and Robinson launched at Thornton Wilder's play *The Skin of Our Teeth* (1942), after they felt Wilder had insincerely appropriated aspects of *Finnegans Wake*.

Campbell's interpretation of myth proved to be the most popular among Americans in the second half of the twentieth century. Well known for its influence on George Lucas's

development of *Star Wars*, Campbell's conception of the heroic cycle, the monomyth, attracted artists and writers of all sorts. Author John Barth taped Campbell's diagram for the monomyth above his typewriter while writing *Giles Goat-Boy, or, The Revised New Syllabus* (1966), and formally explored it in his lecture "*Mystery* and *Tragedy*: The Twin Motions of Ritual Heroism" (1964). Particularly useful to Barth was Campbell's recognition of myth's spectrum of correspondences:

> [A] good thing about Campbell is that he seems to keep clear a [...] distinction, between the kind of meaning conscious symbols have and the kind that myths have. To explain a symbol—cultural, literary, whatever—you look for its referent; but you don't explain a myth these days at all, my mythological colleagues tell me: What you do is look for correspondences, merely, between it and other things, and correspondences of course may be manifold, coexistent, and equally "legitimate," though of unequal interest and heuristic value. (45)

Campbell's work in comparative mythology led him to believe that the benefit of a mythic understanding of life is that it vitalizes, arms against pitfalls, prepares people for and guides them through anxieties, failures, and triumphs. In the interviews with Bill Moyers that were broadcast on American public television as *The Power of Myth* (1988) and made Campbell a household name, he championed just such an awareness:

> [M]ythology is not a lie, mythology is poetry, it is metaphorical [...] It's important to live life with the experience, and therefore the knowledge, of its mystery and of your own mystery. This gives life a new radiance, a new harmony, a new splendor. Thinking in mythological terms helps to put you in accord with the inevitables of this vale of tears. You learn to recognize the positive values in what appear to be the negative moments and aspects of your life. The big question is whether you are going to be able to say a hearty yes to [...] the adventure of being alive. (163)

He saw myth as the exhaustless repository from which narratives are woven. A myth need not be written, painted, sung, or told—it can be a wholly private story or representation of what lies beyond standard human understanding—but there are people among us, artists, who are compelled to create and share what they discover at the exchange between conscious and unconscious experience.

While an archetype can never be captured in our understanding, it will project images by which it can be recognized. Hillman has provided a concise rundown of Jung's notions of archetypes, and further makes the case for reading them always as metaphors:

> Archetypes are semantically metaphors. They have a double existence which Jung presented in several ways: (1) they are full of internal oppositions, positive *and* negative poles; (2) they are unknowable *and* known through images; (3) they are instinct *and* spirit; (4) they are congenital, yet not inherited; (5) they are purely formal structures *and* contents; (6) they are psychic *and* extrapsychic (psychoid). [... *E]very statement regarding the archetypes is to be taken metaphorically*, prefixed with an "as-if." (*Re-Visioning Psychology* 156; italics original)

What we see is not the archetype itself but an image of it, wearing clothes, so to speak, that we recognize from the outer world as we know it. For instance, though a Buddhist monk and a Catholic nun may through prayer or meditation achieve a state of transcendence, we don't hear about nuns receiving visions of Buddha or Buddhist monks encountering the Virgin Mary. Both may experience spiritual ecstasy, but it will manifest in the dress of their individual, local, cultural tradition. Wendy Doniger provides a brilliant simile, drawn from science fiction, to explain the difference between an archetype and an archetypal image: "Like the Invisible Man, who could only be seen when he was wrapped in bandages or dressed in a hat and a coat, the archetype can only be 'seen' when it is enveloped in the bandages that each cultural manifestation swathes it in" (O'Flaherty "The Survival of Myth in Science Fiction" 24). Steven F. Walker adds that where critics of Jungian psychology trip in their assessment of it, and I direct this at Campbell's critics as well, is the distinction between the concepts of myth and archetype:

> [M]ythmaking brings what is relatively timeless (the archetypal image as a representation of the instinctual world of the archetypes) into the world of human history; mythmaking brings what is pre-cultural into the world of human culture. Since the *archetypal image* as *archetypal motif* becomes represented in a *myth* in the terms of a particular culture and of a particular moment in history, it is improper to consider a myth as ageless or as universal as an archetype, since it bears the particular stamp of the specific age and culture that produces it. (19)

The humanist recognition of universality in the study of mythology points through those specific stamps, while celebrating their unique inflections, to the archetypal situations common to members of the species scientifically named *Homo sapiens sapiens.*

Here it is appropriate to acknowledge Doniger's scholarship because she reads the archetypal approach differently. A disciple of Mircea Eliade, himself a friend of Jung, she is upfront when acknowledging Campbell's stature. "One might say," she wrote in her review of his *Atlas of World Mythology*, "Jung, Mr. Eliade, and Mr. Campbell constitute the mythological troika of [the twentieth] century" ("Origins of Myth-Making Man" 3). But in "Joseph Campbell, or, rather, the followers of Joseph Campbell" (*Other People's Myths* 175), Doniger sees those who "would reduce all myths to a colorless, minimal, universal form, a common denominator so common that it has no nobility left at all" (35):

> Like their archetypes, myths do not, strictly speaking, have meanings; they provide contexts in which meaning occurs. [...] To this degree, a myth is not so much a true story as a story on which truth is based, a story which people may infuse with their truth. [...] When the archetype is regarded as the sum total of all the manifestations, when everything is put in, the myth is enriched; when the archetype is regarded as what is left when all the manifestations are removed, when everything is taken out, the myth is impoverished. (35, 36)

Her respect for Campbell is sincere, noting "he is critically aware of the great gaps in our knowledge, and he usually identifies his hypotheses as no more than that" (O'Flaherty "Origins of Myth-Making Man" 24), but she labels him "a Jungian without shadows" (24), curious given that Campbell deeply influenced George Lucas's creation of Darth Vader, one of the most infamous shadows in film for over thirty-five years now. Surmising in her review of his *Atlas of World Mythology* that the book "is good art, not good science" (25), one senses that Doniger's criticism hinges on the romantic aspects of Campbell's perspective.

Here I argue that Campbell was not a scientist; he was a humanist who furthered meaningful discussion of the emotional, spiritual, and psychological forces at play in mythic arts and literatures from cultures around the world and throughout time. Irish mystic John

Moriarty's position on this is fitting: "It has never occurred to me that those of us who aren't scientists should abdicate to scientists the privilege of talking about the universe" (*TGLT3* LXXII). Doniger simply sees myth from a slightly different point of view; so slight, in fact, that one can argue Campbell's presentation of the cultural idiosyncrasies of stories found anywhere fits her definition of enrichment. For where Campbell, and Jung before him, reveled was in the sheer diversity of mythic narratives dealing with the same basic human, that is archetypal, situations. "One of the reasons I lost my temper with Joseph Campbell was because he did it wrong and made it harder for me to persuade people that it was possible to do it right," she writes, "his static monomyth is the very antithesis of the ceaselessly engaged and always subject-filled approach that I argue for" (*Implied Spider* 64). She quotes another brilliant critic, Marina Warner, to level the serious charge of "the archetype as the enemy not only of social change but also of social justice" (*Implied Spider* 137):

> When history falls away from a subject, we are left with Otherness, and all its power to compact enmity, recharge it and recirculate it. An archetype is a hollow thing, but a dangerous one, a figure or image which through usage has been uncoupled from the circumstances which brought it into being, and goes on spreading false consciousness. [...] The theory of archetypes, which is essentially ahistorical, helps to confirm gender inevitability and to imprison male and female in stock definitions. (Warner 239, 279)

Warner is right that an archetype is a hollow thing, but it is not fair to assume it is therefore dangerous. Some archetypes don't coup but, rather, coo when expressed. The loud and oppressive manifestations hopefully receive scrutiny before causing harm to self and Other, or either, but they are not the only show in town. Jung and the post-Jungians believe that *any archetype can be expressed across the full valence of human experience*. Mother as archetype can be anything—nurturing, vengeful, indifferent, *anything*—so what we consider is how Mother is inflected and then why. Interpretation *must* include history *and* histories: personal, societal, ethnic, ancestral, even evolutionary. From a post-Jungian view, Warner has been one of the many voices combating myths of masculinity and femininity supporting patriarchy—

what Marion Woodman calls one of "the outworn mythologies" (9)—as its privileged position in the West changes. It is true, too, that archetypal critics re-vision Jungian concepts, especially as attitudes toward gender and sexuality change.[4]

The laziest theory of archetypes, which neither Warner nor Doniger are putting forward, confuses an archetypal image for the archetype, i.e. nurturing Mother is read as the Mother archetype.[5] From the depth psychological point of view, archetypes are formless, and we haven't chosen them; as conditions of life they simply occur, entirely regardless of the values we perpetually project onto them. We have not invented death, mother, child, war, wholeness, and so on—but we, through the diverse effects of living, *inflect* all of these. Hillman says, "Mythic metaphor is the correct way of speaking about the archetypes because, like Gods, they do not stand still. Like Gods they cannot be defined except through and by their complications in each other" (*Re-Visioning Psychology* 157). We are concerned with inflections of life's energies that run the gamut, from experience to transcendence, not meanings reduced to monoliths. Campbell, maintaining "one can never exhaust [a work of art's] meaning" or "possibility," jokes about this serious misstep to the archetypal approach: "Ask an artist, 'What does your picture mean?' Well, if he despises you enough, he'll tell you. The point is that if you need him to tell you what it means, then you haven't seen it" (*Pathways to Bliss* 97). If one is going to study the cultural specificity of archetypal images, one must be able to identify the archetypes they constellate. Today an archetypal approach to mythology is incomplete if one only focuses on archetypes *or* archetypal images. Both need

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[4] See, among others, Marion Woodman's *Ravaged Bridegroom: Masculinity in Women* (Inner City Books 1990) and *Dancing in the Flames* (with Elinor Dickson, Shambhala 1996), Baumlin, Baumlin and Jensen's *Post-Jungian Criticism* (State University of New York 2004), Lucy Huskinson's *Dreaming the Myth Onwards: New Directions in Jungian Therapy and Thought* (Routledge 2008), Mitch Walker's *Gay Liberation at a Psychological Crossroads* (BookSurge 2009), and Lin Fraser's "Depth psychotherapy with transgender people" in *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 24:2 (Routledge 2009).

[5] This is the problem behind most symbol dictionaries, which present finite definitions for archetypes, which are always multivalent. There are two exceptions: Chevalier and Gheerbrant's *Dictionary of Symbols* and the Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism's *Book of Symbols*. Both are consulted often by Jungians (ARAS is a Jungian Institute) and post-Jungians because they compile examples of images and how they are inflected in cultures around the world, living and dead. Each entry is an anthology of meanings, not a monolithic definition.

to be taken into account, acknowledging the tensions between the human universal and culturally specific.

Campbell listed four functions of myth: the metaphysical, the cosmological, the sociological, and the psychological (*MGC* 609-624):

- The metaphysical function "is to waken and maintain in the individual an experience of awe, humility, and respect, in recognition of that ultimate mystery, transcending names and forms, 'from which,' as we read in the Upanishads, 'words turn back'" (*MGC 609*). "It is that of arousing and maintaining in the individual a sense of awe and gratitude before what is and will forever remain the mystery of being, the mystery of the universe" (*Man and Myth*).

- The cosmological function is "that of rendering an image of the universe through which this sense of the mystery will be experienced, so that the whole world should become as it were a holy picture" (*Man and Myth*).

- The sociological function aims "to validate and maintain a certain specific social order" (*Man and Myth*).

- The psychological function is "the centering and harmonization of the individual, which in traditional systems was supposed to follow upon the giving of oneself, and even giving up of oneself altogether" (*MGC* 623). It is "that of carrying the individual through the stages of his life, from the dependency of childhood to the responsibilities of adulthood, in terms of his local culture requirements, and then to carry him out the final door" (*Man and Myth*).

Key to our understanding of myth's place in the West today are Campbell's metaphysical and psychological functions, particularly in relation to compensation. Perhaps this is no accident, as he notes:

> When you compare the societies of the world, it is [...] the fourth that seems to be the most constant, and the first, the mystical attitude. [...] In our present world the cosmological and the sociological have been taken away from us. Our image of the cosmos is totally different from that of the religious traditions in which we've been brought up. And the social order is totally different from what it was in the days when these laws of Moses and so forth were composed. [...] The basic psychological problems of youth, maturity, and age, and death, and the mystical problem of the mystery of the universe, these remain. And so it is largely from the psychological standpoint that one can reinterpret, re-experience, and reuse the traditions which science and the new morality seem to have taken away. (*Man and Myth*)

So whereas we have learned, thanks to the sciences, that Earth is a sphere revolving around the Sun, which itself is a star on the outskirts of a galaxy, which itself is one of countless galaxies in the universe, and that we ourselves have risen, like all living things on the planet, through a branching of mutations at the molecular level of DNA, and whereas Westerners have convened to write their own laws instead of relying solely on scriptures for legal and social systems, there are still needs within us right now that can be nourished through an active engagement with myth: a way to metabolize the mystery beyond mystery, that of existence as experienced beyond language and our physical senses, and a way, or at least the odd signpost, indicating the stages and ordeals of life commonly experienced by everybody, threshold passages such as birth, death, trauma and triumph, war, fear, love. Moriarty says, "Myths are instinct with wonder. Like nothing else perhaps in our culture, they uncompromisingly mediate the difficult strangeness of self and of world. Therefore the philomythos has as good a chance of reaching and living in the Truth as the philosophos does" (*TGLT3* IX).

Campbell believed that the cosmological and sociological functions of myth as experienced through a religious tradition had failed for many Americans because those institutions have answered reason's smugness toward them by attempting to historicize their scriptures. He stressed that mythic symbols are destroyed as soon as dogma dictates what those symbols mean and what they should evoke in us: "[A]ll the historic events that are so important to us in our tradition should not be important to us in any way except as symbols of powers within ourselves" (*Goddesses* 14). Virgin birth in human beings, for instance, is a physical impossibility. Demanding that we accept it as a fact does not convince those of us who have been shown that it takes sperm to fertilize an egg. There is nothing wrong with virgin birth as a metaphor, as a motif that speaks to the mystery of inner renewal, a new sense of life, a rebirth of one's vitality. But for those of us who paid attention in biology class and

encounter spiritual leaders presenting virgin birth as an event for the history books, our chances of experiencing the metaphorical sense is made difficult at best and, at worst, is utterly squandered.

Campbell's answer to the problem appeals to the myth of individualism and the individual's duty to sift through those fractured metaphors to quench our thirsty spirits:

> There are mythologies that are scattered, broken up, all around us. We stand on what I call a terminal moraine of shattered mythic systems that once structured society. They can be detected all around us. You can select any of these fragments that activate your imagination for your own use. Let it help to shape your own relationship to the unconscious system out of which these symbols have come. (*Thou Art That* 86-7)

Hillman comes at the problem in a similar way:

> This faithful attention to the imaginal world, this love which transforms mere images into presences, gives them living being, or rather reveals the living being which they do naturally contain, is nothing other than *remythologizing*. Psychic contents become *powers, spirits, gods*. One senses their presence as did all earlier peoples who still had soul. These presences and powers are our modern counterparts of former pantheons of living beings, of animated soul parts, protective household gods, and ominous daimones. These beings were *mythical* in that they were part of a *tale* or psychic drama. The same archetypal dramas are played in us and by us, and through us for our behalf, once the imaginal aspect of our lives and of life itself is given attention. (*A Blue Fire* 85)

The emphasis here falls on the individual to discover for him or herself those stories that affirm and inform the sense of being alive. Here stories are phenomenological expressions of myth, meeting the soul's needs with narratives.

Rensma takes Segal's interpretation of Campbell to task for its denial of Campbell's intellectual evolution in his relationship with Jung's work over the course of his career. The same criticism could be leveled at Adams's critique of Campbell in *Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic*, for he only examines *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) and fails to consider the rest of Campbell's output over the following thirty years. Rensma makes a strong argument to read Campbell's work from 1968 to his death as post-Jungian, because in the final stage of his life he embraced key Jungian concepts. Campbell showed that the idea

of the archetype is nothing Jung invented, but that the same notion can be found elsewhere under other names. Rensma offers a series of dyads Campbell used of thinkers in different cultures and times talking about archetypes:

Elementary idea	—	ethnic idea
Mãrga	—	desi
Open IRM	—	imprint
Archetype-as-such	—	archetypal image (153)

By showing the sameness of these concepts across the disciplines of anthropology, Eastern spirituality, biology, and Jungian psychology, Campbell historicized an interdisciplinary approach to archetypes and archetypal images. This is helpful when discussing symbols encountered in literature, because even though stories wear the clothes of their authors' ethnic and social identities, beneath that layer they still speak from the collective unconscious:

> There is a beautiful saying of Novalis: "The seat of the soul is there, where the outer and the inner worlds meet." That is the wonderland of myth. From the outer world the senses carry images to the mind, which do not become myth, however, until there transformed by fusion with accordant insights, awakened as imagination from the inner world of the body [...] These are planes and orders of consciousness that can be brought to mind through meditations on approximately mythologized forms. Plato tells of universal ideas, the memory of which is lost at birth but through philosophy may be recalled. These correspond to Bastian's "elementary ideas" and Jung's "archetypes of the collective unconscious." (*IROS* 5-6)

While Campbell's work exploring universalities leaves him unpopular with some colleagues, it is precisely that which won him respect from modern mythmakers and the public. For Americans living with the belief that all men are created equal, universality is one of the most powerful cultural myths. Campbell's theory of myth, humanistic in scope, embraces the motto of the United States, *E pluribus unum*, making his a uniquely American approach. Where his critics see in his scholarship a one-sided universalism, other readers find his kaleidoscopic delight in the diversity of expressions for specific motifs occurring across cultures. In a two-hundred year old country of immigrants from lands, races, and traditions near and far, a system of myth that embraces the diversity of imported and newly-hatched

symbols has shown great appeal. Campbell's theory of myth, romantic in its inclusiveness, affirms the ethos set out in United States of America's foundational documents: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. His theory of myth is one by the people and for the people, whoever they are, wherever they came from, and however they tell their stories.

From Campbell's perspective, the United States is not devoid of myth. Like all societies, the U.S.A. is held together *by* myth, by the collective beliefs, both acknowledged and subliminal, shared and fought over by the individuals and groups that make it up. What has changed is the recognition of myth, which Campbell sees as having been repressed by a collective emphasis on rationalism. Here it is fitting to identify some of the myths informing American society. James Oliver Robertson's *American Myth, American Reality* (1980) is a history of precisely that, juxtaposing what U.S. citizens believe about America with historical facts:

> American myths are relatively new to human history. They are no less powerful and tenacious because they are only ten or fifteen generations old. And perhaps because American history is relatively brief, few Americans have tried to separate themselves and their realities from their myths in order to describe and understand those myths. Quite rationally and consciously, most Americans try to make themselves into the images they know their fellow countrymen prefer—in order to win elections, sell goods, get jobs, or simply to be able to get along with others. More importantly (because more pervasively), we receive and accept without any rational awareness or conscious analysis many of the images, attitudes, behavior patterns, symbols, heroes, stories, metaphors, analogies, and explanations—the myths, in short—which are available and which make us and our world logical, understandable, and American. (345-346)

Some of the many myths Robertson (1932-2005) identifies are revolution, independence, progress, equality, and freedom. He considers the myths of class mobility, geographical mobility, manifest destiny, wilderness, the frontier, and the construct of the American Indian. East and West, North and South, Republican and Democrat, he measures regional and political binary identities as parts of the whole. And then there is the United States'

historically shifting attitude toward war and the enduring myths of American individualism, of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

In the two decades following WWII, where we are focusing our attention, people in the United States faced new situations which birthed new myths. A major one was the myth of the world superpower. The scientific advances that ended WWII produced only a brief period of weapons superiority, ending 29 August 1949 when the Soviet Union tested their own atom bomb. Though the U.S.A. was (and remains to this day) the only nation to have used nuclear weapons against another country, fear of nuclear annihilation inspired the Cold War with the U.S.S.R., a conflict fought in defense spending, weapons proliferation, and space exploration. Indeed the United States, anticipating Soviet discoveries in particle physics, reframed itself from aggressor to defender, renaming the War (and Navy) Department in 1947 to the Defense Department. This shift, seemingly subtle, changed American consciousness of war, which is explored in Chapter 2 on Vonnegut's war stories. The arena where competition between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. played out most visibly was in exploration and became known as the Space Race. The American myth of the frontier expanded beyond its west coast shore, Alaska, and Hawaii to include low Earth orbit and the Moon. Within U.S. borders, the Cold War pitted citizens against each other in the Red Scare, blacklisting, and McCarthyism. This myth of the superpower, which Americans believed in and hold to today, brought with it many anxieties and new dreams for the future.

There were also radical changes in the way Americans viewed race in the fifties and sixties. The old myth of racial hierarchy, with whites above and blacks beneath and others in between, was challenged and legally rejected. Women started entering college and the workplace in greater numbers, and in 1960 took control of contraception with the FDA's approval of the birth control pill, mythically regarded in capital letters as The Pill. Automobile ownership became a mark of normalcy and interstate and highway infrastructure

provided a vigorous new circulatory system of freight and travel across the nation. Industry and consumerism invigorated the economy, appliances altered life lived in the American home, and television changed the way America presented itself to itself, repackaging and eventually exporting to other countries the myth of the American Dream. These sweeping changes were not lost on Campbell, whose interest in mythology stretched from prehistory to his present day. An American himself, shaped by but also aware of the United States' own myths through the nature of his work, his theory of myth, concurrent with their careers, provides insight into Vonnegut and Bradbury's America.

1.2 Short Fiction as Myth

> Living one's myth doesn't mean simply living *one* myth. It means one lives *myth*; it means *mythical living*. As I am many persons, so I am enacting pieces of various myths. As all myths fold into each other, no single piece can be pulled out with the statement: "This is my myth." Remember, the mythic is a perspective and not a program.
>
> James Hillman
> (*Re-Visioning Psychology* 158)

Myth's webbing traces through any form of expression, but this study examines myth through the medium of the short story. Compact narratives lend themselves to condensing metaphor, that figure of speech Vico (1668-1744) explained as "a fable in brief" (129). Kurt Vonnegut reflected upon this point in a 1999 radio interview: "The short story is a very special art form and almost as artificial as the sonnet really, because it misrepresents life. Events can't be that meaningful and that compact" (*Bookworm*). Bradbury offered his own perspective: "I speak in tongues. I write metaphors. Every one of my stories is a metaphor you can remember. The great religions are all metaphor" (Weller 204). A novel, play, or film brims with metaphors, is oftentimes an anthology of metaphors, whereas short stories, like lyric poems, songs, and some of the visual arts, can single out and distill one with great precision. Short story theorist

Charles E. May links the short story back to the impetus for myth—"a feeling—rather than a concept of the systematic pattern of social functioning" (131). May, who rallied around the short story in the nineteen-eighties and nineties as a form deserving of its own criticism, helped found the scholarly movement that has brought forth a suite of short story theories.

Hillman also links myth and metaphor to the experience of living: "Metaphors are more than ways of speaking; they are ways of perceiving, feeling, and existing. [… P]sychological consciousness, because it sees through, because it flourishes in ambiguity, is metaphorical" (*Re-Visioning Psychology* 156). May says short fiction's chief reason for existing as a form is "to 'defamiliarize' the everyday. Storytelling does not spring from one's confrontation with the everyday world, but rather from one's encounter with the sacred (in which true reality is revealed in all its plenitude) or with the absurd (in which true reality is revealed in all its vacuity)" (133). May's stance is that the short story disrupts or disturbs those aspects of life most people take for granted, "[defamiliarizing] our assumption that reality is simply the conceptual construct we take it to be, [throwing] into doubt that our propositional and categorical mode of perceiving can be applied to human beings as well as to objects" (137). Short stories, in his view, are based on and appeal to a receptive, deautomatized perspective, whereas the novel operates in an active, automatized mode. He cites psychologist Arthur Deikman's (1929-2013) bimodal automatized/deautomatized world view and Martin Buber's (1878-1965) philosophy of dialogue as fitting the narrative forms: I-It for the novel, I-Thou for short stories. Moment births short fiction, in this view, as opposed to successive events that make a novel.

I propose a variation of May's view, one that aligns with Campbell's work. There is another possibility in short fiction, one reaching past duality, which we might call a reautomatized mode but will label the supra-rational, or the Thou-I. It fuses awareness of self with awareness of the Other's self and accepts the two as linked, forming an awareness of

interconnectedness between and through all. "You can address anything as a 'thou,'" Campbell said, "and if you do it, you can feel the change in your own psychology. The ego that sees a 'thou' is not the same ego that sees an 'it.' And when you go to war with people, the problem of the newspapers is to turn those people into 'its'" (*POM* 78-79). Campbell often expressed this concept using a Sanskrit phrase from the Chāndogya Upaniṣad: *Tat tvam asi*, translated as "Thou art that." He drew from Arthur Schopenhauer's interpretation of the concept in *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) and later in *The Basis of Morality* (1841):

> "This presupposes," he declares, "that I have to some extent identified myself with the other and therewith removed for the moment the barrier between the 'I' and the 'Not-I'. Only then can the other's situation, his want, his need, become mine. I then no longer see him in the way of an empirical perception, as one strange to me, indifferent to me, completely other than myself; but in him I suffer, in spite of the fact that his skin does not enfold my nerves. . . ." (*IROS* 83-84)

Campbell also cites physicist Erwin Schrödinger's appraisal of the phrase in *My View of the World* (1964):

> [I]nconceivable as it seems to ordinary reason, you—and all other conscious beings as such—are all in all. Hence this life of yours which you are living is not merely a piece of the entire existence, but is in a certain sense the *whole*; only this whole is not so constituted that it can be surveyed in one single glance. This, as we know, is what the Brahmins express in that sacred, mystic formula which is yet really so simple and so clear: *Tat tvam asi*, this is you. (22)

This belief in a union of all things pushes beyond rationality into metaphysics to form what I call a supra-rational or mythological perspective. It is evoked by a subjective experience of symbol, the symbol of the mummy in the case of Charlie Flagstaff, which itself can be rendered within and beyond the confines of fiction. This phenomenon is dynamic, found in many places, arts, even sciences, and is not limited to short stories. My decision to focus solely on short fiction is similar to May's, in that the form lends itself to symbolic distillation:

> In their very shortness, short stories have remained close to the original source of narrative in myth, folktale, fable, and fairy tale. They, therefore, are more

> apt to focus on basic desires, dreams, anxieties, and fears than novels are and thus are more aligned with the original religious nature of narrative. Short stories are therefore more apt to embody a timeless theme and are thus less dependent on a social context than novels. Consequently, short stories are more likely to identify characters in archetypal terms and are more patterned and aesthetically unified than novels are. (*NSST* XXVI)

If the archetypal theory is lifted from religious interpretation and applied to secular literature, be it deemed literary or popular, we may see in the characters and situations depicted the culture's archetypes in action. May argues that "the tradition of the short story as descended from myth, folktale, fable, and romance forms, drives it toward focusing on eternal values rather than temporal ones and sacred/unconscious reality rather than profane/everyday reality" (*NSST* XVIII). I do not disagree, but add that in the short fiction we examine, the eternal and sacred/unconscious will be dressed in temporal and profane/everyday outfits and idioms. Applied to Kurt Vonnegut and Ray Bradbury's popular short fiction, we shall discover alongside extraterrestrials, time machines, and monsters the undeniably postwar American-ness of their work as it explores problems and situations both ancient and new to those people who identified themselves as twentieth-century Americans. The editors of *It Came From the 1950s!*, Darryl Jones, Elizabeth McCarthy, and Bernice M. Murphy, have set a complementary aim in their volume's exploration of postwar pop culture:

> [P]opular culture could operate conspiratorially to reinforce the power of vested interests—as a recursive medium, which does the thinking for its audience, [...] popular culture was the perfect medium for securing and enforcing cultural-imperial hegemony. And yet, as we have seen, popular culture also became a means of expressing themes and concerns which openly contradicted the cozily consensual message being disseminated by the military-industrial complex of which it might be viewed as the cultural arm. This duality, we would argue, is at the very heart of popular culture and its appeal. (14-15)

That tension between enforcement and subversion is present in Neumann's illustration of the emerging and disintegrating archetypes upholding the cultural arch in the western world. There are those who fight to uphold fading cultural norms and those who undermine their task to do so; there are those who attack new cultural conditions and those who seek to

establish them against great odds. The anxiety arising from this struggle, which is itself a culture's attempt to find balance under shifting archetypes, provided Vonnegut and Bradbury with the wellspring from which they crafted their fiction. And again we should consider Jung's statement that, "[Art] is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up forms in which the age is most lacking." These two writers were anything but poster boys for American hegemony, but they were not pure rebels either. Jones, McCarthy, and Murphy's point about duality reminds us that while Vonnegut and Bradbury's stories often confront and criticize postwar American life, they also embrace many of the foundational and adaptive ideals thought to be idiosyncratically, or if you prefer, exceptionally American.

If we pan out hemispherically and briefly consider differing perspectives on literature from other parts of the Americas, we see the writer's individual mythic impulse while heeding the mythic pulse of his or her own society—and how these are inflected in a Pan-American way. Given the European colonial history of North and South America, there can be traced a common effort in the many cultures there to represent themselves as independent from Europe, to inflect archetypes by their own distinct warp and woof. "In this new world, the old stories break down," says Canadian writer Robert Kroetsch (1927-2011) (29). New stories based on American archetypes—newly-hatched and ethnographically uprising—offer recognitions where those imposed from Europe fall short. Another Canadian, Frye, who carried the torch of archetypal criticism from the nineteen-fifties to his death in 1991, articulated a possible marriage through literature of those individuating myths we live by and the myths that uphold a society:

> Literature [...] is conscious mythology: it creates an autonomous world that gives us an imaginative perspective on the actual one. But there is another kind of mythology, one produced by society itself, the object of which is to persuade us to accept existing social values. "Popular" literature, the kind that is read for relaxation and the quieting of the mind, expresses this social mythology. [...] I know of no critical rule for distinguishing them. [...] The same work may belong to both mythologies at once, and in fact the separation

> between them is largely a perspective of our own revolutionary age. (*Bush Garden* 237)

Bradbury and Vonnegut worked in this final mode, melding the two in a form aiming at psychological relevancy with mainstream appeal in the U.S.A. Each of their stories then becomes a new creation of narrative expressing and expanding U.S. American mythology. "[The] imaginative writer is finding his identity within the world of literature itself," Frye argued. "He is withdrawing from what Douglas LePan calls a country without a mythology into the country of mythology" (*Bush Garden* 240). LePan's (1914-1998) poem, "A Country Without a Mythology," imagines a "stranger" wandering through the Canadian wilderness, searching for berries to eat, overwhelmed by the natural world and the "savage people" who live there (75-76). The descendant of Europeans in North America, as Frye reads it, must get to work at writing his new culture's mythology in order to survive. This can be seen as a colonizing/imperialistic tendency, but at the same time there is no culture, living or dead, that has not told stories about itself. As much as we love the far reaches of fantasy, we still love to find life as we know it in our fiction.

Kroetsch claims that from European arrival onward, Americans have been in an ongoing process of finding out what it means to be American in any number of ways:

> It is the paradox of Columbus's perceptual moment that it cannot end. The moment of the discovery of America continues. Its re-enactment becomes our terrifying test of greatness; we demand to hear again and always the cry into mystery, into an opening. We demand, of the risking eye, new geographies. And the search that was once the test of sailor and horse and canoe is now the test of the poet. (12)

Looking south of the U.S.A., Latin American critics, particularly from the Caribbean, have carried such concepts as far as political revolution. Cubans like Jose Martí (1853-1895) and Roberto Fernández Retamar have opposed both European myths and U.S. imperialism after it by identifying with the indigenous peoples both powers wiped out. Martí, while encouraging "to keep abreast of one's own time" in social and infrastructural changes, believed "[t]he

American intelligence is an indigenous plumage" (337). The conditions of life in Cuba, say, produce their own distinct homegrown myths. If aspects of European myths survive, they have been cannibalized, "[a]bsorption of the sacred enemy" as Brazilian modernist poet Oswald de Andrade (1890-1954) has it (43). Retamar, a proud independentista of Cuba, finds in literary criticism the opportunity to discover the uniqueness of American cultures in their literatures and through them the universals that connect with literatures from around the globe:

> [As] nearly as we can tell, and despite the tangle of our history, *in a certain sense* we are in circumstances similar to everyone elses', with all due consideration to each particular case. Accordingly, our insistence in rejecting the indiscriminate imposition of criteria born of other literatures cannot in any way be construed as isolationism: the truth is the exact opposite. We need to think out our concrete reality and point out its specific features, because this is the only way we will discover what we have in common with every other area of the globe, detect the real links, and arrive at what, someday, truly will be a general theory of world literature. (99)

Again, from a post-Jungian perspective, we see a celebration of the distinctiveness of archetypal images, which themselves clothe archetypes common to all people. Canadians and especially Cubans are defined and define themselves as existing apart from the U.S.A., and yet we see the thread through the American hemisphere of national selfhood as severed from Europe. Though the nation became independent in the eighteenth century, this comparison is raised to keep us from taking that independence as a done and dusted event. The height of the national calendar in the U.S.A. is Independence Day, lest we take it for granted in this study. It is best to keep in mind, too, that the short stories interpreted here were written mostly between WWII and the Kennedy assassination, two decades in which the U.S.A. assumed status as a superpower and reconstructed Western Europe, which it fought to liberate from itself. The United States did not want to be anything like Europe.

Two ways of giving attention to this aspect of our lives are the complementary acts of writing fiction and reading fiction. In the case of our present study, Vonnegut and Bradbury's

work is free, by virtue of our collective attitude toward fiction as an art, from religion's present tension to historicize. While religious institutions predominantly present their gospels as fact, thereby denying a metaphorical reading of their fantastic happenings, occurrences, and symbols, most of us will never read a science fiction, fantasy, or even a so-called realistic short story or novel and say, "Yes, this actually happened, is happening, or will happen, just like this, to the *t*." We do not have to believe that Billy Pilgrim or Kilgore Trout or Jim Nightshade and William Halloway lived and breathed and walked among us in order to experience something that, if it isn't factually true, carries truth. Readers do not demand that fiction, bought in the arenas of literary and popular culture, maintain nonfiction's implied authenticity or historical factuality. Doniger expresses this as reading without commitment: "[W]e have no *commitment* to the myths of 'Star Trek' or Tolkien; there is no group that will hold us responsible to live in a certain way because of these myths. Our suspension of disbelief when we read such stories is only momentary; it has no lasting effect upon us" ("The Survival of Myth in Science Fiction" 23). I disagree with the lengths to which she takes the point; after all, joking or not, in the first years of the twenty-first century tens of thousands have identified their faith as Jedi in censuses taken in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the Czech Republic. While there is not (yet?) a Church of Star Wars with a substantial following, it is too much to say myths of this type have no lasting effect upon us. But Doniger is correct about the collective lack of enforcement or coercion in following science fiction and fantasy stories as scripture. We are not expected to believe these stories to the degree religious institutions expect their faithful to believe holy writ. The often unrecognized acceptance that a science fiction story is not a factual or religious account grants the reader more immediate and less scrutinizing access to the imaginative realm as invoked by these writers.

This brings us to the symbolic language of myth: metaphor. The etymology of 'metaphor' originates in Ancient Greek *μεταφορά*, *μετα meaning 'beyond' and φορά* meaning 'carrying'. And that is what metaphors do: they carry us beyond. Structuralist Roman Jakobson (1896-1982) distinguished between metaphoric and metonymic poles in literary expression, poetry typically favoring metaphor while prose takes to metonymy. "A competition between both devices, metonymic and metaphoric, is manifest in any symbolic process" (60), Jakobson wrote, acknowledging a dynamic tension present in all verbal art. May supports the distinction: "Chiding literary critics for paying so much attention to the principle of metaphor in poetry and ignoring the principle of metonymy in prose, Jakobson notes that prose is often ignored because the verbal devices are unostentatious and seem transparent, and the parallelisms are less obvious" (XXI). In *The Short Story: The Reality of Artifice*, May tunes his theory upon this tension:

> [T]he short story has from its beginning been a hybrid form combining both the metaphoric mode of the old romance and the metonymic mode of the new realism. [... S]hort fiction [...] often features characters caught between their "as-if-real" nature and their status as functions of the fable in which they exist. As a result of this dual nature of character in the short story, the form takes on some of the metaphoric qualities that we usually associate with poetry: conflicts are not resolved solely by preestablished plot or by realistic characterization. Instead [...] characters ultimately confront a metaphoric embodiment of their dilemma. (72-73)

This is a major reason why Vonnegut and Bradbury's short stories succeed in their blend of fantasy, science-fiction, or gothic motifs with characters who exhibit a twentieth-century American psychology. Much has been written on metaphor in their most famous novels, on the book-burning firefighters of *Fahrenheit 451* as metaphor for censorship and McCarthyism, on Billy Pilgrim's coming unstuck in time in *Slaughterhouse-Five* as a metaphor for Post-Traumatic Stress.

But more waits to be unpacked in these writers' short stories, which, by virtue of the medium, lend themselves to distilled metaphor. With little space and time to establish

atmosphere, character, and plot, a necessary confidence of expression marks their short fiction. The boldness of a Martian setting or the unreality of a gadget that will ruin a housewife's life by whispering her worst insecurities back to her are tempered by characters whose behavior would be reliably believable by a mainstream audience. Encountered in "slick" magazines that boasted interviews, articles, and advertisements appealing to the American middle class, these tales had an uphill fight in suspending the disbelief of their readers, who likely would not have come to the magazine with science fiction or fantastic expectations. While many of their stories were indeed published in genre pulps, others found publication in the pages of *Collier's, The Saturday Evening Post, Cosmopolitan, McCall's*—everything from *Playboy* to *Ladies' Home Journal*. In the case of Vonnegut, Fiedler hammers home the legitimacy of myth in his popular work:

> [H]e began as a Pop writer, the author of "slick" fiction, written to earn money, which is to say, to fit formulas which are often genuine myths, frozen and waiting to be released. Fortunately, though he has sometimes written to suit the tastes of middle-aged ladies who constitute the readership of Ladies' Home Journal, he has tended more to exploit the mythology of the future. But he has, in any case—as writers of, rather than *about*, mythology must—written books that are thin and wide, rather than deep and narrow, books which open out into fantasy and magic by means of linear narration rather than deep analysis; and so happen on wisdom, fall into it through grace, rather than pursue it doggedly or seek to earn it by hard work. Moreover, like all literature which tries to close the gap between the elite and the popular audiences rather than to confirm it, Vonnegut's books tend to temper irony with sentimentality and to dissolve both in wonder. (7)

What the stories share is a consistency of clarity in their fantastic elements, which come through as culturally specific metaphors for the energies of life.

As modern mythmakers through short fiction, Vonnegut and Bradbury used varying shades of metaphor and metonymy, the level of each particular to each story, to express many of the personal and collective anxieties of their time and place. In his work studying mythology, Campbell found metaphor to be inseparable from myth:

> These images must point past themselves to that ultimate truth which must be told: that life does not have any one absolutely fixed meaning. These images

> must point past all meanings given, beyond all definitions and relationships, to that really ineffable mystery that is just the existence, the being of ourselves and of our world. If we give that mystery an exact meaning we diminish the experience of its real depth. But when a poet carries the mind into a context of meanings and then pitches it past those, one knows that marvelous rapture that comes from going past all categories of definition. Here we sense the function of metaphor that allows us to make a journey we could not otherwise make, past all categories of definition. (*Thou Art That* 8-9)

Through power of suggestion we are challenged beyond a mundane, concrete, positivistic understanding to a poetic, symbolic, mythic understanding reachable only through the imagination. In this way metaphor allows uncomfortable truths, notions, or feelings to be addressed—ones that may have gone unexpressed, unexplored, or unrecognized elsewhere in the culture.

The magazine industry of the time in question, those twenty years between WWII and the Kennedy assassination, started out verdant and, with the proliferation of TV in the American household in the late fifties, came out withered. There were the highbrow magazines, chief among them the *New Yorker*, which survives to this day, but there were also many large format magazines—*The Saturday Evening Post, Collier's, McCall's, Esquire, Cosmopolitan*, and others—that published multiple short stories weekly or monthly. These were not aimed at a literary audience but the mainstream, containing articles on an array of topics considered to be of general interest to white middle class readers. One magazine editor Bradbury and Vonnegut share is Knox Burger, who took over fiction at *Collier's* in 1948. He "cultivated a fruitful relationship with Bradbury by publishing six of his stories" between 1950 and 1952 (Eller *Becoming Ray Bradbury* 206). More fortuitous was Vonnegut's relationship with Burger, who gave his work a chance because they were friends from Vonnegut's time writing for the *Cornell Daily Sun* before the war. Burger gave Vonnegut his big break and would publish twelve of his stories in *Collier's* between 1950 and 1953. Charles Shields provides some context for these magazines:

> The pages of *Collier's* or the *Saturday Evening Post* indicated that most popular magazine fiction was an extension of consumers' wish fulfillment. Attractive, smartly dressed young couples were perpetually entertaining or, in the case of male professionals, working at executive level jobs. Big blocks of advertising, quarried from the same happy landscape, featured young men and women enjoying the good life—house, car, television, and home appliances. "The Golden Age of White People" was how Vonnegut later referred to the era. (104-105)

There were also inexpensive pulp magazines, printed on cheap paper, that catered specifically to science fiction and fantasy enthusiasts, a specialty market though easily found across the country. The pulps, as they were known, championed imaginative work and Bradbury and Vonnegut both found success there, particularly as the middlebrow market dried up. But we truly have to thank plucky young editors like Burger, who was only twenty-six when he took over fiction at *Collier's*, for bringing these writers and their mythic stories to a wider national audience. Room was made, amid these magazines' stories about middle class romance and careers, for the palatable sort of fantasies Bradbury and Vonnegut were writing, stories that coyly brought a sense of mystery into their readers' consciousness.

Let us turn to a story in which the mythic sense finds awakening in a distinctly American context. In "Colonel Stonesteel's Genuine Home-made Truly Egyptian Mummy," first published in 1981, Ray Bradbury tells of a boy and an old man who combine forces to defeat boredom's hold on their community. "Face it, boy," Colonel Stonesteel says, "Green Town, Upper Illinois, is the most common mean ordinary plain old bore of a town in the eternal history of the Roman, German, Russian, English, American empires!" (*Bradbury Stories* 319). On Labor Day, the American holiday observed on September's first Monday to honor the nation's workers, Charlie Flagstaff and the colonel construct a mummy from the lifetime of keepsakes found in the old man's attic. Ingredients include a papyrus scroll, a diploma, cannonball cotton, twigs, pussy willow and cattails, meadow grass, owl feather, yellow fox-eye, bent lizard tail, old nicotine bandages, patches of a Kissel Kar inner tube, and burned-out sparklers from the summer before World War I. Deposited in a field to be

discovered by farmer Tom Tuppen's plow, their craft causes a sensation, inspiring three mayoral speeches, two parades, and the fife-and-drum corps's hastily-learned rendition of the triumphal march from *Aïda*. The pranksters later abscond with their creation, lifting it from under the sheriff's guard at the post office, returning the mummy to the secrecy of the attic.

Regrouping, Colonel Stonesteel provides his own poetic estimation of the mummy's vitality:

> "He was everyone, no one, someone." A quiet pause. "You. Me. [...] He was, he is," murmured the colonel, "a bundle of old Sunday comic pages stashed in the attic to spontaneously combust from all those forgotten notions and stuffs. He's a stand of papyrus left in an autumn field long before Moses, a papier-mâché tumbleweed blown out of time, this way long-gone dusk, that way at come-again dawn . . . maybe a nightmare scrap of nicotine/dogtail flag up a pole at high noon, promising something, everything . . . a chart-map of Siam, Blue River Nile source, hot desert dust-devil, all the confetti of lost trolley transfers, dried-up yellow cross-country road maps petering off in sand dunes, journey aborted, wild jaunts yet to night-dream and commence. His body? . . . Mmmm . . . made of . . . all the crushed flowers from brand new weddings, dreadful old funerals, ticker-tapes unraveled from gone-off-forever parades to Far Rockaway, punched tickets for sleepless Egyptian Pharaoh midnight trains. Written promises, worthless stocks, crumpled deeds. Circus posters—see there? Part of his paper-wrapped ribcage? Posters torn off seedbarns in North Storm, Ohio, shuttled south toward Fulfillment, Texas, or Promised Land, Calif-orn-I-aye! Commencement proclamations, wedding notices, birth announcements . . . all things that were once need, hope, first nickel in the pocket, framed dollar on the café wall. Wallpaper scorched by the burning look, the blueprint etched there by the hot eyes of boys, girls, failed old men, time-orphaned women, saying: Tomorrow! Yes! *It* will happen! Tomorrow! Everything that died so many nights and was born again, glory human spirit, so many rare new daybreaks! All the dumb strange shadows you ever thought, boy, or I ever inked out inside my head at three A.M. All, crushed, stashed, and now shaped into one form under our hands and here in our gaze. That, that is what old King Pharaoh Seventh Dynasty Holy Dust himself is." (326)

Sewn together, the colonel darns, not damns, the mummy into existence, a precipitation of his works and days. His litany points to the significance of the individual scraps that went into the wrapping, giving the finished figure a cultural and collective numinosity. Their mummy is natural, of feathers, scales, and plant matter; it is worldly, Orientalized with papyrus and maps of Siam and the Nile; it is comic, transfiguring collected funnies pages from Sunday newspapers; it is economic, incorporating ticker-tape, once-valued stocks, deeds, the first

nickel and dollar earned; it is transportational, bearing tire patches, trolley transfers, train tickets, and posters for traveling circuses; it is institutional, recycling diploma and medical bandages; it is historical and traditional, stuffed with cannonball cotton and ribbed with spent 4th of July sparklers; it is geographical, boasting those scraps from seedbarns in Ohio, Texas, California; it is life's rites and thresholds, announcements for weddings and births and funerals. The mummy is the paper trail of American culture, embodying the way the United States of America quantifies and advertises and depicts itself and the world beyond its borders. It is a catalog of American life lived, greater than the sum total of its individual bits of detritus. This mummy illustrates Doniger's Invisible Man example of the archetype: the American wrappings hide something unknowable by any other means.

Stonesteel's mummy echoes the titular scarecrow from Nathaniel Hawthorne's (1804-1864) "Feathertop: A Moralized Legend" (1852), the last short story he wrote. The events transpire a decade shy of American independence from Great Britain, evident from a mention of the cession of Canada, which France granted in the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Feathertop is constructed by Mother Rigby, a New England witch who, like Colonel Stonesteel, crafts him from artifacts at hand. His skeleton is comprised of "a certain broomstick, on which Mother Rigby had taken many an airy gallop at midnight" (244), her husband's disabled flail, a pudding-stick, a broken chair rung, and a stick from the wood-pile. His flesh is a meal-bag full of straw and his head a pumpkin. These items speak to agriculture and, forming the skeleton's structure, they point to a foundation in farming. The clothes Rigby furnishes upon the body expand from that basis "to be the making of the man" (244). First mentioned is "an ancient plum-colored coat, of London make" that is worn, tattered, and threadbare. A round hole on the left breast is speculated to be the wound where "a star of nobility had been rent away" (244), and neighbors even suspect that the Black Man, meaning the Devil but also carrying racial connotations, would wear the coat "whenever he wished to make a grand

appearance at the governor's table" (244). Beneath that is a faded gold velvet waistcoat and a pair of "scarlet breeches, once worn by the French governor of Louisbourg, and the knees of which had touched the lower step of the throne of Louis le Grand. The Frenchman had given these small-clothes to an Indian powwow, who parted with them to the old witch for a gill of strong-waters, at one of their dances in the forest" (245). These three articles, "the stiff, rickety, incongruous, faded, tattered, good-for-nothing patchwork of its substance" (247), can be read as costume pieces representing American esteem for Old World colonial powers. England and France, by way of New England and New France, have been given to and then traded away by an indigenous American, ending up in the hands of the settler witch. Completed with silk stockings, dead Goodman Rigby's wig, and "a rusty three-cornered hat, in which was stuck the longest tail-feather of a rooster" (245), Feathertop, though named for the style of his wig and that final cocky flourish, stands as an exhibit of the colonial powers' history in the region and their worn-out influence on the hardworking colonists. He is brought to life with a magic pipe and used by Mother Rigby in a failed attempt to exact revenge on Justice Gookin. The cause for her grudge is never stipulated, though Gookin being "at the head of society in the neighboring metropolis" (249) and Rigby a witch, the Salem witch trials of the 1690s would be reason enough for her to hate colonial authority.

Hawthorne's Feathertop, echoed in L. Frank Baum's (1856-1919) Jack Pumpkinhead from *The Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904), which was itself a deep influence on Bradbury, holds a vitality similar to Colonel Stonesteel's mummy. It is perhaps appropriate to note, too, that Bradbury traced his own ancestry back to witch trials survivor Mary Bradbury, a woman convicted of witchcraft in 1692; though sentenced to death by hanging, she was released or escaped and died naturally in 1700. Mother Rigby is a literary ancestor of Colonel Stonesteel: both take the broken and discarded scraps of their time, place, and history to craft a dummy that awakens awe in others. Keeping in mind Hawthorne's subtitle, "A Moralized Legend,"

John W. Wright makes the point that "the moral is that we must construe the symbolism of [the story's] latent meanings imaginatively in relation to our own understanding of the way dreams contribute to the composition of our worlds" (454).

Bradbury's story steps beyond moral and immoral into the amoral experience of discovering one's career in relation to his or her own nature as it manifests in a specific environment shaped by spatial and historical dimensions. Stonesteel's mummy symbolizes latent meanings evoked by one's relation to the ways cultural artifacts contribute to the composition of our worlds. Inspired by the colonel's ability to manufacture mystery, Charlie declares that he will live with mystery every day of his life, staving off ennui by becoming "the greatest writer that ever lived" (327). Colonel Stonesteel, himself a rejected writer, responds with encouragement but instructs that, in old age, Charlie "must find some lad, not as lucky as you, to give Osiris-Ra to. Your life may be full, but others, lost on the road, will need our Egyptian friend" (327). His mantle, which he passes on to the boy, is one of creative action. There is something of the magician in the colonel, a mélange of mysticism and con-artistry, the seemingly contradictory elements of hoax and truth in his art. His belief is that most people slumber through their potentially transcendent lives, that "life is a magic show, or *should* be if people didn't go to sleep on each other. Always leave folks with a bit of mystery" (323). Bradbury ends the story with the colonel getting the boy to listen not to him but to the inanimate mummy:

> "What's he saying, Charles?"
> Charlie shut his eyes, waited, listened, nodded, let a single tear slide down his cheek, and at last said:
> "Everything. Just everything. Everything I always wanted to *hear*." (327)

With that, the boy gains access to the imaginative realm. The master artist has passed the caduceus on to the apprentice. Colonel Stonesteel's elaborate prank has been not only for his own amusement and the evocation of wonder in the citizenry of Green Town, it has also been for the benefit of Charlie Flagstaff's psyche. Even though the mummy is an artificial

construction, in the end it speaks to the boy without words, beyond language, imparting an amplification of consciousness that can only be described as "everything."

"Colonel Stonesteel's Genuine Home-made Truly Egyptian Mummy," through the figure of the genuinely home-made, barely Egyptian mummy, presents something capable of producing mystery: a symbol. While the townspeople rush to historicize and celebrate the mummy, its hold is altogether different for the old man and the boy. The fetish's power to excite and evoke such varying reactions becomes, in the end, mythological. Bradbury, in a few thousand words, offers a narrative about the call to create art and the duty to pass it on to others. It encapsulates the realization that art is psychologically and culturally nuanced. It also expresses a metaphysical source of mystery for the imagination that inspires creative expression. Like all mythic narratives, this short story draws from its author's local ethnic experiences and traditions—in this case Bradbury's Midwest American upbringing—to impart to its audience a sense of awe in mystery—produced here by Charlie Flagstaff's induction into artistic life. His own name, Flagstaff, suggests the pole from which the banner of art will be hoisted.

1.3 Vonnegut and Bradbury as Mythmakers

> The ability to fantasize is the ability to survive, and the ability to fantasize is the ability to grow.
>
> Ray Bradbury
> ("Day at Night: Ray Bradbury")

For the purpose of this study, I have chosen to examine the short stories of twentieth-century American writers, Kurt Vonnegut and Ray Bradbury. Part of the reason for choosing these writers is my own enjoyment of their work. Beyond that, I am driven to explore how their stories operate mythologically. Pairing them interests me for several reasons: both are of the same generation, Bradbury born in 1920 and Vonnegut in 1922; both spent their childhoods

in the American Midwest, Bradbury in Waukegan, Illinois, and Vonnegut in Indianapolis, Indiana; both left the Midwest to live on an American coast, Bradbury the Pacific and Vonnegut the Atlantic; both enjoyed publication in the pulps and "slicks" in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, a time when short story writers received widespread attention and handsome payment; both achieved widespread success through their work, becoming household names in North America and translated into many languages around the world; both are regularly taught to this day in American public schools, have had their work adapted for stage, screen, TV, and radio, and show no sign of going out of print; both lived secular lives, neither committing to a religious tradition, although Vonnegut became honorary president of the American Humanists after its previous president, Isaac Asimov (1920-1992), died; and, perhaps most integral to our study, both wrote using a variety of fantastic motifs and refused to limit themselves to any single style or genre, so that while we can clearly identify the voice of Vonnegut or Bradbury when blindly picking up and reading a story, we know to be on the lookout for elements of science fiction, fantasy, magic realism, prairie realism, and so on.

In his 1972 study on Vonnegut, David H. Goldsmith uses the term fantasist and also pairs these men with a third wheel writer who remains rather neglected: "A list of contemporary American fantasists who have achieved some measure of respectability would include, besides Vonnegut, only Ray Bradbury, and perhaps John Collier" (31). As Bradbury put it, "I grew up in the one field that reached out and embraced every sector of the human imagination, every endeavor, every idea, every technological development, and every dream" ("Science Fiction: Before Christ and After 2001" XI). Vonnegut, self-conscious of his work's reception, worried that his use of such motifs kept people from taking his work seriously: "I have been a soreheaded occupant of a file drawer labeled 'science fiction' [...] and I would

like out, particularly since so many serious critics regularly mistake the drawer for a urinal" (*Wampeters* 1). And here we have a sense also of how different these writers were.

Pairing them works quite as well for their dissimilarities: Vonnegut was shaped by personal and collective tragedies in his life, from his mother's suicide to surviving the firebombing of Dresden in World War II to losing his sister to cancer and brother in-law to a train wreck, which saw him and his first wife adopting three of their sons and doubling the size of their own family, as well as surviving a suicide attempt in the nineteen-eighties, while Bradbury, who did lose a sister in childhood, did not serve in the war and lived, by his accounts, poor and then, as his work sold, comfortably in southern California; Vonnegut eventually rubbed elbows with New York's literary crowd while Bradbury maintained and preferred lifelong friendships with science fiction writers on the west coast; when the market for profitably writing short stories dried up, Vonnegut switched almost solely to writing novels, whereas Bradbury held to the form all his life, many of his novels being groups of his stories woven together in new ways; Vonnegut eventually placed himself in his fiction, collaging his public persona, whereas Bradbury hid once-removed in characters who shared his middle name, Douglas, and his father's middle name, Spaulding; Vonnegut's black humor became his trademark while Bradbury preached a robust enthusiasm for life. Just consider the bios written for each author when their short stories were published in the same issue of *Wonder Stories: An Anthology of the Best in Science Fiction* (1957 Vol XLV, No 1). The first appears inside the front cover:

> RAY BRADBURY
>
> Speaking of places in the sun, few if any writers in the field of fantasy and science fiction occupy the high, bright seat that Ray Bradbury does. The dean of his genre at the ripe old age of 36, Ray began writing at the age of 12, selling when he was 20. His short stories have been published in most of the top literary and slickpaper magazines, and have been repeatedly anthologized. Collections of his own work in book form include THE ILLUSTRATED MAN, THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN, FAHRENHEIT 451and OCTOBER COUNTRY, at least two of which are

> being transformed at this moment to Broadway plays. He is the author of the new novel, DANDELION WINE, wrote the screen-play for MOBY DICK and is at work on 28 new short stories, simultaneously. Married and the father of three girls, Ray basks in California sun.

The other appears inside the back cover:

> KURT VONNEGUT, JR.
>
> Author of short stories published principally in The Saturday Evening Post, Collier's, Cosmopolitan and The Ladies' Home Journal, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., also wrote the novel, PLAYER PIANO. He became a science-fiction writer by way of the study of biochemistry at Cornell, mechanical engineering at Carnegie Tech and anthropology at the U. of Chicago, some of which was segmented by a tour of duty in World War II which resulted in his being captured by the Germans, liberated by the Russians and rehabilitated at Miami. He lives with wife and children in Osterville, U. S. A.

Here we find adumbrations of the four archetypes this dissertation explores in their short fiction. When beginning the work on this dissertation, other archetypes were entertained: Death and Love in Bradbury's stories, Child and Woman in Vonnegut's. Studies could be done on all of those, but in looking at the beginning of each writer's career it became most important to address those archetypes that most inform their early works. In Vonnegut, we see the emphasis on his wartime experience, which informs his earliest stories, each providing new narratives for the War archetype. The mentions of capture, liberation, and rehabilitation, as well as our knowing that he never completed any of those degrees listed as his studies, points to fragmentation which shapes so much of his work throughout his career. Here we find a person who was picked apart by events international and personal, which made him uniquely capable of critiquing his own culture in his stories, which is the focus of Chapter 3. Bradbury's exuberance is nearly boastful in the brief biography, touting his success and ending with a sentence that points to the archetypes I see greatly informing his short stories. First is his investment in exploring the family—in this case the postwar American white patriarchal family. These families, in all kinds of configurations and crises, show us what Americans feared and hoped for at home, forming Chapter 4. Then there is the

sun, a symbol depth psychologists have pointed to as showing us Wholeness. Bradbury wrote many stories in the fifties that bring the sun in as a force operative in the lives of his characters, which forms the basis of Chapter 5. And it is important to point out that Vonnegut's fragmentation and Bradbury's Wholeness are two sides of the same archetype. Fragmentation is the breaking of a whole; and something whole can be fragmented—even, if it is to be absolutely whole, must be fragmented if it is to encompass all things and be truly whole. In both, in this regard, we find a tension between what is American and what is human, with the emphasis on linking back to a common humanity, which has always been a problem for the collective project of the United States of America.

Bradbury later said, "[I]f I heard that Kurt Vonnegut suddenly liked me a whole lot, I would worry; I'd begin to think I was going around the bend. He has problems, he has terrible problems. He cannot see the world the way I see it. I suppose I'm too much Pollyanna, he's too much Cassandra" (Weller 291). Vonnegut did like Bradbury a whole lot, and wrote him a letter in 1959 to which he replied. In a letter to editor and friend Knox Burger, Vonnegut summarized the exchange:

> I got an extremely friendly letter back from Ray Bradbury. I called him Mr. Bradbury and he called me Kurt. I told him I was thinking of moving to California, and he said sure, come ahead. He said he would introduce me to some people, and he said it was warm all the time out there. Can you imagine someplace where it's warm all the time? (*Letters* 68)

Vonnegut praises Bradbury in *Fates Worse Than Death* (1991) as a "great fiction writer" and riffs on "The Kilimanjaro Device," his short story reimagining Hemingway's suicide, when bringing up his own suicide attempt (182). In *Palm Sunday* (1981), he also lists Bradbury as one of the "friends" he has met at least once (111).

Did Vonnegut and Bradbury's short stories compensate for a lack of myth in America during the second half of the twentieth century? Are they making up for a dearth of myth? Campbell would say no, that myth was, as it always had been, present all along; their short

stories did, however, fill a collective need for narratives embodying America's changing myths during the second half of the twentieth century. In the case of writers like Bradbury and Vonnegut, so concerned with the issues of their time and place, their work was twofold, that of presenting appropriate images for new archetypes and re-presenting old archetypes with fresh images.

To return to Colonel Stonesteel's mummy, we are privileged as readers to be in on its hoax. Where the townsfolk of Green Town see a cousin of King Tut, we know that the mummy's wrappings are American. Each of Bradbury's and Vonnegut's stories are mummies of this sort, carefully crafted from Benjamin Franklin's junk drawer of American life, and in them we can read the myths that possessed and enriched people's lives in the United States in the middle of the twentieth century. We see it illustrated again in the title sequence of *The Ray Bradbury Theater* (1985 - 1992), a series of adaptations of his short stories for television. Bradbury is shown entering his office, a space so crammed with knickknacks, toys, and posters as to make it eligible for its own episode of *Hoarders*.[6] His voiceover as he sits behind his typewriter expresses the local, material, even personal influences informing his stories:

> People ask where do you get your ideas? Well right here. All this is my Martian landscape. Somewhere in this room is an African veldt. Just beyond, perhaps, is a small Illinois town where I grew up. And I'm surrounded on every side by my magician's toyshop. I'll never starve here. I just look around, find what I need, and begin.

The artifacts depicted are akin to the American bandages constructing Colonel Stonesteel's mummy, and this distinction offers a foundation from which to approach these writers' short

[6] A stark contrast can be found in the title sequence of *Kurt Vonnegut's Monkey House*, a seven-episode series of adaptations of his short stories for Showtime airing in 1991. Opening on Vonnegut in a white room, the cardigan-clad author introduces himself to a whimsical score: "Hello, I'm Kurt Vonnegut. My father was an architect and it seems to me that I myself have designed a structure something like this. Except I've provided something that architects don't provide, which is a world behind each door." The room features a series of five identical doors. He opens them to white light and different sounds. There is also a trapdoor in the floor, through which cries and a ball of flame rise. He slams it, walks away, and stops at a final door. "Welcome to the monkey house," he says, opening the door and inviting the camera through, into the light. The set's minimalism is a profound contrast to the cluttered mess of Bradbury's filmed office. Instead of inviting the viewer into his workspace, Vonnegut's stories already await entrance from a bare room into a white void.

stories. But Bradbury and Vonnegut's positions in the field of genre fiction will be left to the literary taxonomists. I am not examining where their work fits in the family tree of science fiction, speculative fiction, and fantasy. Our interest is in what some of their work between WWII and the Kennedy assassination reveals about American consciousness that was not being acknowledged elsewhere.

By the time Vonnegut and Bradbury started writing, the modernists had seriously loosened realism's grapple on expectations of literature. While writing short stories through the fifties, Vonnegut and Bradbury, neither educated in literature at university level, were more invested in writing stories that individuated out of themselves as Americans and human beings than writing for a new literary mode. We might say these impractically practical Midwestern men enacted at typewriters owned and rented one of Bokonon's songs, from Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* (1963):

> We do, doodley do, doodley do, doodley do,
> What we must, muddily must, muddily must, muddily must... (*NS* 175)

Their own relationships to the modernists differed, neither seeming to have been more influenced by them than they were by writers of other periods and movements. Bradbury drew from Yeats in titling one of his stories, "The Golden Apples of the Sun," but esteem for Proust and Joyce was absent:

> God, I've tried to read Proust so often, and I will recognize his style and the beauty of his expression. But he puts me to sleep. And Joyce, the same. Joyce doesn't have many ideas. You see, I'm completely idea-oriented, and I appreciate certain kinds of French writing and English storytelling more. I just can't imagine being in a world and not being fascinated with what ideas are doing to us. (Weller 278)

Vonnegut, on the other hand, was found by Robert Taylor undertaking a peculiar project in 1969 at his home in Barnstable, Massachusetts:

> Against the house leans a slab of bathroom marble. The slab bears incomplete the last sentence of Ulysses which Vonnegut has been engraving with a hammer and a nail:

> AND HIS HEART WAS GOING LIKE MAD AND YES I SAID YES I WILL (Allen 8)

He wrote to Burger in 1955, wanting to know "what *women* think of the Molly Bloom part of *Ulysses*. [...] And isn't that the balls of a book? Greatest one, I think" (*Letters* 62). Both started out writing for the mainstream, not expecting critical attention. Though Vonnegut would suffer an inferiority complex about his place in the literary world, a community Bradbury came to unabashedly shun, in the beginning both worried chiefly about writing and selling their work to mainstream Americans. Bradbury, self-educated in public libraries, and Vonnegut, whose Master's thesis in Anthropology, "Mythologies of North American Nativistic Movements," was never finished at the University of Chicago, were literate adults writing for the average white American. Their stories, crafted with hope of sale to a paying national market, mythicize the postwar years not for the literati but for the magazine-buying public.

In "Open Letter to Ray Bradbury" (2001), Russian physicist and artist Bulat Galeyev (1940-2009) criticizes Bradbury for U.S.-centricism. While expressing profound appreciation and sharing that he memorized Bradbury's stories like poems when he worked in the Aircraft Engineering Institute for the Soviet Union, he asks why Bradbury's future-focused fiction never depicts Russia's presence across the solar system:

> How is it that you, being so much "our" writer, never let representatives of other planets know that "our" country is also on Earth? How was it possible not to note the huge red spot on the geographical map of our planet? Excuse me, but you know, even A. C. Clarke did not forget about its existence. (25)

Bradbury, to my knowledge, did not respond to Galeyev. But here I defend Bradbury as an artist offering archetypal images, which always bear ethnic, localized inflections. Not that Clarke (1917-2008) is guilty of it, but is it wrong that Bradbury did not shoehorn Russia into his stories? He wrote about Americans colonizing other planets because his is an American heritage. While Clarke and others put Russians out there, Bradbury's scope was much more

regional, growing out of his ethnicity as a child of the American Midwest. Though not depicting Russians in space, there is still something present in Bradbury's work that spoke to Galeyev. Though frustrated by not being nationally represented in them, he still credits their cross-cultural, archetypal significance.



THE MANNED MISSILES

Now there are two new "baby moons" in the sky: one Russian, one American. Not ordinary satellites, these moons were once men

BY KURT VONNEGUT, Jr.

[Fig. ii: Three pages of art by Paul Nonnast for "The Manned Missiles" (83, 84, 87)]

It is true that while Bradbury may have overlooked Russians in space, Vonnegut did not. "The Manned Missiles," first published in the July 1958 issue of *Cosmopolitan*, is an epistolary story, pairing two letters written between fathers. Mikhail Ivankov's letter to Charles M. Ashland expresses sorrow that their respective sons, Stepan and Bud, the first two men in space, died as a result of their rockets colliding. Ashland's response to Mr. Ivankov is

one of respect and commiseration. Historian Hugh Brogan notes that "When the Soviet Union put the first satellite into space in 1957 the shock to American vanity was almost unbearable; the cry went up that something was badly wrong with American society, American science, American education" (612). In his own moralistic way, Vonnegut gives voice to anxieties running hot at that time and appeals for a humane response to the burgeoning space race between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., humanizing it for a mainstream American audience. He breaks the conflict down to the level of two men, separated by geography and culture, who can relate as fathers who lost their sons in war games playing out above the global stage. The story's title, "The Manned Missiles," underlines the urgency felt in America at the time and provides, as it were, a preemptive myth of mutual assured conciliation. "[Our sons] will be forgotten only when men no longer look up at the sky. They are like the moon and the planets and the sun and the stars," Alexei writes in English on his father's behalf (83); "I never got it straight in my mind about religion in Russia. You don't mention it," Ashland writes back, "Anyway, we are religious, and we think God singled out Bud and your boy, too, to die in a special way for a special reason. [...] I like to think they lived a little while after the crash, and tried to save each other" (88). However universal Vonnegut and Bradbury's mythologizing, they nonetheless need to be read as American writers.

To illustrate both collective reaction and individual transcendent meaning evoked by a symbol, we have already examined "Colonel Stonesteel's Genuine Home-made Truly Egyptian Mummy." Now we will consider the possibility of a diversity of meanings present in a sole symbol through Bradbury's short story "The Jar" (1944). Charlie lives in Louisiana, in a place called the Hollow, and gains agency by mystifying his community with a thing in a jar he buys for twelve dollars from a carnival man. The story begins with this paragraph, presenting a murky image evading specifics:

> It was one of those things they keep in a jar in the tent of a sideshow on the outskirts of a little, drowsy town. One of those pale things drifting in alcohol

> plasma, forever dreaming and circling, with its peeled dead eyes staring out at you and never seeing you. It went with the noiselessness of late night, and only the crickets chirping, the frogs sobbing off in the moist swampland. One of those things in a big jar that makes your stomach jump like it does when you see an amputated arm in a laboratory vat. (49)

The gothic elements stack into a recognition of the ineffability of death, which is granted both the inanimate qualities of dead eyes and a preserved arm and the unconscious force of "forever dreaming." The hypothetical "outskirts of a little, drowsy town" and the noiselessness paired with crickets and "frogs sobbing off in the moist swampland" provide melancholic harmonies to "one of those things they keep in a jar." It is the undefined nature of the thing in the jar—its being at its most specific a *thing,* and therefore ultimately unknowable—that imbues it with power.

The jar is a container not unlike that of Wallace Stevens's 1919 poem "Anecdote of the Jar," in which practitioners of practically every branch of literary theory, from new critics to feminists and beyond, have seen the contents of their own intellectual focus.[7] Each of Bradbury's neighbors in the Hollow makes sense of the thing in the jar in his or her own subjective way. Thedy, Charlie's unloving wife, initially sees him in the jar; Gramps Medknowe sees something genderless, a brain, an octopus; Juke Marmer sees a kitten his mother made him drown as a boy; Jahdoo sees "the center of Life": Middibamboo Mama, primordial progenitor of all humankind, "from which we all come ten thousand year ago" (53); Mrs. Tridden sees her young son Foley, who vanished in the swamp; pipe-smoking Granny Carnation relishes the thing's ambiguity, asking, "why couldn't it be sort of—all things? [...] That's it. Symbol. Symbol of all the nights and days in the dead canebrake. Why's it have to be one thing? Maybe it's lots" (54); and Tom Carmody, who is likely having an affair with Charlie's wife, refuses to look into the jar, declaring, "I don't think it's nothin'!" (54). They all see different colors in its eyes, its hair.

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[7] See Jacqueline Vaught Brogan's essay "Introducing Stevens: Or, the Sheerly Playful and the Display of Theory." (*Teaching Wallace Stevens*. Ed. John N. Serio and Bobby J. Leggett. Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1994. Print. 51-62.)

The thing in the jar is a numinous object, the evenings spent discussing it described as "kind of a rude church gathering" (52). Threatened by Charlie's newfound respect in the community and the awe he has awakened, Thedy and Tom Carmody take it upon themselves to spoil the mystery by tracing the thing in the jar to its source. She takes a cruel pleasure in telling Charlie what they discover:

> "We talked to that carny-boss, and he—he almost died laughin', he said he sold it to some—hick—for twelve bucks. And it ain't worth more than two dollars at most!"
>
> Laughter bloomed in the dark, right out of her mouth, an awful kind of flower with her breath as its perfume.
>
> She finished it, snapping, quick:
>
> "It's just junk, Charlie! Liquid rubber, paper-mache, silk, cotton, chemicals! That's all! Got a metal-framework inside it! That's all! That's all it is, Charlie! That's all!" she shrilled in triumph. (55)

Here Thedy reveals herself as a rationalist and, with her threat to reveal the truth to the community, we see played out the schism between concretized and transcendent consciousnesses. Her perspective denies metaphor its opportunity to speak past the categories of definition because she thinks the world can be explained. That concretism is an utterly unlivable mindset for Charlie, who has won respect by introducing something mysterious into his neighbors' lives. "They, this jar HAS to have somethin' in it. Somethin' besides the junk you say," Charlie pleads with her, "Too many people believe there's somethin' in it, Thedy. You can't change that" (56). When unconscious contents are consciously denied, they will oftentimes rise with force, and that is precisely what happens. Thedy thinks her rational explanation trumps, defeats, contains Charlie's object of mystery. But before she has a chance to tell the others, he replaces the thing in the jar with her head. And the individual members of the community still see what they project into it.

"The Jar" provides a glimpse of not only the potential diversity found in a symbol, it also exposes the danger of literalism to an image or motif. Campbell often warned against the literal interpretation of a symbol, the stock example being a creationist reading of *Genesis*,

which does not hold up factually against scientific understanding. Bradbury's story shows how a literal interpretation from a rationalist stance is just as destructive to a metaphor's mythic potential. Thedy's understanding of the thing as crafted and manmade does not change the subjective, psychic realities it has already inspired in the neighbors' minds, but her use of reason to debunk its mysteriousness is as much an attack to its poetic vitality as would be identifying it as any single one of the neighbors' imagined interpretations and demanding everybody accept it as such. Rationalism itself is exposed as a dogma, a narrative that both threatens and fails to grasp the value of the unconscious.

Bradbury's title, "The Jar," is an intriguing choice for the story. He could have very well called it "The Thing in the Jar," for it is the thing that manifests so differently for all of the characters, but "The Jar" points instead to the seemingly benign container that holds the



[Fig. iii: Boris Dolgov's illustration for "The Jar" from *Weird Tales* (49)]

thing. Boris Dolgov's illustration that accompanies its first publication, in pulp digest *Weird Tales* (Nov. 1944), highlights the subjective nature of its contents, with a human skull crosshatched dark behind the heads of those looking into the jar, which holds only the story's title in a field of white. We recall Warner's observation that an archetype is a hollow thing, and here that is rendered artistically. The jar within the story can be read as a representation of archetype itself, making the thing within it the subjective archetypal image that manifests to express the archetype. Archetypes themselves, in Jungian psychology, are patterns of possibility existing in the biological structures of the human psyche. They are potentialities that may crystallize if experience in time and space trigger them. The image projected once inspired will be based on the individual's subjective experience. Here we turn again to Huskinson, whose Jungian explanation of mythic symbol underlines this reading of "The Jar":

> Myth is a conscious interpretation of unconscious communication and as such its nature is both rational and non-rational, archetypal image and ineffable, numinous 'content'. As symbols, myths are clothed with finite images that are subjectively defined by the ego according to its response to the transcendent and its own conscious attitude or orientation (Jung 1951c: 355). The image has a subjective power and can therefore be experienced as a symbol for one person and an ineffective sign for another. Likewise, from an objective standpoint, one mythic image is only as appropriate as the next. If a mythic image no longer affects ego consciousness it is demoted from the symbolic order to that of sign, and then, in accordance with Jung's premise of a teleological and self-regulating psyche, another mythic image—potent and alive—will take its place. In this scheme we can see the two facets of myth at work: myth as an image and myth as a process of image making. (9-10)

Charlie and his neighbors find their own individual symbols in the jar, while Thedy and Tom Carmody see an ineffective sign. And where she and Tom find a mere jar, the others, according to their own orientations, don't see the jar at all but find themselves looking through it at mysteries of death, origins, regret, loss, multitude.

Most symbols are not as ambiguous as Bradbury's thing in the jar. Most are experienced with some similarity of meaning by members of a society because of overlaps in

their biological and cultural connotations with any specific image. Campbell also stressed that symbols have shelf-lives:

> [T]he metaphors of one historically conditioned period, and the symbols they innervate, may not speak to the persons who are living long after that historical moment and whose consciousness has been formed through altogether different experiences. [...] A system of mythological symbols only works if it operates in the field of a community of people who have essentially analogous experiences, or to put it another way, if they share the same realm of life experience. (*Thou Art That* 6, 8)

Turning then to the United States after WWII, two thousand year old pastoral religious traditions simply fell flat, not for all but for many. The world looked different, life was changing in how it was lived, and new symbols appeared to replace old ones.

Jung, fascinated by the UFO phenomena that arose in the late forties, devoted one of his final studies to it. His focus was not the physical existence of UFOs but how people dealt with such sightings. He found a historical precedent of shapes seen in the sky and determined that what had changed in the middle of the twentieth century was the way people defined what they saw: "Anything that looks technological goes down without difficulty with modern man" (1958/1970, *CW 10*, ¶624). Walker's analysis of this work applies to our own:

> Our modern age no longer believes in personifications of psychic forces in the form of gods or spirits of other kinds. For that reason, when the UFO as a modern projected image of wholeness is visualized in terms of the modern mythological imagery of contemporary science fiction, it can easily become part of a modern mythic narrative. The modern mind will reject a traditional myth dealing with the descent to earth of celestial divinities, but it will accept a myth of close encounters with extraterrestrials endowed with superior wisdom and technology. Furthermore, since UFO buffs frequently believe that these extraterrestrials have come to Earth not with hostile intent but rather with messages of hope for the survival of the human race, Jung seems justified in seeing in the UFO myth a modern restatement of the old myth of *epiphany*, in which gods or angels would visit earth with promise of "peace on earth, good will to men." (Walker 99)

The nineteen-fifties saw the body of literature in film, television, and fiction featuring contact with aliens from outer space expand at the same time Westerners started reporting flying saucers in their skies. Symptomatic of a need for new symbols, science fiction itself

blossomed as a genre. "In the forties," Bradbury later reflected, "only a handful of paperback s-f collections had begun to pop up. Science was exploding all over the place but s-f was still [...] Sleeping Beauty waiting to be kissed awake by atomic bombs, hydrogen explosions but, above all, Sputnik, and Neil Armstrong bootprinting the lunar soil for all mankind" ("Science Fiction: Before Christ and After 2001" IX, XI). Once kissed, science fiction and fantasy experienced a profound expansion in quantity, visibility, and variety, to the point that bookstores had to create a special section to accommodate demand. Doniger has said that while twentieth-century science fiction and fantasy lacked religious authority, the best (and worst) of it nevertheless carries forth mythic dimensions:

> Science fiction provides a body of literature in which great mythological classics take refuge in a demythologized age. [...N]owadays in writers like Ray Bradbury and Ursula LeGuin, mythology takes on a new form, devoid of a formal, communal, ritual religious element, but not necessarily devoid of an individual, personal, mythical religious element. Such works of literature, like the great science-fiction films, present a genuine instance of that ephemeral swinging door through which myth and reality eternally pass one another, like star-ships in the night. ("The Survival of Myth in Science Fiction" 32)

And Goldsmith's point about Vonnegut carries over to Bradbury as well: "Certainly he is fond of space ships, time travel, and other gimmickry, but these phenomena, after all, represent the latter half of the twentieth century far better than would the riverboat journeys of Twain, the small town life of Sherwood Anderson, or the physical encounters with death of Ernest Hemingway" (6).

Rollo May declared that "we in America want to find a new self, a new set of expectations" (*Cry for Myth* 102). Vonnegut, reflecting on Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* being hailed as the American myth of WWII, understood the field in which he wrote, that of popular fiction, to be the vehicle for those new expectations:

> To accept a new myth about ourselves is to simplify our memories—and to place our stamp of approval on what might become an epitaph for our era in the shorthand of history. This, in my opinion, is why critics often condemn our most significant books and poems and plays when they first appear, while

> praising feebler creations. The birth of a new myth fills them with primitive dread, for myths are so effective. (*Palm Sunday* 121-2)

An artist thrusts contents from the unconscious into the field of a reader's awareness and forces him or her to confront what has been denied, avoided, or not yet seen. By following specific mythic motifs that appear across stories written by Bradbury and Vonnegut, perhaps we can map constellations of certain archetypes as filtered through the American psyche of the mid-twentieth century. The path will not be easy, as Walker warns: "Reductive interpretation may be useful in discussions of psychological matters, but it does not make for good literary criticism. A literary critic's first duty is to the text" (148). The temptation to essentialize a symbol, to cherry pick and ascribe how it should make us feel, what it should make us think, is perilous to our aim. Our work, rather, is to engage the valence of connotations present in archetypal images that recur in Bradbury and Vonnegut's short fiction, read as narrative projections of crumbling and load-bearing cultural archetypes, thereby bearing witness to myths informing American society in the decades following WWII. This study is an attempt, by following specific archetypes and analyzing how they manifest in a number of colors, to examine how Bradbury and Vonnegut expressed these collective animating psychological forces in and from their own time, place, and culture. Their stories may not have overt rites and rituals attached to them but, as we shall see, they do behave like myths.


'KURT'
KEN STORR 2014

Chapter 2

WAR'S SHADOW

Vonnegut's Conflicts with Arms

2.1 WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

> Vonnegut: I want a military funeral when I die—the bugler, the flag on the casket, the ceremonial firing squad, the hallowed ground.
>
> Interviewer: Why?
>
> Vonnegut: It will be a way of achieving what I've always wanted more than anything—something I could have had, if only I'd managed to get myself killed in the war.
>
> Interviewer: Which is—?
>
> Vonnegut: The unqualified approval of my community.
> (Allen 169)

"Dear people," Pfc. K. Vonnegut, Jr., wrote home from the Le Havre P.O.W. Repatriation Camp on 29 May 1945, "I'm told that you were probably never informed that I was anything other than 'missing in action.' Chances are that you also failed to receive any of the letters I wrote from Germany. That leaves me a lot of explaining to do" (*Armageddon In Retrospect* 11). This explaining continued for the rest of Vonnegut's life, culminating most overtly in two novels: *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) and *Bluebeard* (1987). Before those he also portrayed the bewilderment of military service in *The Sirens of Titan* (1958), ethics of war in *Mother Night* (1961), and produced a series of posthumously published short stories inspired by his service.

Early adulthood was a traumatic time in Vonnegut's life. Historian Paul Fussell, a veteran of the same war, provides some perspective on Vonnegut's Division and what they experienced in the Battle of the Bulge, where he was taken prisoner:

> It would not be fair to depict what happened to the 106th Division as typical. The boys were young and they had been drafted and were not terribly well trained. Charles Whiting puts it bluntly: "There was no 'Crusade in Europe' for the young soldiers of the 106th Infantry Division." Those not immediately captured fled to the rear, many throwing away their weapons and howling, "The Krauts are coming." Those remaining on the line or close to it were hustled back east for long marches into prisoner-of-war cages. They were the eight thousand boys of two whole regiments of the 106th. Later narrative tried to brighten things up by noting that they said they were out of ammunition. This mass surrender was one of the most embarrassing moments in the history of the American military. Because an event like this was unthinkable, neither officers nor men were prepared for its ever happening. The army had barely noticed the training topic "Retrograde Movements," to employ the favored euphemism. (129)

The surrender was merely one of a series of wounds Vonnegut suffered in a short span of time: "In 1944 he had to confront the suicide of his mother, capture by the Germans, the loss of over forty pounds while in captivity, and a second narrow escape from death in the firebombing of Dresden—traumas that would later fuel his fiction and impact the nature of his humor" (*SFKV* 3). The result of his survival was induction into the rest of his life as a veteran, here contextualized by Hillman:

> "Veteran" from *vetus*, old, ripe, worn, belonging to the past. Time alone does not make veterans. A twenty-year-old German student writes: "all about us death hissed and howled. Such a night is enough to make an old man of me." Combat is instant aging. The veteran has survived an initiation; the fact of that survival, that chance or miracle, forces upon one the deepest questioning and the veteran's burden of carrying the dead into life. Of course a veteran is ripe and worn and burnished by the past. (*TLW* 34)

Such survival is rarely, if ever, cleanly achieved. The ancient Greeks interpreted war trauma as a polluting of the person which must be cleansed. "The answer to *miasma* [translated as defilement or pollution]," writes classicist Robert Emmet Meagher, "its cure or antidote, as it were, was called *katharsis*, an elusive word meaning something like purgation, cleansing, and the restoration of normalcy" (19). Unfortunately, shell-shock/combat

fatigue/PTSD—each designation being a euphemism for this same *miasma*, this lasting agony earned in combat—has repeatedly gone untreated collectively in modern times. The burden of achieving *katharsis* in all modern American wars has been placed squarely on the shoulders of the individual soldiers suffering long-term effects. This continues to be a major problem today, despite studies and worries for the health of veterans.[8] For those who suffered during World War II, part of the problem of adjusting to life after it was due to the collective notion of normalcy. Historian James Oliver Robertson writes that, given the Great Depression that had preceded it, after WWII "there was no acceptable vision of normalcy to go back to" (334):

> Fear of a return to normalcy produced in Americans a vision of war as the only available model or pattern for economic success and productivity. The decades since 1945 have seen a transformation of *the American mythology of war* as a result. [...] The myth of war, with all its analogies, its aggressive and heroic metaphors, its visions of loyalty and victory, its promises of defense and security, its focus on an enemy, its image of supreme effort and efficiency, its appeal of "the game well played" and of sacrifice, and its implications of national unity, national prosperity, and national success, has become the most important model for American behavior since World War II. (335; italics mine)

This state of affairs, this mythological alignment, is hardly conducive to healing those so-called unseen wounds of war.

Evolutionary psychologist David Livingstone Smith reminds us that the ways we imagine war often exacerbate our inability to understand it at all:

> In the popular imagination, soldiers unflinchingly perform their duties and are emotionally unscathed by their experiences. But this image is tragically flawed. It is a convenient fiction that occludes a more disturbing reality. [...] War is not only an assault upon a soldier's body, it is an assault upon his sense of his own humanity. It requires him to perform acts that no human being should have to perform, exposes him to perpetual fear, and threatens him with crushing guilt. One way to minimize these pressures is to become distant, to

[8] See Jonathan Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (1995) and *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (2002), Keith Armstrong, Suzanne Best, and Paula Domenici's *Courage After Fire: Coping Strategies for Troops Returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and Their Families* (2009), Erin P. Finley's *Fields of Combat: Understanding PTSD among Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan* (2011), and the National Center for PTSD's publication: *PTSD Research Quarterly*.

> close down, to enter into spiritual hibernation. When this happens, the world seems to become unreal. (152, 160)

Vonnegut, left like others to conjure his own *katharsis*, sought a cure in the arts. The task of working to correct the popular narrative of war was so great, so much bigger than himself, that its achievement proved evasive. He later admitted that his "war book" was beyond reach in his first twenty years of writing, and yet he tried and tried to produce something of the sort through much of his earliest work. Realism had its day in WWII short stories never published in his lifetime but fantasy asserted itself early and became a useful tool in Vonnegut's exploration of war. From a post-Jungian standpoint, the fantastic events, settings, and devices in Vonnegut's war stories are born of the unreal *miasma* Smith acknowledges.

In the short stories we examine here, we sense Vonnegut, in his later twenties and thirties, already understood that war dominated his personal myths. He knew the myth he lived by but articulating it, his life's work, was his primary artistic struggle. These stories are more than attempts, however. Most were published. Some were not. Hillman states that, "Writers, especially writers of war, do not create; they re-create, and reading is both a recreation and the re-creation of what has slipped away from present grasp and into the soul's recesses, avoided, forgotten" (*TLW* 29). What was required was a submersion into that forgotten past and, through active imagination, Vonnegut finally surfaced with Billy Pilgrim and his condition of schizoid temporality. "Report on the Barnhouse Effect," "All the King's Horses," "Great Day," and "Armageddon in Retrospect" deliver instances of experiential and creative engagement with the war archetype. "If we want war's horror to be abated so that life may go on, it is necessary to understand and imagine," Hillman urges. "Perhaps that is what we are here for: to bring appreciative understanding to the phenomena that have no need to understand themselves" (*TLW* 5):

> [To] understand war we have to get at its myths, recognize that war is a mythical happening, that those in the midst of it are removed to a mythical state of being, that their return from it seems rationally inexplicable, and that

> the love of war tells of a love of the gods, the gods of war; and that no other account—political, historical, sociological, psychoanalytical—can penetrate [...] to the depths of inhuman cruelty, horror, and tragedy and to the heights of mystical transhuman sublimity. [... A] rational science of war can only go so far, only to the edge of understanding. At that point a leap of imagination is called for, a leap into myth. (*TLW* 9)

Vonnegut, an accidental survivor, practiced this leap in crafting stories.

The ancient Athenian dramatists were veterans producing for audiences of veterans. With military service reaching to the age of sixty for all men, the Greeks were no strangers to war and embraced tragedy as a means of collectively addressing its wounds. Vonnegut's early stories sought to provide the same collective benefit in the advertisement-laden pages of magazines. His own literary hero, Mark Twain, left his most damning condemnations of war to be published after his death, *The Mysterious Stranger* going unfinished and "The War Prayer" appearing during World War I in *Harper's Monthly* (November 1916). But Vonnegut, like Euripides, was a veteran who openly crafted his work as a veteran, airing conflicts with and of war from the very beginning of his career.

Thomas F. Marvin points out Vonnegut's "basic belief that, except in extraordinary circumstances, wars should be avoided" (131). While his work expresses anti-war sentiments, he allows for the occurrence of a just war. He even expressed gratitude for World War II altering the course of his life:

> World War II made war reputable because it was a just war. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. You know how many other just wars there have been? Not many. And the guys I served with became my brothers. If it weren't for World War II, I'd now be the garden editor of *The Indianapolis Star*. I wouldn't have moved away. (*Rolling Stone*, 24 Aug. 2006)

We do not find prescriptions for absolute pacifism in his writings. His fiction depicts war as horrible, terrible, awful—which it surely is—but once every now and again war is necessary. This paradox is a complexity misunderstood by anyone enlisting him simply as an anti-war author with a ho-hum Midwestern voice. Exploring the attitudes of war in the following selection of stories reveals a far more dynamic engagement with the problem; we bear

witness to the valence of the archetype of war. Though Vonnegut's work is at times funny, it never shies from the seriousness or the magnitude of war, elbowing right up to it. Here we find the short story as testimonial, as lament, as warning. Sublimity, in these fictions as in life itself, is war's overpowering energy:

> MOYERS: I once interviewed a veteran of the Second World War. I talked to him about his experience at the Battle of the Bulge, in that bitter winter when the surprise German assault was about to succeed. I said, "As you look back on it, what was it?" And he said, "It was sublime."
> CAMPBELL: And so the monster comes through as a kind of god. (*POM* 117)

Before signing off at the end of the letter home to his father and siblings, knowing him as Missing In Action, he wrote, "I've too damned much to say, the rest will have to wait" (13). The rest, we might say, was Vonnegut's career in the literary arts.

2.2 Barnstorming Debut

> We have met the enemy, and he is us.
> Walt Kelly, *Pogo* (Soper 39)

Vonnegut's first published story was "Report on the Barnhouse Effect," a fantasy of worldwide disarmament. On 29 August 1949 the Soviet Union successfully tested a nuclear bomb, becoming the first nation after the U.S.A. to do so and starting the Cold War arms race. Appearing in the 11 February 1950 issue of *Collier's*, Vonnegut's story plays upon the timely fear while criticizing the exploitation of individuals for purposes of national security. Written as a dossier regarding the discovery and use of "dynamopsychism," the ability to move objects with the mind, Vonnegut's narrator provides a sympathetic evaluation of what has happened to Professor Arthur Barnhouse. Desired by the state as a weapon, Barnhouse has disappeared and gone on a rampage in exile—disarming the world's weaponry. In a final twist, the author of the report admits that he, too, has developed the skill and, with a threat to the sabre-rattlers of the world, has decided to vanish as well.

Names carry associative significance. Arthur evokes the monarch of greater Britain's medieval romances: King Arthur. The legend is well known in the United States (for instance, Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*), of how Arthur fought traitorous Mordred, his son by incest, and fled to Avalon to lay dormant with his wounds until needed once again to vanquish Britain's enemies. When Vonnegut's Arthur unleashes his might in a military demonstration, his own Battle of Camlann, the professor spirits himself away to his own undisclosed Avalon to precipitate "a bloodless and entertaining sort of war that might be called the 'War of the Tattletales'" (185), in which fear of his return has all but quashed the world's militaries and reduced them to revealing each other's hidden arms. If King Arthur is to be counted upon the next time Britain comes under attack, Arthur Barnhouse is presented as a humane phantom sentry, ever-vigilant against the use of weapons around the globe.

His surname, Barnhouse, could point toward Donald Barnhouse, an evangelical pastor from Pennsylvania and a pioneer of radio preaching. Largely forgotten now, he started broadcasting in the twenties and his sermons played on stations across the country until his death in 1960. *Collier's* readers in 1950 would have known of Dr. Barnhouse, a Princeton-educated intellectual who led the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. His reputation as an educated public figure and spiritual leader may have tinted readers' expectations for a moral tale, triggering a sense of Professor Barnhouse as a holy man. Most readers today coming to the story will lack this association, as Donald Barnhouse is not widely remembered; the reference is something of a cultural timestamp. The name also bluntly summons a barn that has been converted into a home, an image of architectural metamorphosis in line with America's postwar transition from the Depression's ailing pastoral identity to suburban possibility—not to mention that the majority of Americans in 1950 (and to this day) are no stranger to the concept of a savior born in a barn.

Beyond the professor, Vonnegut names the other characters with Dickensian glee, pairing exaggerated sounds with knowing connotations. The Soviets, Premier Slezak and Commisar Kropotnik, carry sophomoric and sophisticated associations. Slezak, apart from the punning of "sleaze," was also the surname of an Austrian character actor, Walter Slezak, who often portrayed villains in Hollywood films. Kropotnik plays on Pyotr Kropotkin, a Russian communist revolutionary and astute critic of capitalism. Kropotnik's American counterpart is Senator Warren Foust, who declares, "He who rules the Barnhouse Effect rules the world!" (175). His name is a nod to soul-selling Dr. Faust of German folklore, famously fleshed out by Goethe in the eighteenth century. This myth figures later in this chapter in our reading of "Armageddon in Retrospect," but here we note how Vonnegut masks it with a slight spelling change, an intertexual wink criticizing the U.S. Senate. There is also the State Department's William K. Cuthrell and General Honus Barker, who engineer "Operation Brainstorm" and wish to use Barnhouse for military purposes. *Cut*ting in servitude ("threll" is an alternate spelling of "thrall") and *bark*ing orders, they see the professor not as a person but a weapon. Barnhouse confronts this in his parting letter: "*as the first superweapon with a conscience, I am removing myself from your national defense stockpile. Setting a new precedent in the behavior of ordnance, I have humane reasons for going off*" (185; italics in original).

And yet, with all of these playful names, the author of the report remains nameless. He provides plenty of personal details, but refrains from signing his name at the end. Context tells us the report's recipient is likely the U.S. government, as the author's refusal to share the method of the Barnhouse Effect and final note of "Good-by" (188) imply that he does not trust those who will be reading it. One effect of reading the story is the titillation of having something in our hands that is not only meant for other eyes but also probably classified

information. As a method of hooking a reader, it will come off as a gimmick to some and others will find it irresistible.

Jeff Karon, in an article applying science to Vonnegut's early short fiction, says, "We can easily condemn dynamopsychism—because it [disobeys the] fundamental forces of nature [...]— and thus kick away the story's central prop" (*At Millennium's End* 113), thereby limiting the story to a rationalistic interpretation, under which it befalls a fate suffered by all mythopoetic texts that are read literally: reduction, ridicule, and dismissal. Peter J. Reed, on the other hand, is more accepting:

> The central premise may seem farfetched, especially when taken to such extremes, but it retains just enough plausibility to sustain the plot. After all, the notion of persons' having some degree of psychokinetic power is a persistent one, occurs in other story and film plots,[9] and even has fueled rumors of the Russians experimenting with it for military purposes. (*SFKV* 29)

We should remember that there were—and are—plenty who accept paranormal phenomena as real. This is not to say that we should accept Vonnegut's invention as a reality; that is the other pole of literalism, and reading fiction as fact is out of the question. Rather, we might attempt a more dynamic deconstruction of dynamopsychism.

The report's author defines the phenomenon as "*force of the mind*" (173), but consider the word's parts in finer detail. The *OED* lists "dynamo-" as a combining form "pertaining to current (formerly called dynamic) electricity." A "dynamo" is also a machine that converts mechanical power into electrical energy by rotating conductors in a magnetic field. "Psychism" pertains to "The theory or doctrine that there is a single vital force diffused throughout all animate nature," "Animism," and "The doctrine proposing the existence of psychic phenomena." We should also note the Greek root, "Psyche," for "Soul" or even "Butterfly." Read from a depth psychological perspective, dynamopsychism is the effect of an electrified, conducting, rotating, magnetic soul. It is the product of a metamorphic life set

[9] Stephen King started his career as a novelist with *Carrie* (1974), which focuses on a telekinetic teenage girl coming into her powers as she enters puberty. The novel contains extracts from fictitious articles, news reports, and studies, leading one to question whether "Report on the Barnhouse Effect" was a direct influence.

apart, metabolized internal trauma coiled in copper and emitting a powerful field "undiminished by distance" (174). It manifests only in Professor Barnhouse and the story's narrator, who, along with scholarship, share the distinction of being war veterans. The superhuman quality remains out of reach for all other characters.

Dynamopsychism also provides the story with a MacGuffin: Barnhouse has it and everybody else wants it. What complicates matters is not only the fact that the Effect is stupendously powerful but it is also an ability arising within a person who bears a conscience against killing. It is bodily inseparable from the character at the heart of the story. In this way, Professor Barnhouse bears much in common with comic book superheroes of his day, particularly Captain America, who was infused with Super Soldier Serum and employed against the Nazis in WWII. Vonnegut's combat vet, however, has no interest in cooperating. We are told he discovered his skill in May 1942, while he was serving in the U.S. military as an artillery private playing craps. He kept the ability to land sevens to himself and "By the time of his discharge in 1945, he could knock bricks loose from chimneys" (177).

We know nothing of the action he saw as a soldier, his war stories untold. A detail that reveals Barnhouse's humility emerges in his enlistment: "[The] professor turned down a direct commission in the Army and enlisted as an artillery private" (175). In other words, he shrugged off the chance to enter the military as an officer and willingly stepped into a role at the bottom of the ranks. It is a sacrificial move, as an artillery private was far more likely to experience combat than an officer. Being older than his comrades, he was given the nickname Pop, a colloquially disarming and fatherly designation. The narrator, himself an overseas WWII veteran, scoffs at the notion that Barnhouse's ability could have ended that war singlehandedly. They share a bond as veterans that sees them protecting one another from others who do not understand them or would seek to exploit them. The dean of students at Wyandotte College where Barnhouse teaches, describes him as "Difficult to know since his

return, perhaps, but his work before the war brought a great deal of credit to our little school" (177). He sees him as a hapless casualty of the war, only to be pitied and tolerated. But Barnhouse warms to the narrator, his advisee, assigning him done-and-dusted experiments while he "annoyed me further with irrelevant questions. His favorites were: 'Think we should have dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima?' and 'Think every new piece of scientific information is a good thing for humanity?'" (178-179). Later, after he vanishes, Barnhouse entrusts a list of nine riddled instructions to the narrator, which pass along the Effect and unlock the ability.

Their camaraderie bonds almost instantaneously upon meeting. The narrator's account of this event depicts someone suffering what was then called "war fatigue":

> When I reported to the professor's laboratory for the first time, what I saw was more distressing than the gossip. Every surface in the room was covered with dust; books and apparatus had not been disturbed for months. The professor sat napping at his desk when I entered. The only signs of recent activity were three overflowing ashtrays, a pair of scissors, and a morning paper with several items clipped from its front page. (177)

The professor is portrayed as stagnating, presumably from the psychological effects of his service. He is the veteran who returns home "changed" and "unfit for work," misunderstood and/or not understood by those around him, those who did not serve. But another myth is hiding within this passage, that of Albert Einstein, whose naps on the job as a young man are legendary for furthering his development of the theory of relativity. As Peter Venkman quips in *Ghostbusters* (1984), "Einstein did his best stuff when he was working as a patent clerk!" Alan Lightman's bestselling novel *Einstein's Dreams* (1993) is built upon this legend. The notion of eccentric genius applies to Barnhouse as much that of the vet suffering long term effects of war.

Selective in whom he trusts, it is the following brief exchange in which Barnhouse screens and approves of the narrator:

> "You an overseas veteran?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."
"Not much left over there, is there?" He frowned. "Enjoy the last war?"
"No, sir."
"Look like another war to you?"
"Kind of, sir."
"What can be done about it?"
I shrugged. "Looks pretty hopeless." (178)

Establishment of common ground as veterans opens the professor to human connection. Details of their experiences are not necessary yet; what counts is their attitude toward those guarded experiences. Discovering mutuality in their understated lack of enjoyment of the war makes possible a relationship exclusive to individuals who have lived and suffered as soldiers. A month later Barnhouse implores his advisee for help: "I wish you'd help me look into a more interesting problem—namely, my sanity," he says, and, "It's fear of myself that's made me odd" (179). The narrator does not spell out where he thinks this was going but we assume he, like others, feels that Barnhouse has lost touch with reality. However, where others would fall impatient, the narrator shows respect when the professor admits that he may be crazy:

> His eyes narrowed. "To give you an idea of how crazy, I'll tell you what's been running through my mind when I should have been sleeping. I think maybe I can save the world. I think maybe I can make every nation a have nation, and do away with war for good. I think maybe I can clear roads through jungles, irrigate deserts, build dams overnight."
> "Yes, sir." (179)

On the precipice of witnessing dynamopsychism, a phenomenon he was unaware of, the narrator is confronted with what appear to be delusions of grandeur. His response is not to confront Barnhouse as a madman but rather to treat him with dignity, calling him "sir."

"War is venomous to the human spirit," writes Meagher, "and friendship is the anti-venom. Like air, it allows us to breathe rather than suffocate" (32). Vonnegut wrote many times of his war-forged friendship with Bernard V. O'Hare, Jr., how this relationship was important to his own wellbeing: "We were paired off to look out for each other before being sent into battle [...] the buddy system. After we were captured, that continued. It's a very

close bond, so he's a very close friend. We've kept in touch ever since" (Rhodin). Though they are not war buddies, Professor Barnhouse and the narrator develop a bond that allows the former to share his most guarded secret, and the latter to rise to the occasion of guarding it for him. When circumstance calls for *peace-minded* Barnhouse to vanish into a self-imposed exile, the narrator is the person who receives his recipe for dynamopsychism in the mail.

If we read dynamopsychism as the precipitation of Barnhouse's wartime *miasma*, his friendship with the narrator brings about *katharsis*. Consider how the war machines Barnhouse destroys in "Operation Brainstorm" are deployed by the American military; despite being a demonstration, he strikes down 120 ships, ten V-2 rockets, and fifty radio-controlled jets. Barnhouse is put in a position of demolishing weapons launched by his own nation. Vonnegut was nearly killed by Allied firepower while he was a P.O.W. The fantasy of bringing down the war machinery one once used in the name of his nation is raised like a banner in this story, which was sold to a mainstream middle class American reading audience alongside ads for Cohama ties, Old Spice, Ex-Lax, and Dr. Edwards' Complete Relief from Constipation. It is a *katharsis* not only for the character of Professor Arthur "Pop" Barnhouse but for real life Americans in 1950 feeling helpless against the escalation of nuclear armament.

The aspect of psychological cleansing that simmers between the lines of the report comes across as minimized, held privately, because the narrator is invested in protecting Barnhouse. Through an act of compassion, he shoulders the professor's burden. Like Simon of Cyrene, commanded by the Romans in the Synoptic Gospels to carry Christ's cross when he drops it, Vonnegut's nameless narrator is compelled by the ruthlessness of the world's militaries to take up Barnhouse's dynamopsychic cross. His given reason is that Barnhouse's parents died young and he may, too—a passing which will send the world's militaries back

into war—but he himself is of long-lived stock, which should keep war at bay. With the narrator being a disciple of Barnhouse, we may read his report as an epistle in the vein of those found in the New Testament. The author even expects this of the reader, trying to throw us off: "There is an understandable tendency to look upon Professor Barnhouse as a supernatural visitation. The First Church of Barnhouse in Los Angeles has a congregation numbering in the thousands. He is godlike in neither appearance nor intellect. [...] Neither he nor his powers fall outside the sphere of Nature" (174).

This is a lukewarm attempt at rationalizing a paranormal phenomenon to an American audience whose majority identified as Christians accepting, literally or metaphorically, the son of God as having assumed human form. Furthermore, the capitalization of Nature implies divinity of a feminine order—all that is lacking is "Mother" before it. We recall that Barnhouse's personal intentions incline him toward improving the world's infrastructure, both transportational and agricultural, and moving rainclouds to relieve countries suffering drought. Left to his own devices he would be a real Child of Nature, but the weight of responsibility that accompanies his power leads him to seek help in regulating it: "Now I realize that I haven't any more right to it than a man has a right to own an atomic bomb" (180). There is also the detail in the story's second sentence, of receiving "one short, enigmatic message left in my mailbox on Christmas Eve" (173), activating our awareness of Santa Claus and the birth of Christ.

The professor's ethical obligation "to single out critical individuals and objects instead of slaughtering whole populations in the process of maintaining international equilibrium" (175) casts him as nothing short of Christlike, a savior for the dead center of the twentieth century. Also worth considering is the apocalyptic full-page painting that accompanied the story in *Collier's*. Tran Mawicke's infernal illustration portrays a serious, concentrating Barnhouse in eyeless, orange-fire silhouette as jets, engulfed in flames and

smoke, crash toward Earth and battleships burn on the water. The image is a descendant of romantic apocalyptic paintings such as John Martin's *The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* (1852).



[Fig. iv: Tran Mawicke's full page illustration (19)]

Leslie Fiedler writes that when first encountering Vonnegut's novels, "his books seemed more scriptures than commodities" (5). In this light, "Report on the Barnhouse Effect," delivered to American mailboxes and porches on 11 February 1950 in the pages of *Collier's*, may very well be received as the inaugural epistle in a humanistic literary career

that, taken all together, might be thought of as the Gospel According to Kurt. It is a tale of war vets who lead a two-man insurgency against the system that made them who they are. It is also a serious meditation upon the potential agency lurking within the individual, dynamic in the breadth of its possible uses, as well as a withering critique of the exploitative motivations of the military-industrial complex. "The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist," Dwight D. Eisenhower would warn in his final speech as President of the United States. A full eleven years earlier, Vonnegut made the same warning in this story.

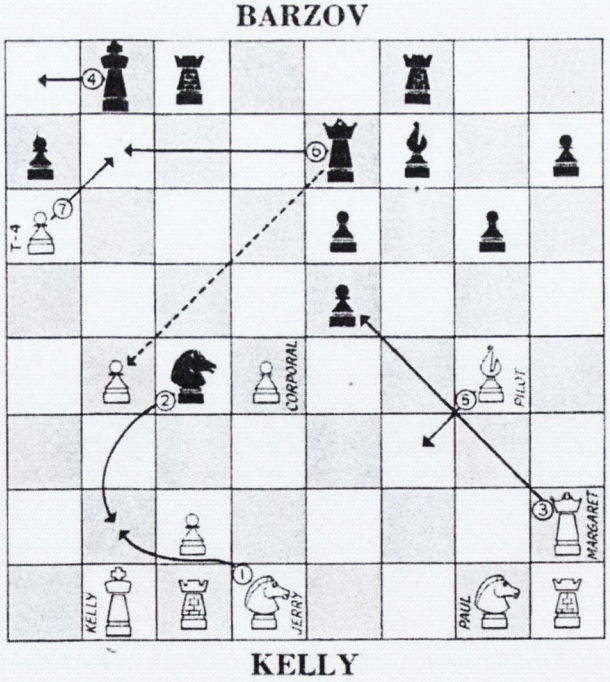
2.3 Only a Pawn in Their Game

> Chess: the least civilized game in the world. It's all about war. Attack, defend, sacrifice. To win, you not only have to murder your opponent's pieces, but have some of your own pieces murdered by your opponent. Of course, chess is only a limited simulation of the real thing.
>
> Kurt Vonnegut (introducing "All the King's Horses" for Showtime's *Monkey House*, 1991)

With a title evoking nursery rhyme futility of trying to repair a broken eggshell, "All the King's Horses" presents a fanciful micro-drama of international relations edging on war, what Jerome Klinkowitz and John Somer call one of Vonnegut's "early fables" (38). His fourth published story (*Collier's* 10 Feb. 1951), it stands out in Vonnegut's oeuvre for its unambiguous designation of heroes and villains. Where much of his fiction refuses to establish or subverts binary oppositions, there is no question here when it comes to who to root for and who to despise. The story follows sixteen American P.O.W.s who have suffered a plane crash and been captured on the vaguely designated Asiatic mainland by Pi Ying, "a Communist guerilla chief" (91). In pulp-fiction style, the warlord offers safe travel through

his territory if American Colonel Bryan Kelly can beat him in a life-size game of chess. Kelly plays with his fellow P.O.W.s, his wife Margaret, and twin sons Jerry and Paul as the game pieces, while Pi uses massive wooden pieces. Every time Kelly loses a player to Pi, that person is taken to an adjoining room and shot dead.

Chess has been used to similar ends in earlier fiction. *The Chessmen of Mars* (1922) by Edgar Rice Burroughs, fifth volume in his Barsoom series, features a similar game, called jetan. Warlords play the game in an arena with a life-size playing field and death to players lost. There is also the chessboard layout of the Victorian classic *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871), which is explicitly acknowledged with Lewis Carroll's diagram of the board as being "strictly in accordance with the laws of the game" (133). Humpty Dumpty, alluded to in Vonnegut's title, is a character in Carroll's sequel. Vonnegut's game is also true to the rules of chess, so much so that *Collier's* printed a diagram in the center of the last page to help readers follow the moves. This diagram was not reproduced for either *Canary in a Cat House* (1961) or *Welcome to the Monkey House* (1968), which both include "Horses."



[Fig. v: Diagram accompanying "All the King's Horses" (50)]

Dan Wakefield, editor of Vonnegut's letters, brought forth correspondence preceding the story's publication: "It appears from the letter that someone at *Collier's* had objected to the ethnic identity of the villainous guerilla leader, named 'Pi Ying,' in the story 'White King' that was published as 'All the King's Horses'" (*Letters* 37). In a letter to the magazine's fiction editor, Knox Burger, dated 31 October 1950, Vonnegut defends the story:

> First off, leave me point out that nobody in the village or anywhere else would wince if the villain of my story were Baron Wolfgang von Steinhaus Kriegswald, scourge of the infamous S.S., ca. 1942.
>
> Second off, I am a registered Democrat, pro-Fair and New Deal, distressed by the new anti-subversive laws, hate McCarthy, enflamed by Communist smears on liberals—etc., etc. But, dammit, Knox, I don't like Communist Russia any more than I did Nazi Germany. There are some 3,000 Americans dead in Korea, killed in a chess game with Russia looking on. That is a lot of dead people and a plenty sickening situation. I have sixteen on my chessboard, which is peanuts. Them as may say I am insensitive to put an inflammatory thing like "White King" on the market are, perhaps, too insensitive to a casualty list as long as King Kong's arm. (37-38)

That said, Pi remains an Orientalized foe, complete with a speechless subaltern courtesan at his side. Before tackling those issues, historical context is necessary.

"Horses" appeared during the Korean War, fought from June 1950 to an armistice lasting July 1953 to November 1954. The conflict remains unresolved, with the Korean peninsula split North and South. During combat operations in the early nineteen-fifties, as Robertson points out, Americans confronted a set of expectations far different from those of WWII:

> War was not declared. It was officially a United Nations "police action" commanded by Americans, with a majority of the non-Korean military forces provided by the United States. Russia was the "real enemy" in Korea, as most Americans believed (the North Koreans and the Chinese were "Russia's puppets"). [...] Total victory proved impossible, because the military objectives of the war were kept limited: America could not defeat the Russians or the Chinese in Korea, and the vision of atomic holocaust prevented most from playing with the idea of extending the limit of the war. (339)

Sure enough, in Vonnegut's story we find a Russian official, Major Barzov, at Pi's ear. Thanks to political dynamics, "Horses" provides a fantasy depicting American anxieties in

the early years of the Cold War. Publication in one of the most popular mainstream magazines of its time underscores its significance as a product of and for the middle class American psyche, which in 1951 was quite unsure of the Soviet Union's influence in the world, particularly in East Asia.

The Americans begin the story plane-wrecked in Pi's territory. Some of the specialists on board were bound for the Middle East, but Colonel Kelly, his wife, and twin sons were en route as military attaché to India. One recalls another Westerner who headed the long way around to India and came up short: Christopher Columbus, arch-usher of European imperialism in the Americas. Kelly's failed journey is an imagined international hiccup in postwar American imperialism, heading so far west it lands in the so-called Far East. Here there are "rice fields," "near-jungle," and Pi's "decaying palace" (91). The palace's decay suggests an ailing seat of power in a foreign Waste Land, one even more beguiling than the Waste Land back home. Even use of the word "palace" is othering from the standpoint of American conceptions of normality: palaces are opulent Old World residences of command not found in the U.S.A., whose President rules from the modestly-named White *House*.

Regarding whiteness, the story's original title, "White King," points to the color and chess piece Kelly assumes, as well as his race as a white American. The racial element is not subtle, though color is not used to describe the "Oriental" characters. This story operates, in part, through the myth of "The White Man's Burden." Rudyard Kipling brought the phrase into American and British consciousness with his poem of the same title, a poem written for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee but rewritten to address the Spanish-American War (1898). The most common understanding of the myth is dependent upon the bigger myth of progress and places white Europeans and Americans above the other people of the world, their "influence" trickling down a hierarchy based on race and supported by biased sciences,

bestowing them with the responsibility of "bringing up" those less fortunate races through civilizing (a.k.a. imperializing) means.

It is one of the most dangerous myths in the West and is not behind us. In 2007, Nobel Prize winner Dr. James Watson, who with Dr. Francis Crick discovered the double-helix structure of the DNA molecule, was forced to resign from his own institute for statements about the intelligence of blacks:

> [Watson] told the *Sunday Times'* Charlotte Hunt-Grubbe that he is "inherently gloomy about the prospect of Africa," since "all our social policies are based on the fact that their intelligence is the same as ours—whereas testing says not really." Watson also [said] that even though he would hope all people are equal in intellectual capacity, "people who have to deal with black employees find this not true." ("The Mortification of James Watson")

Vonnegut worried about being read as a racist, coming to his own defense in his letter. But even with the new title, this story presents white Americans falling prey to an uncivilized Orient and rising to the occasion of establishing dominance. Chess, considered a game of medieval Europe, though developed from games from India and Persia, is used by an East Asian foe against white Americans, the effect being of one's own game used against him. And here, on the coattails of rebuilding Europe and Japan, is a newly anticipated burden of cleaning up the mess of red communism in "yellow" Asia. The emphasis on whiteness also relates to American military might, conjuring the image of President Theodore Roosevelt's Great White Fleet. In 1907, he sent the white-painted U.S. armada on a fourteen-month mission to sail the globe in a westerly direction. It was an unambiguously imperialistic strut, waving Teddy's proverbial Big Stick in a pageant that saw no action but spoke loudly. Vonnegut's story plays out a scenario of the white American military spreading into parts of the world lacking definition in U.S. consciousness and shows its individual members becoming entangled in unforeseen, deadly circumstances.

Pi Ying, whose name puns the act of urination in a culturally insulting way, has more in common with Raymond's Ming the Merciless from *Flash Gordon* or Rohmer's criminal

mastermind Fu Manchu than he does with any East Asian military leader in 1951. Kim Il-sung, who became leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, was the man to beat at the time, viewed as a puppet ventriloquized by the Russians and the Chinese. It is also worth noting that the same issue of *Collier's* contains "City Under a Dagger": sketches and an account by Howard Brodie, *Collier's* Combat Artist, from his visit to Hanoi, then undergoing the First Indochina War (32-33, 37). To be fair, Pi is not portrayed as a caricature of Kim, the U.S. is not at war with him in the story, and specifics are avoided as to his nationality and locale in East Asia. He and his guerilla force are generalized, broadly labeled as communist and Oriental, underlining an undiagnosed American uneasiness with the unknown Far East.



[Fig. vi: Tran Mawicke's two-page spread illustration (14-15)]

Painter Tran Mawicke put terrific care into his two-page illustration for the story in *Collier's*. It depicts Pi and Kelly's game as it stands halfway through the story, nearly matching the diagram of the board reproduced in the magazine. The only deviation is a pawn absent from position 2c, likely a compositional decision, because from the chosen angle a

grown man in that square would block our view of ten year old Jerry, greatly hampering the emotional tug produced by the boy's presence. Heightening that effect, Mawicke puts an armed guerilla over the child's shoulder. This level of detail is exceptional for a story of this period. Reed notes differences between story and Paul Burns's illustration in the first publication of Vonnegut's "Bagombo Snuff Box" (*Cosmopolitan* Oct. 1954):

> In two of the illustrations this tired housewife appears confidently ravishing in a strapless, low-backed ball gown and elaborate jewelry, with finely tapered fingers and long painted nails! Harry, described as a "short, blocky man," appears lean, tan, and handsome. The artists obviously had an important role in setting the tone of these magazines and luring readers to their stories. (*SFKV* 53)

Mawicke's precision is appreciable. On the far left we see Pi's bishop, right hand held in an affected *mudra*—a symbolic gesture expressing Buddhist or Hindu values. The queen piece standing to his right is shown in Orientalized robes. Both pieces have East Asian facial features. Framed between them, at the far corner of the board, we see an American soldier, the pilot-cum-bishop, and Margaret as the white queen. The three, whose anxiety is expressed in worried postures, are dwarfed by the foregrounded pieces.

The right page is entirely illustrated. On this side of the board, Pi's knight dominates, standing between two of Kelly's pawns. The piece is a full-sized horse, its four hooves cramped together on a square base, an Orientalized knight upon its back. Ten-year-old Jerry stands on tiptoed-anticipation beyond the horse's rear end in striped shirt, looking at his father. From this angle, a trick of distance makes it look like the carved horse's face might bite off Kelly's face. He is shown at 1b, looking over his shoulder to his opponent standing in a balcony. Pi, cheerful in white military uniform with his hands on his waist, is flanked by a Stalinesque Barzov on the left and the unnamed "delicate young Oriental [...] motionless, ornamental girl" (94) on the right, her face painted something like a geisha's. A leafless, gnarled bonsai trunk stands in a pot beside them and a red banner with a golden Chinese dragon in ouroboric form drapes over the ledge.

So many of these elements, combined as they are, make the painting, inspired by the content of Vonnegut's story, a pictorial example of manifest Orientalism. The lack of specificity in an image pieced together from various East Asian cultures introduced this story to *Collier's* readers in a way, most likely unconscious, that appealed to their general ignorance. This isn't to say that middle class Americans were stupid. Rather, at the time of publication, mainstream America was at least a decade away from developing a widespread and open curiosity about the East (which would bring, with benefits, its own generalizing pitfalls). This was five years after the end of WWII, concurrent with the Korean War, and despite the scale of both, most Americans experienced those conflicts second-hand. Their ideas of East Asia had been largely shaped under the rhetoric of us vs. them, inflected by cartoon propaganda depicting slant-eyed and bucktoothed "Japs" by the likes of otherwise-great artists like Theodor Geisel. Someone at *Collier's* questioned the racial depiction of Pi, and yet his appearance in the magazine lifts the archetypal image of the "Oriental" foe from jingoistic cartoons and pulp modes and plops it into mainstream, middle class American discourse. The story legitimizes the fears Americans had at the time about potential conflicts in East Asia and Soviet Communism as a threat to the people and prospects of the U.S.A.

Critics Kevin Alexander Boon and David Pringle claim that, "there are no heroes in Vonnegut's 'All the King's Horses' [...] Colonel Kelly, the communist guerilla chief, Ying, and the Russian military 'observer,' Barzov are all military figures. It is their inhumane military logic that Vonnegut exposes, a 'logic' that women, to their credit, cannot fathom" (*At Millennium's End* 174). Apart from the doting sexism shoehorned in at the end, they approach this early Vonnegut story with an understanding of the author at a more mature stage. This might be a case of Vonnegut's persona getting in the way. To build upon a dictum from D. H. Lawrence: never trust *our idea of* the teller, trust the tale. One aspect of this story is that of its WWII veteran author, not six years on the other side of traumatic military

service, flexing his ideological stance when it comes to exploring international relations through fiction. His defense of the story in the letter to Burger tells us that protagonist Kelly is, without a doubt, a hero in the sense that he symbolically stands up for and wins a victory for American values against Communist guerilla factions. Vonnegut is not your token subversive element; at times he is marvelously conventional in his convictions.

And yet Boon and Pringle are correct to say that the story exposes the inhumanity of being put in the position of making tactical decisions that will kill not only one's enemies but also one's own soldiers. Repeatedly, the word "philosophically" is used, set apart by commas for emphasis, to describe the nature of the game: "Pi said that their fight against death would be no different, philosophically, from what all of them, except Kelly's wife and children, had known in battle. In a cold way, it was true—no different, philosophically" (91). This idea of a philosophy of war underlines, from a Western point of view, the notion of a psychological split between East and West. Pi is a pseudo-Sun Tzu in poor translation, offering the odd platitude about war, a convention common to pulp villains. "I think this is an excellent way," he says, "of bringing together the Eastern and Western minds, don't you, Colonel? Here we indulge the American's love for gambling with our appreciation of profound drama and philosophy" (97). Barzov supports this perceived split: "'He'll learn to be a pawn yet,' he roared. 'It's an Oriental skill Americans could do well to learn for the days ahead, eh?'" (99).

Campbell classified the world's dominant mythologies as Oriental and Occidental: "In their mythologies, religions, philosophies, and ideals, no less than in their styles of life and dress and in their arts, these four domains have remained throughout their histories distinct. And yet they do group significantly in two orders of two: India and the Far East, on one hand; the Levant and Europe, on the other" (*Myths to Live By* 61-62). It is an old binary still popular in the West whether one believes it or not. The two overarching systems, as Campbell sees them, can enter into dialogue if engaged, neither superior to the other. This

spirit does not come through in Vonnegut's story. In time, he would challenge American views of other cultures—in *Man Without a Country* (2005) he went against the grain during the Afghanistan and second Iraq wars in thanking Arabs and central Asians for algebra and the concept of zero. But in "Horses," written at the beginning of his career, the East/West split is portrayed superficially, Kelly's opposing players little more than Vonnegut's game pieces representing Communist Russia and East Asians.

Accepting that caveat, the story does acknowledge the ethical complexity of decisions that military commanders must make. If Campbell is correct that "when you go to war with people, the problem of the newspapers is to turn those people into 'its'" (*POM* 78-79), that ruthlessness is dictated by the war-making leaders when they send soldiers off to die. But Kelly experiences this "it-ness" in relation to his own troops: "He found himself thinking of the lieutenant in those terms—no longer human, but a piece capable of moving diagonally across the board; capable, when attacking with the queen, of terrible damage to the black men across the board" (97). When he loses his first soldier, the sergeant/pawn, and hears the gunshot in the next room, the Colonel suffers a crisis of conscience: "Kelly's calm was shattered, and with it went the illusion of the game. The pieces in his power were human beings again. The precious, brutal stuff of command was gone from Colonel Kelly. He was no more fit to make decisions of life and death than the rawest recruit" (99). Here we see the sanctity of life breaking through a man's condition as a seasoned career military officer.

Losing the sergeant shatters "the eerie calm" that Vonnegut calls "the essence of war" before the chess game begins: "Now [Kelly] recognized the eerie calm—an old wartime friend—that left only the cold machinery of his wits and senses alive. It was the narcotic of generalship. It was the essence of war" (95). This wartime stillness is present in countless accounts of war, historical, journalistic, and fictitious. World War I poets paid this stillness high respect, for instance Siegfried Sassoon in "Before the Battle" (1918) and Edmund

Blunden in "Gouzeaucourt: The Deceitful Calm" (1928). This quiet "friend," a personified quality of atmosphere preceding combat, has deadened everything in Kelly but his wits and senses. As Vonnegut puts it, this "essence," "the narcotic of generalship," is a drug for those in command.

The watershed of humanity that floods his consciousness when the sergeant is killed inflicts a psychological wound on Kelly. He experiences it as a failure of his own command. Meagher argues that, "Whether we have in mind a modern superpower like the United States or an ancient superhero like Herakles, both of which unleash irresistible force, we find that there is no such thing as killing without dying, no such thing as inflicting casualties without enduring them. Every wound inflicted on another is a wound suffered within" (13). Meagher refers chiefly to attacks on the enemy, the killing of a demonized stranger. The effect of seeing a subordinate killed due to one's orders invites a wound as great or greater.

Yet after Kelly has lost five servicemen to Pi, he suddenly steels his emotional core, invoking necessity of tactics. He switches from playing defensively to offensively, which realigns him under the "essence of war":

> Kelly didn't permit himself to think of the chessmen as anything but a cipher in a rigid mathematical proposition: if *x* is dead, the rest shall live. He perceived the tragedy of his decision only as a man who knew the definition of tragedy, not as one who felt it [...] The cold resolve deserted Kelly for an instant, and he saw the utter pathos of his position—a dilemma as old as mankind, as new as the struggle between East and West. When human beings are attacked, *x*, multiplied by hundreds or thousands, must die—sent to death by those who love them most. Kelly's profession was the choosing of *x*. (102)

He registers a need to embrace the situation's inhumanity in order to save as many lives on his side as he can. Impersonalization, along with deliberate cruelty and coercion, is one of historian John Keegan's trinity of "the inhuman face of war" (320-31). Hillman comments: "It is not merely the industrialization of warfare and the large population involved, but the ontology of numerical thinking, of science itself, that produces the impersonalization which

creates a new kind of deliberate cruelty in the precisely calculated bombing of the unnamed by the unnamed [...] War turns humans into parts, spare parts" (52).

The problem of naming is relevant. The sergeant, corporal, and pilot are all identified by these terms. These nameless characters are refurbished as two pawns and a bishop respectively, old parts becoming new parts for this miniaturized, stylized version of battle. The sergeant gives service as a pawn, the corporal offers his body to pawnship. But Kelly, too, surrenders his name, giving himself to coronation as the white king. Boon and Pringle remind us that the king is "the one piece that cannot die, that can only be captured" (174), so he is safe from everything—save command. In accepting this persona Kelly dehumanizes himself, making the intellectual, programmatic choice to align with the ideological value that it is better to send some to slaughter in order to spare the majority than suffer a numerically higher loss of life.

The white king, in an Abraham and Isaac decision, moves the queen's knight forward. That knight is one of Kelly's ten-year-old twin sons, Jerry. Jerry was Allied slang during WWII for the Germans, as well as the name of MGM's cartoon mouse who perpetually outwits his predatory feline foe in *Tom and Jerry* shorts. Kelly's sacrificial offering outwits Pi—and sets the women into motion. When Pi takes Jerry with his bishop and orders the boy killed, the voiceless subaltern "girl" to his side, horrified by his cruelty, stabs him in the back. Pi dies a serpentine Humpty Dumpty: "The small man slumped on the balustrade, slithered over it to crash among his soldiers" (104). The "Chinese girl," the only East Asian character given a nationality, stabs herself in the chest and collapses against Barzov. Within this single instance of the word "Chinese" is all of America's notions of Red China, far less blatant than Barzov's status as a representative for Soviet Russia. The reality of the Korean War was that both Russia and China were backing the North Koreans.

The white queen, Kelly's wife Margaret, cannot accept the sacrifice of their son: "Death through a blunder she might be able to understand; but death as a product of cool reason, a step in logic, she could never accept. Rather than accept it, she would have had them all die" (105). This is what causes Boon and Pringle to espouse "that women, to their credit, cannot fathom" the so-called logic of war (174). Margaret is one of only three women portrayed in the story, the other two being the nameless Orientalized Chinese girl and the opposing queen game piece. Boon and Pringle's patriarchal argument is too gendered. Hillman disdains this as "the testosterone hypothesis":

> [T]hat is, everything to do with bellicosity and militarism is the expression of male physiology, both the cruelty and the courage—it's all reducible to glands of gender. The myths and legends tell it differently: the spirit of war and the rage of battle are archetypal, forced upon all animal life, all gender, all societies. No gland can contain it. It is irreducible, a *Ding an sich*. It breaks out in matriarchal and matrilineal societies. No one is exempt. Women cannot hide from it, as its victims know, nor can they hide it. Not only legendary Amazons but modern women in power have been war leaders; women have clamored for admission to military academies and they serve the military with distinction, pride, and killing weaponry. (*TLW* 86)

Margaret rejects what Boon and Pringle call patriarchal rationalization, as does the Chinese girl. The focus on patriarchy, however, must not limit our reading to binaries. The opposite of patriarchal rationalization would be matriarchal irrationalization, but Hillman warns us of following that lead as a definitive answer. A quick consideration of chess in terms of binaries reveals plenty of cleavings: one side vs. the other, white vs. black (in pieces *and* alternating squares on the board), sixteen pieces vs. a mirrored sixteen pieces, and on each side a solid rank of pawns before a solid rank of specialized pieces, as well as each king and each queen having his or her own bishop, knight, and rook. The setup is hardly a model for the reality of war. As a simulation, it is intellectually contrived, rather than arising from the sublime realm of actuality. Vonnegut *almost* rejects the logic of war but ends up enacting it to spare lives on Kelly's side, which was also the side of *Collier's* readers.

The chief problem in "Horses" is respecting war only as a game played out by the frontal lobe of the brain. Cut off from the emotive and instinctual nerves, chemicals, and spirits that course through all of us, people wage war from a place of imbalance. Campbell pointed to this intellectual imbalance as a terrible danger for individuals:

> [C]onsciousness thinks it's running the shop. But it's a secondary organ of a total human being, and it must not put itself in control. It must submit and serve the humanity of the body. [...] If the person insists on a certain program, and doesn't listen to the demands of his own heart, he's going to risk a schizophrenic crackup. Such a person has put himself off center. He has aligned himself with a program for life, and it's not the one the body's interested in at all. (*POM* 146, 147)

Kelly plays by the rules of the system of chess. Denied the rights of prisoners of war under the Geneva Convention, the Americans' alternative is death. It is with hope of saving some souls under his terribly limited protection that Kelly accepts the game. In a sense, this is a condition of generalship that we foist upon our military leaders when our political representatives send them to oversee battle. This is a paradox: they act on behalf of the collective and, in playing by a set of rules anathema to civilized life, risk losing their own humanity to protect it.

In a variation on British philosopher Philippa Foot's ethical "Trolley Problem", Smith posits a scenario in which a house is on fire and you only have time to rescue occupants of one of two occupied bedrooms. One room has three children unrelated to you in it and the other has your child: "[A] person who, being more altruistic, would let his child die to save the lives of the three others would probably be regarded by most people as a psychopathic monster" (138). Thus Margaret and the Chinese girl's disgust with the implications of Kelly's final move. His own duty is put to the test thanks to his presence on the line of battle, an uncharacteristic position for a military commander. Smith expounds upon the significance of distance in psychological stability when issuing orders:

> Distance also explains how it is possible for generals to condemn thousands of men, women, and children to death with a single order without suffering

> psychological harm, while a private who kills just one man in close combat may be haunted by the experience for the remainder of his life. [...] Indirect, impersonal killing has little if any effect on the soldier's psyche. It is when the slaughter is up close and personal, and the humanity of the victim cannot readily be denied, that our profound aversion to taking a life swings into action, and must be overcome if the soldier is to perform his lethal duty. (180)

That buffer of physical distance most modern military commanders enjoy is taken away, as is the buffer that typically separates a citizen back home from the front lines for those who would have read the story from the comfortable, oversized pages of *Collier's*. This story aims to repersonalize those impersonalized to war.

While "Horses" gives us a man's world where men command the pieces on the board, we ought to know better than to end our reading there. Patriarchal rationalization is merely symptomatic of impersonalization, one third of Keegan's "inhuman face of war." The women supersede not just patriarchy but its root cause, refusing to impersonalize themselves in the situation and revealing their individual humane capabilities for dignity and brutality. Margaret's courage is in her utter rejection of the game, seeing it as a horribly inhumane construct, a perversion of reality. The Chinese girl, an intervening anima, strikes out and kills Pi before sacrificing herself. The characterizations are not profoundly nuanced; most are bluntly allegorical. It is the process of war and the dynamism of individual reactions to it that are shown to be complex.

Vonnegut's story ends with Kelly achieving checkmate against Barzov, who finds little to do with the board he inherits from Pi. Kelly's family is spared and Barzov agrees to safe passage for the remaining troops through the territory. "Horses" ends in Saturday matinee serial style, with the promise of another skirmish down the road: "If you insist on arranging another game, issue an invitation, Major, and I'll be there" (110). Reading the story today we sense prophecy, thinking of the Vietnam War. At the time though, "All the King's Horses" was expressing the collective anxiety that armed conflict with an East Asian, Russian-backed faction was inevitable.

2.4 GREAT WAR

> The writer enters the field of action more a psychologist than a general, a phenomenologist of the human in the midst of war's terrifying and chaotic inhumanity, to stare into the face of battle which is the inhuman face of Mars.
>
> James Hillman (*TLW* 75)

"Great Day," published posthumously, is an account of boot camp gone wrong in a future where peace reigns and a time machine gives trainee soldiers a glimpse at a real battlefield: WWI's Battle of Château-Thierry. When the overeager, war-loving drill instructor, Captain Poritsky, ventures too far into the demonstration, he and the story's narrator are stranded in 1918. "I ain't no hero," the narrator insists, confronting the myth of the war hero, while Poritsky is portrayed as a pipsqueak Patton, his yearning for war overriding his faculties. The story pits the reluctance to war against the hunger to war and puts the reader in the position of listening to a veteran victim of combat. Hillman says, "War's inhumanity is captured best by poets and novelists, for their imaginations reach into the afflicted soul beyond the reporting of the facts" (48). "Great Day," with its science fiction motif, takes us beyond the realm of fact to immerse us in wartime suffering.

Before delving, we need to consider critic Donald Morse's comments regarding recent collections of Vonnegut's unpublished short fiction[10] to be "unfortunate posthumous publications bearing [Vonnegut's] name." He argues that these previously rejected works should have been available only to scholars, worrying that Vonnegut's standing is at stake: "Whether put together as an act of misplaced piety or out of greed, such books do a grave disservice to Vonnegut by damaging his reputation as well as disrespecting his clearly expressed wishes not to publish" ("Bringing Chaos to Order"). Morse's anxiety sounds like a flare-up from the early years of Vonnegut scholarship, when the case had to be made that this

[10] *Armageddon in Retrospect* (2008), *Look at the Birdie* (2009), *While Mortals Sleep* (2011), and *We Are What We Pretend To Be* (2012).

writer was worth studying. He compares these posthumous productions to those that followed Twain's death, but Twain's legacy as a canonized writer in American letters speaks to the insignificant damage wrought by such publications. Vonnegut fans, which his work produces beyond a "cult following," may appreciate these works because they measure his growth as a writer. Teeth were cut on these stories, so many of them simpler than—yet hinting at—the work to come. Several of the stories also stand to critical analysis. "Great Day" is one such story.

Great Day, we find out at the end, is the nickname given to the narrator by the nurses and wounded soldiers in the cathedral-turned-hospital where he is recuperating. For the majority of the story, the narrator is nameless, addressed only as "soldier" by his captain, giving the account as we encounter it as readers an archetypal quality. The individual relating his war story is "soldier," the grunt, the low-ranking faceless unit that makes up one part of the collective Army. That is, until we find out the story title is his moniker, knighted Great Day for his insistence that he has come from a future with "the Army of the World, everybody like brothers everwhere, peace everlasting, nobody hungry, nobody ascared" (70). Here the story meets rationality: the reader is free to interpret Great Day's story of coming from a peaceful future as the ravings of a blinded "casualty" or a messenger speaking the truth. Like Cassandra, either way, he is hardly heeded by those caring for him.

Great Day's voice approximates that of an uneducated Midwesterner, coming down to us from Huckleberry Finn. Vonnegut used first person narration in many of his stories and novels, often and increasingly in his signature, almost journalistic style. Great Day's voice is not to be found elsewhere in his output, however, making it a curiosity:

> When I was sixteen folks took me for twenty-five, and one full-growed woman from the city swore I must be thirty. I was big all over—had whiskers like steel wool. I sure wanted to see something besides LuVerne, Indiana, and that ain't saying Indianapolis would of held me, neither. (49)

Consider that opening next to the opening of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*:

> You don't know about me, without you have read a book by the name of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. (1)

Twain was an early and persistent inspiration for Vonnegut, and here we see the latter flattering the former with imitation. Great Day's identity as a Hoosier is a projection of Vonnegut's. And while Minnesota, Alabama, and North Dakota have towns called Luverne, and Iowa has one called Lu Verne, none exists in Indiana. This gives Great Day a broader series of connections to the Midwest in general, Alabama being the outlier. Midwestern readers would recognize the towns with the same name in their own states or states nearby, and feel a neighborly kinship. It also suggests, at some remove, science fiction pioneer Jules Verne.

And yet his rustic vernacular hardly fits American notions of what his home year, 2037, would look like. In the fifties, when this story was written, Disney and the World's Fair made imaginings of the future into industries, inspiring the next generation's engineers into expectations of flying cars and moon cottages by the year 2000. Here we are confronted with a voice quite like Huck's Antebellum river-rat dialect. This speaks to Great Day's class, likely poor, white, and uneducated. When his mother warns him to steer clear of the Zulus he will meet when joining the Army of the World (which tells us racism is still alive in 2037), he insists it is a "high-class kind of army," to which she replies, "You just remember you *was* high-class [...] As long as I had you,' she said, 'you was'" (50). This tells us Great Day and his mother have been deemed or at least made to feel lower class. Like many recruits, Great Day's impetus for joining the Army of the World seems to involve the notion of class mobility and "climbing the ranks." While international conflict has been eradicated in 2037, class hierarchy, like racism, trundles onward. 2037 is not a Utopia.

The idea of a future where war has been wiped out creates a premise steeped in wishful thinking and pacifistic idealism. But Vonnegut does not simply build such a setting

and leave the reader with its description. Actually, 2037 goes barely described, the details of its united Army of the World relayed mainly via context. The premise is actually that of mid-twentieth century human beings' reluctance to war and how they are made victims of war by those who desire it. "Although it is true that men have, from time to time, pursued carnage with bloodthirsty enthusiasm," writes Smith, "it is also true men have probably always tried to avoid it" (150). War, in 2037, is an action left to the past, which makes the use of a so-called time-screen to glimpse an actual battlefield a regressive act. The story then is one of collective regression into war and its blinding, impairing, psychological effects on the individual.

The time-screen itself is a variation on the time machine, a trope found in post-Industrial Revolution literatures. In the mid to late nineteenth century, characters like Ebeneezer Scrooge (1843) and Twain's Hank Morgan (1889) were transported through time, by spirits and a concussion, respectively; Vonnegut took Twain to task for this device in his introduction to *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*: "His explanation of how a Yankee gets back to the sixth century couldn't be more lame. He got hit on the head. Oh my, my, my... One remembers that Twain, in a funny and unforgiving essay, fricasseed poor James Fenimore Cooper for literary crimes not half that bad" (xxxii). As machines became more and more common, mechanical means of manipulating time arose in literature. Enrique Gaspar y Rimbau's novel *El Anacronopete* (1887) holds the distinction of the first use of a time machine, and H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* soon followed (1895). By the nineteen-fifties, time machines were a staple of fantastic fiction. The time-screen in "Great Day" presents a machine producing a projection that reveals the past. Captain Poritsky explains how it works, with his limited knowledge:

> "[At] oh-five-hundred hours the artillery will lay down two lines of flares, two hundred yards apart. Them flares will mark the edges of the beam of the time machine. We will attack between them flares. [...Between] them lines of flares it will be today and July eighteenth, nineteen-eighteen, both at the same

> time. [...] You're going to see the Americans counter-attacking the Germans back in olden times at Château-Thierry. [...The] scientists tell me nineteen-eighteen can't do nothing to us, and we can't do nothing to nineteen-eighteen. We'll be ghosts to them, and they'll be ghosts to us. We'll be walking through them and they'll be walking through us like we was all smoke." (59-60)

This beam that shines back through time is not clumsily imagined. From a depth psychological standpoint, projection is the unconscious act of seeing one's own shortcomings or graces manifested in the behavior of others. It is often a denial of the potential for such attitudes, qualities, and actions in oneself. When we moon over someone, we are seeing our own potential to love mapped onto that someone; when we loathe somebody, we are often witnessing our own consciously-denied or unconsciously-repressed capacities in full display. Named a time-screen, the device also carries significance attributed to various meanings of "screen": It screens the past for conflict, presents a screen upon which past events are watched, a sort of three-dimensional film screen, and even sifts time as an archaeologist's screen sifts soil to find easily-missed shards of bone.

In 2037, humanity unified has gone about creating a way to project the sins of its forefathers, believing this will "blood" its peacekeeping Army without any respect for the reality lurking beyond the beam's periphery. The machine bears a caveat that would tempt Bluebeard's latest wife: "[If] anybody's thinking of going A.W.O.L., here's your golden opportunity. All you got to do is cross one of them lines of flares, go through the edge of the beam. You'll disappear into nineteen-eighteen for real—won't be nothing ghostly about it" (60-61). The scientists' invention, seemingly clever in its safety features, carries all of the real dangers of a battle fought 119 years earlier for reasons largely forgotten. Great Day's comrade Earl Sterling, of Salt Lake, demonstrates his ignorance of Château-Thierry the night before the demonstration: "Something big must of happened over there" (55). The demonstration carries with it the irreversible potential to feed lives to an unheeded history.

Captain Poritsky, who commands the time-screen company, the first of its kind, is one who has fallen in love with war, though he has never experienced it. Great Day introduces him, citing his sporty Midwestern Catholic education and perverse fondness for his own physique: "He use to be a football player at Notre Dame, and he looked like a stack of cannonballs on a courthouse lawn. He use to like to feel hisself all over while he talked to us. He use to like to feel how hard all them cannonballs was" (51). Poritsky is a sick individual. His penchant for masturbatory exhibitionism of his own muscles in front of his soldiers casts him as narcissistic at the very least. And his desire is entirely yoked to scientific progress. He has waited for the day the scientists would develop such a thing as their time-screen so that he might finally come close to experiencing a human event that has been rejected collectively, that of making war. Poritsky would gladly see peace undone because he seeks an outward manifestation of the war he feels within himself. "'I was born to *fight*!' he hollered. 'I'm rusting out inside!'" (65).

In taking classicist Victor Davis Hanson to task for his championing of the current war on terror, Meagher portrays him in a way that could very well apply to Captain Poritsky:

> Hanson's celebration of that tradition, his confident righteousness, his seemingly eager embrace of carnage, and his apparent assumption that the hoplite charge need only be tinkered with to be effective against civilian insurgents and urban terrorists make at least one thing manifestly clear—that he has learned of war from books. His dreams of combat, if he has them, are second-hand, far from the nightmares of a veteran. (10)

Clearly, Meagher condemns the glorification of war by one who has not seen it, and so does Vonnegut in this story. But condemnation does not always pave the way to understanding where such an attitude arises. Campbell offered one explanation of the love of war as a desire, strange as it sounds, to live:

> Men sometimes confess they love war because it puts them in touch with the experience of being alive. In going to the office every day, you don't get that experience, but suddenly, in war, you are ripped back into being alive. Life is pain; life is suffering; and life is horror—but, by God, you are alive. Those

> young men in Vietnam were truly alive in braving death for their fellows. (*POM* 114)

How are we to conduct ourselves humanely, if that is indeed our aim, in this life where certain others around us eagerly or unconsciously long to behave inhumanely? Despite Great Day's goal that we identify with him, the peace-seeking narrator, this story reminds us that there are war-lovers in the world. All struggles in establishing and maintaining peace will be met by individuals who carry a yearning for war.

The story offers no solution to this conundrum. Short stories need not solve problems and few, if any, do. "I don't think a story has to deal with an 'issue' at all," writes Charles E. May ("Junot"). The form does, however, favor the warning, the drawing of consciousness to particular problems. This is not to reduce all of short fiction to the status of public service announcements; yet some stories do present human problems with a realized dynamism that refuses to simplify life-shaping forces. No moral is delivered, just a warning. Myths often act in the same way, not explaining the world, not solving it like a puzzle, but simply enfranchising aspects of experience within it, delivering the message that such-and-such is a feature, an event, a potentiality of being alive. "Fiction seeks out truth," writes John Gardner. "Granted, it seeks a poetic kind of truth, universals not easily translatable into moral codes. But part of our interest as we read is in learning how the world works" (79). "Great Day" presents soldiers struggling to metabolize the existence of war:

> "How come the folks just didn't go crazy in all them real wars—or quit?"
> "Folks are funny," I said.
> "Sometimes I don't think so," Earl said. (54)

In many ways, this is the experience of every halfway decent person who has not experienced battle him or herself. If Smith and others are correct that the vast majority of people are intrinsically reluctant to kill other people, disbelief or bewilderment must be typical when war happens.

Here Vonnegut's personal experiences as a Private First Class are clearly feeding the need to tell the story at hand. In his introduction to *A Connecticut Yankee*, Vonnegut identified his tendency as an aged novelist to read personal details in others' books: "Such autobiographical material is not *between* the lines. It is *in* the lines" (xxxi). As one who would eventually inject himself as a character into his fiction, Vonnegut was in every way present in his work from the beginning. "Great Day" offers two telling details that would emerge later in his fiction as deriving from his personal experiences in surviving the firebombing of Dresden. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy Pilgrim is given a Jack the Giant Killer quality as he waits out Allied bombing: "He was down in the meat locker on the night that Dresden was destroyed. There were sounds like giant footsteps above. Those were sticks of high-explosive bombs. The giants walked and walked" (*NS* 464). In "Great Day" the narrator says: "There was a barrage going on up above, like giants walking around, kicking the world apart. They was shells from our guns, of course, playing like that was the enemy, playing like they was sore as hell about something" (53). Later Poritsky describes the approaching glimpse of Château-Thierry in terms evoking the meat locker that protected Vonnegut and his fellow P.O.W.s during the bombing of Dresden: "it's going to be a slaughterhouse in Hell" (59).

The depictions of the WWI battle then are fittingly infernal:

> You could see where the four poor nineteen-eighteen souls had been crawling around and around in that hole, like snails crawling around in a fishbowl. There was a track leading from each one—the live ones *and* the dead ones.
>
> A shell lit in the hole and blowed up.
>
> When the mud fell back down, there wasn't but one man left alive.
>
> He turned over from his belly to his back, and he let his arms flop out. It was like he was offering his soft parts to nineteen-eighteen, so it could kill him easy, if it wanted to kill him so bad.
>
> And then *he* seen *us*.
>
> He wasn't surprised to see us hanging there in the air over him. Wasn't nothing could surprise him no more. (66-67)

We do not often stop and realize that the field of history is in many ways a collective failure in time traveling into the past. The act of imagining an event with the trace materials we can gather after it has come to pass is a meditation aiming at reconstructing experiences that are gone. Cause for trying to piece together the past is entirely subjective and the desired goal of objective recreation can never be truly achieved in a living way. Facts provide clues but they cannot draw the past into happening again for the full experience of what it was like. One aspect worth noting in "Great Day" is the representation of men being shelled at the Battle of Château-Thierry, an actual event in our history that provides a setting in a fantasy that begins in the unknown future. The effect of wondering what the dying man thinks when seeing Great Day and Captain Poritsky standing over him is something we like to imagine when contemplating the lives and deaths of our ancestors: What would they make of us looking back at them?

"Great Day," going unpublished until its young author had died an old man, benefits from a familiarity with what Kurt Vonnegut had experienced as a soldier. It is an attempt, unsuccessful, to exorcise *miasma* from its writer's life. Great Day himself, only nicknamed, archetypally cast as a Soldier, tells his story to us and anyone else who will listen to his own attempt to overcome the pollution war has left in his soul. "They should ought to have special hospitals for heroes, so heroes wouldn't have to lay next to the likes of me," he says.

> "I never done a thing to make the world safe for democracy," I tell 'em. "When I got hit, I was crying like a baby and trying to kill my own captain. If a bullet hadn't of killed him, I would of, and he was a fellow American." [...] But all these heroes here, they don't seem to care. "That's all right, Buddy," they say, "You just go right on talking." (69)

One problem with heroism is the perpetuation of what are typically identified as heroic circumstances and emerging, initiated, without feeling the anticipated sensation of having become a hero. Many veterans find themselves derided or unappreciated for their service by those who disagreed with the justness of the conflict their community sent them to fight, an

experience that deepens their disillusionment into an abyss. This is why stories that represent the horrible dynamics of battle are integral to our collective psyche: they place us briefly within the experience of war-making without bodily danger of killing or being killed. For the veteran who does not feel like a hero, who feels its opposite, "Great Day" is a story where he or she will find a voice expressing the same feeling. Vonnegut, always trying to be a useful member of society, was unable to express his own wartime trauma to his own satisfaction, for lack of a better word, until he was nearly fifty years old. *Slaughterhouse-Five* was not his final word on WWII or war itself, but with the publication of "Great Day," it is clear that his cathartic novel was also not his first.

2.5 LOOKING BACK ON ARMAGEDDON

> One can learn things of great value by visiting the underworld, the habitat of the devil.
>
> Rollo May (*Cry for Myth* 273)

Another 1950s story Vonnegut failed to place for publication in his lifetime is "Armageddon in Retrospect." An epistolary narrative, the story's form is that of a generic form letter asking for money to fund a dubiously supernatural enterprise: capture of the Devil. It stands apart in Vonnegut's canon for the way it engages the Judeo-Christian myth of evil. Nowhere else did Vonnegut so directly play with the binary, religiously inflected, that pits the concept of good in a war with the concept of evil. Play provides the means in this story to reconsider not only faith but also science, which stand today as another binary many accept at face value as being irreconcilable opposites in constant conflict; Vonnegut's Dr. Gorman Tarbell explains "if you'll investigate the history of science, my dear boy, I think you'll find that most of the really big ideas have come from intelligent playfulness. All the sober, thin-lipped concentration is really just a matter of tidying up around the fringes of the big ideas" (216).

The letter writer's goal, as he explains it, is to defeat the Devil by scientific means and rid the world of evil. Instead of focusing on war between nations, this story delves into metaphysical war, sizing up a major Western spiritual/metaphorical (depending on your persuasion) explanation for the root cause of conflicts, both inner and communal.

Addressed "Dear Friend" and signed by "Dr. Lucifer J. Mephisto, Chairman of the Board" (209, 232), the letter unspools the history of the Pine Institute and UNDICO, the United Nations Demonological Investigating Committee. Given the purported author's name—"as you might expect," he writes, "I was subjected to a lot of poor jokes about my being the perfect man for the job because of my name" (220)—there is reasonable cause to weigh him on the scales of reliable narration. Lucifer, of course, is one of the many names of the Devil, though it initially referred to the planet Venus, which shines brightly in the sky at dawn and dusk. In Latin, *lux* means "light" and *ferre* is "to bring." Later Lucifer became associated with the chief angel who rebelled against God in the Old Testament (*Isaiah* 14:12). Lucifer points to the light-bringing, Promethean attractiveness of the Devil, his ability to disguise himself in brightness as a means of deception, hiding his nefarious nature. The pairing of light with good and darkness with evil may be primordial, but it has certainly existed in Western conscious expression at least since belief in Zoroastrianism, a 6th century BCE Persian religion that influenced the Judeo-Christian traditions.

The middle initial J. could stand for any number of names, but the surname of Mephisto is specific. It is a shortening of Mephistopheles, the name of a demon in German folklore and attributed to the Faust legend in the sixteenth century as a minion of Lucifer. Christopher Marlowe used Mephistopheles in *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (1604) but Johann Wolfgang von Goethe stole his thunder in his two-part tragedy titled *Faust* (1808 and 1832). In a spin on the competition between God and Satan for Job's devotion, Mephistopheles wagers that he will lure Faust, an intellectual pursuing

enlightenment, away from truth. Faust makes a pact with Mephistopheles for greater access to knowledge. Fully intending to claim Faust's soul, Mephistopheles puts him through a series of labors but loses him to the angels of heaven. Reed and Rackstraw have written on Vonnegut's intertextuality with Goethe's *Faust* in *Mother Night* (where its title originates) and *Slaughterhouse-Five*, with Rackstraw noting: "Vonnegut's whimsical recapitulations of honored literatures like *Faust* affirm the continuity as well as the transforming cultural powers such archetypal figures have had and will continue to have" ("Paradox" 60-61). This Pan-American tendency of re-presenting European archetypes is also expressed, we recall from Chapter 1, by Latin American writers like Retamar and Andrade.

In the prologue to Goethe's *Part One*, Mephistopheles introduces himself:

> I am the spirit that seeks to do evil
> But always turns out to be good. (1.1335)

Rollo May reads the play as an expression of the hope and failure of westerners from the Enlightenment onward who place faith in the bright-shining notion of progress: "Goethe's *Faust* is a poignant and powerful expression of the myth of our modern age in which people yearn to believe that the God of progress [...] will have a beneficent effect upon us and will bring vast gains to humanity" (*Cry for Myth* 235). Campbell similarly drew a line between technology and Satan's little helper: "Mephistopheles, the machine man, can provide us with all the means, and is thus likely to determine the aims of life as well. But of course the characteristic of Faust, which makes him eligible to be saved, is that he seeks aims that are not those of the machine" (*POM* 18). In this sense, Mephistopheles is the metaphysical mouthpiece for materialism, throwing seekers off the transcendent path and grounding them in an understanding of existence that allows only for the machinations of concrete matter. Reading Sir Isaac Newton's explanation of light, modern Irish mystic John Moriarty pinpointed what he felt to be a juncture in the collective rejection of the metaphysical function:

> Now I think modern scientists have led us into a 'nothing but' universe that is without colour, that is without taste, without touch, without all of these things. And I'm not denying that Newton isn't right here. I mean, what Newton's saying, it's so far, so good. But, like, in the hands of lesser persons. And by the time we reach the eighteenth century we are straight into the 'nothing but' universe. Now add that to *Genesis*, chapter one, verses twenty-six and twenty-eight, and we have the formula for the modern world. (*Seeking to Walk*)

In those verses, God decides to make human beings and grants them dominion over all the earth. Moriarty saw moderners as having granted ourselves dominion over a "nothing but" universe,[11] which is precisely what Mephistopheles wants to inspire in Faust. That positivistic belief system, which denies the force of unconscious energies, is his trick, which is succinctly expressed in the saying that *the greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing people he doesn't exist*. This masterly deception certainly might be Lucifer J. Mephisto's game, if that is how we choose to read "Armageddon in Retrospect."

Armageddon comes down to us from *Revelation* (16:16), given as the place where the final battle between good and evil will take place. In Vonnegut's story, that location is Verdigris—not oxidized copper but a town in Oklahoma located on Route 66, the interstate highway that holds a mythic place in people's imaginations around the world.[12] Mephisto, in his letter, outlines the history of the Pine Institute, set up by Jessie L. Pine, an oil magnate who bought 200 feet of books for his library. Included were the collected works of Dr. Selig Schildknecht, holder of five degrees and native to Dresden, Germany (grabbing the attention of any reader of Vonnegut), who "believed that the mentally ill were possessed by the Devil" (210). Selig means "blessed, happy" in Yiddish and Schildknecht means "shield boy," or squire, in Middle High German. Pine feels this happy armor-bearer's philosophy harmonizes

[11] Vonnegut later imagined himself meeting Newton in Heaven in his collection of vignettes, *God Bless You, Dr. Kevorkian* (2001): "[The] late Sir Isaac Newton [...] got to make only a single one-way trip down the tunnel. He wants to know what it seems to be made of, fabric or metal or wood or what. I tell him that it's made of whatever dreams are made of, which leaves him monumentally unsatisfied. | Saint Peter quoted Shakespeare to him: There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (52). Like Moriarty, Vonnegut rejects Newton's positivism as a reductive denial of universal complexity transcending our capacity for understanding.

[12] Illustrating this, in Sept. 2013, a billboard advert appeared at the train station in Bray, Ireland, where I live, heartily encouraging people to take the 2014 Route 66 Challenge, a motorcycle pilgrimage that raises funds for Temple Street Children's University Hospital.

with his own: "Onliest thing in the world that's wrong with folks is that the Devil's got aholt of 'em" (211). Mephisto tells us that the Pine Institute, its aim being to eradicate the Devil, is soon filled with quacks and shysters seeking free money: "Their experiments, usually awfully expensive, were principally satires on the ignorance and credulity of their benefactor" (211-212). And then a retired physicist approaches the institute with new ideas.

Dr. Gorman Tarbell is a Tarbell in the tradition of Ida Tarbell (1857-1944), a "muckracker" whose *History of the Standard Oil Company* (1904) is a feat in investigative journalism admired to this day. Her reputation for undermining John D. Rockefeller is echoed in this character's exasperation with his oil tycoon boss. Gorman leads in several directions but may point directly to the Irish surname Gorman, which in Irish is a diminutive for *gorm*, or "blue," a color of mood and nobility.[13] Of the story's cast, he is certainly the most noble, possessing an iconoclastic view of the "nothing but" universal perspective:

> "We are now at the point at which the physical sciences once were with respect to the structure of the atom," he said cheerfully. "We have some ideas that are little more than matters of faith. Perhaps they're laughable, but it's ignorant and unscientific to laugh until we've had some time to experiment." (214-215)

Considering that electro-shock therapy "cures" many cases of mental illness, he hypothesizes that the Devil may have an aversion to electricity and starts experimenting across nine counties in Oklahoma to see if the Devil can be driven away.

When Pine blabs what Mephisto calls *Operation Rat-hole* to the press, the world takes notice. Blame shifts from Othered peoples to the Devil:

> The trouble with the world wasn't the Russians or the Americans or the Chinese or the British or the scientists or the generals or the financiers or the politicians, or, praise be to God, human beings anywhere, poor things. People were all right, and decent and innocent and smart, and it was the Devil who was making their good-hearted enterprises go sour. Every human being's self-respect increased a thousand-fold, and no one, save the Devil, lost face.

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[13] In Irish *fear gorm*, translating to "blue man," is the term for a black man. This is because *an fear dubh*, translating to "black man," is taken to mean the Devil. Vonnegut's Gorman, even if Vonnegut did not realize it, stands in purposeful differentiation from the Devil.

> Politicians of all lands rushed to the microphones to declare themselves as being against the Devil. Editorial pages everywhere took the same fearless stand—against the Devil. Nobody was for him. (218-219)

UNDICO is formed, with the Pine Institute's very own Lucifer J. Mephisto elected Chairman. They calculate the economic cost of equipping every man, woman, and child in the world with electric headsets and batteries to $90,000,000,000: "As modern wars go, the price was about right. But we soon found that people weren't inclined to go that high for anything less than killing each other" (221). The Committee starts working on a talking cure to fight the Devil but talking soon puts an end to the whole endeavor:

> Shortly after the Committee's first recommendation, the accident happened. "Any fool knows the quick and easy way to get rid of the Devil," whispered one American delegate to another one in the U.N. General Assembly. "Nothing to it. Just blow him to hell in his headquarters in the Kremlin." He couldn't have been more mistaken in thinking the microphone before him was dead. (222)

The Soviets soon release a statement that says, "Using the same experimental techniques, these scientists have found no signs whatsoever of the Devil's activities within the boundaries of the U.S.S.R., and, hence, consider the problem as being uniquely American" (223). The bottom falls out from under UNDICO and the Pine Institute. "Frankly," Mephisto devilishly admits, "I was relieved and delighted" (223).

Tarbell, however, is persistent. In a last ditch effort, he decides to summon the Devil by reenacting the Black Mass, as laid out in *The Golden Bough* by Sir James George Frazer, to catch him in an electrified copper drum. Mephisto's letter claims Tarbell was demonically possessed in the act and unfortunately trapped himself in the electrified drum, the upkeep of which requires money. Donations are encouraged from the reader and the suspicious feeling evoked leads us to think Tarbell has been imprisoned in his own trap, that Mephisto is, despite denial, the Devil himself. This reading relies on the intuitive sense that evil is insidious, that it lurks within our own institutions and can even sit at the head of the table on committees and boards of trustees. Vonnegut likely encountered *The Golden Bough* while

studying Anthropology at the University of Chicago and his direct quotation of Frazer's description of the Black Mass is thematically irreverent: "'And many other things ["the bad priest"] does which no good Christian could look upon without being struck blind and deaf and dumb for the rest of his life'" (225). It is a bold statement coming from a Scottish social scientist remembered as a rationalist.

"Armageddon in Retrospect" riffs thematically and historically off Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916), the story of Austrian boys encountering Satan, who criticizes what he deems the Moral Sense, or binary of good and evil, that the West claims as its foundation. It is a complicated text, as William M. Gibson laid out in 1969: "Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger, A Romance*, as published in 1916 and reprinted since that date, is an editorial fraud perpetrated by Twain's official biographer and literary executor, Albert Bigelow Paine, and Frederick A. Duneka of Harper & Brothers publishing company" (1). Gibson discovered that Paine and Duneka scrubbed provocative passages from Twain's unfinished manuscript of *The Chronicle of Young Satan*, tacked on the last chapter of another unfinished manuscript, *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*, and packaged it as a Christmas gift book for children. Morse may be appalled at the publication of Vonnegut's manuscripts, but they have not received treatment anything like the disingenuousness shown Twain's unfinished works. Gibson's publication of *The Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts*, however, came in 1969, many years after Vonnegut wrote "Armageddon in Retrospect." Therefore, if he did draw in any way from Twain's Satan, it was through the edition cobbled by Paine and Duneka and passed off for two generations as bona fide Twain. As engrossing as the unfinished manuscripts are, our task calls for an appraisal of what Gibson deemed "an editorial fraud."

Satan in *The Mysterious Stranger* appears in 1590 Austria to Theodor and friends. Taking the form of a youth, Satan wows the boys with supernatural feats and blunt criticisms

of humanity. What they perceive to be indifferent cruelty at his hand he sees as a matter of fact—or is it dream? Prior to the esoteric final chapter, in which Satan decrees life is but a dream, he pushes past the boys' concepts of good and evil, what he calls the Moral Sense. At one point, he entertains Theodor's desire to see the local jail, revealing a scene of graphic torture he uses to rail against the Moral Sense:

> When a brute inflicts pain he does it innocently; it is not wrong; for him there is no such thing as wrong. And he does not inflict pain for the pleasure of inflicting it—only man does that. Inspired by that mongrel Moral Sense of his! A sense whose function is to distinguish between right and wrong, with liberty to choose which of them he will do. Now what advantage can he get out of that? He is always choosing, and in nine cases out of ten he prefers the wrong. There shouldn't be any wrong; and without the Moral Sense there couldn't be any. And yet he is such an unreasoning creature that he is not able to perceive that the Moral Sense degrades him to the bottom layer of animated beings and is a shameful possession. (78)

Rackstraw identifies this binary split as symptomatic of our condition: "[O]nce consciousness evolved out of the cosmic chaos and became self-aware, it inevitably invented distinctions with language—differentiations between self and other, night and day, life and death, good and evil—which, with its enlightened ego, it took to be absolute" ("Paradox" 60). And Smith makes the same point about brutality:

> Like it or not, war is distinctively human. Apart from the raiding behavior of chimpanzees [...] and the so-called wars prosecuted by certain species of ant, there is nothing in nature that comes anywhere near approximating it. Despite this, we often describe warfare as "brutal" (literally "animal-like") or "inhuman"—conceiving of it as something remote from our true humanity. (6)

Twain was a staunch moralist who grew increasingly pessimistic as he aged (Vonnegut, too); the *Mysterious Stranger* manuscripts were written at the end of his life and express profound abhorrence of humanity. Satan's sentiment may be read as immoral, but that would miss the point. Satan, in this imagining, is amoral. His disgust with the concepts of good and evil challenges the reader to think about his or her own understanding of morality. The mythological objective is not to reject morality but to exercise one's consciousness into recognizing how the binary functions, its ramifications and consequences. There is a danger

in conceiving of oneself or one's group as humane, as if it has already been achieved individually or collectively. Humane conduct is a struggle, not a destination. There is no merit badge for it and those pinning such badges to their lapels suffer from denial. Cultural, communal, even national values are all too often held to be self-evident and believed to be unalienable while the barometer on one's own cultural, communal, and national behavior goes unchecked and off balance. This ambivalence, according to Smith, Hillman, Twain, and Vonnegut, engenders war.

War, from these points of view, is human but not excused. All the writers mentioned agree that there is such a thing as war with a just cause—even Vonnegut, scarred as he was, said that WWII was the last just war while criticizing the ways it was carried out. Twain did not live to see the World Wars, though Paine and Duneka's *Mysterious Stranger*, containing passages about the future mechanization of war, would be published during World War I (perhaps the only time a children's Christmas gift book starring Satan could appear). One of Satan's most damning tirades historicizes the myth of progress as applied to war, from Cain's murder of Abel long ago into the unseen future. Given our own place in time today, we are aware of Pfc. K. Vonnegut, Jr., hunkered in Schlachthof-fünf under Dresden on 13 Feb. 1945, aged twenty-two, one of Twain's literary descendants directly surviving the effects of this anticipated weaponry.

Lucifer J. Mephisto is not *The Mysterious Stranger*'s Satan, who seeks to educate the boys about human nature. Dr. Gorman Tarbell, duped, fails to see the demon beside him. In aiming to eradicate the Devil, Tarbell neglects the insidiousness of his chosen opponent. He is no Faust, opting for battle over dialogue, suffering capture in the end. He loses because the unconscious processes Mephisto represents sneak past the limits of his awareness. In winning, the masked Devil lies to us, insisting that he has been captured in the electrified drum with Tarbell, that Armageddon has come to pass. Readers of the letter who would

accept these weak arguments are oblivious to the continued presence of darkness in their community, and thereby complicit. Those who would answer Mephisto's request and send money are even worse: compliant.

This story is an early iteration of what Rackstraw classifies as a technique Vonnegut honed later: "Through irony and satire he came to excel in making language reveal its inherent paradox: to function simultaneously with *daemonic* creativity or *demonic* destructiveness" ("Paradox" 54). By telling the story through a generic form letter, he plays on what Smith and Hillman argue is the greatest force behind the occurrence of war: ambivalence. Most people receiving form letters are inclined to toss them out after a skim. Editors were ambivalent toward "Armageddon in Retrospect," declining to publish it, and response to the collection it titles has been lukewarm at best. One cannot help wondering if the largely apathetic reaction to the story has anything at all to do with the unpleasantness of the sentiment that frames it: that we are, in our lack of care, all responsible for what we deem as evil's mobility throughout the world and in our own communities.

2.6 War Myths

> After the last World War we hoped for reason: we go on hoping. But already we are fascinated by the possibilities of atomic fission and promise ourselves a Golden Age—the surest guarantee that the abomination of desolation will grow to limitless dimensions. And who or what is it that causes all this? It is none other than that harmless (!), ingenious, inventive, and sweetly reasonable human spirit who unfortunately is abysmally unconscious of the daemonism that still clings to him. Worse, this spirit does everything to avoid looking himself in the face, and we all help him like mad. Only, heaven preserve us from psychology—*that* depravity might lead to self-knowledge! Rather let us have wars, for which somebody else is always to blame, nobody seeing that all the world is driven to do just what all the world flees from in terror.
>
> C. G. Jung (1948/1968, *CW* 9.I, ¶454)

The idea of responsibility in postwar U.S. culture saw the formation and implementation of the United Nations, and its first great test in handling international crisis was the Korean War. The 2 September 1950 issue of *Collier's* contains an editorial titled "United We Stand." Its final paragraph presents common views arising from this sense of responsibility for regulating war around the world:

> The hour has already struck when the members of the United Nations should rally round their own standard. For this is the United Nations' war, and it is not a "little" war to the men who are fighting it. They need help to win that war. They need help which will refute the Soviet charges of "American imperialism." And they need help which will give the world "for the first time since the Crusades," as the New York Times has put it, "a great international army fighting for a common ideal" (74).

A few national anxieties are given away in this editorial: confusion as to whose war this was, uncertainty about its scale, insecurity about the U.S.A. being viewed as imperialistic, hyperbolic conflation with holy wars of the Middle Ages, and ultimately the legitimacy of the U.S.-backed U.N. And Donald F. Moss's accompanying artwork operates like propaganda:



Collier's Editorial

United We Must Stand

THE PAINTING on this page was intended to illustrate an editorial urging all non-Communist members of the United Nations to send troops to help liberate South Korea. The editorial never got published, for Secretary General Trygve Lie made substantially the same request before we could get ours into print. But we are using the picture because it represents to us an ideal which is at the same time a practical necessity of the highest moral and political importance.

It was a moment of great historical significance when General MacArthur accepted the United Nations flag to fly as a battle standard beside the flag of his own country. For the U.N. flag is, as he said, "a symbol of one of the greatest efforts man has made to free himself." Unfortunately, the presence of the United Nations flag in Korea has remained largely symbolical, and the great efforts of man to free himself have been largely confined to the men of the United States and South Korean armies.

The Korean war is not America's war, although American publications of the extreme left and right have tried to make it seem so. For the first time since the Nazi-Soviet alliance, the Daily Worker and the isolationist press are seeing eye to eye. The Worker has raised its familiar howl of "Wall Street" and "imperialism." The isolationists consider the war another development which proves their point that anything which happens outside the continental United States is none of our business.

The Korean war is an attack upon the only legal government in Korea. And since that government was set up through the suggestion and guidance of the United Nations, it is an attack upon the authority and prestige and very existence of the world organization.

This is the gravest challenge that the United Nations has faced. But it offers the free world an opportunity to accept the challenge in kind. Instead, with the notable exception of Great Britain, Australia and Nationalist China (whose offer of troops was not accepted), the free world left the United States to meet the first onslaught of the hot war almost single-handed.

Perhaps it was inevitable that this country should bear the brunt of the early fighting. But the United States and the few other friendly nations who took quick action should not be asked to stand alone.

Brave words were spoken in reply to Mr. Lie's request for aid from every U.N. member. Except for a couple of the Arab states, all the non-Communist governments condemned aggression, supported the Security Council's action, and wished it success. A number offered help "within the limits of their resources." But few made any tangible, specific offers. It is true that, in the weeks that followed, some did volunteer military aid. Still, the response was not heartening.

The hour has already struck when the members of the United Nations should rally round their own standard. For this is the United Nations' war, and it is not a "little" war to the men who are fighting it. They need help to win that war. They need help which will refute the Soviet charges of "American imperialism." And they need help which will give the world "for the first time since the Crusades," as the New York Times has put it, "a great international army fighting for a common ideal."

74 DONALD F. MOSS

Collier's for September 2, 1950

[Fig. vii: Art by Donald F. Moss (74)]

This was a mainstream American attitude to war, the cultural climate in which Vonnegut produced these stories. Traumatized by experiences as an American infantryman and P.O.W. in WWII, he would grow in adulthood into a wounded healer through his fiction. His stories of war are sorrowful testimonials and grave warnings from one of its living victims and survivors. While the early short stories have often been overlooked, we see now that his bid for artistic *katharsis* began in the pages of *Collier's* magazine with his very first publication. "Report on the Barnhouse Effect" is a fantasy for those Americans dismayed by weapons development in the nuclear age and the ethics of proliferation. "All the King's Horses" offers up the fantasy of war as a game—with a pro-American outcome and a fine-print forewarning of the inevitability of conflicts with Communist nations and warlords in the near future. "Great Day" warns against regression into war as we imagine ourselves building a united humanity, and "Armageddon in Retrospect" warns us that the Devil we deny in ourselves is free and probably mailing us form letters. The first two stories placed successfully in one of the leading middle class American weekly magazines of its day; the last two went unread until after their author's death.

As products of the early nineteen-fifties, they all reveal a score of tensions emerging from the U.S.A.'s newfound prominence as a superpower, a super *war* power. As myths, they both challenge and toe the line, scrutinizing new problems, such as proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and old problems, entered into through a time-screen, without the conceit of solution. Archetypal situations are universally human and can be charted throughout world myth. Individual mythmakers express these universals always with the unique timestamps of their own place, culture, and individuality. While this study is not focused on world myth, we recognize that War, though often fought over borders, does not know them itself. In these stories Vonnegut courts universal concerns with the tools he has as a white Midwestern American man who suffered in the nation's largest international conflagration. Caution is an

aim in the various narrators' tellings: caution of the might behind one's own capacity for war, let alone that of the collective American capacity, giving them the mysterious quality of prophecy, or something like it.

Chapter 3

FRAGMENTED INDEPENDENCE

Vonnegut's Critiques of the American Trinity

3.1 FRAGMENTATION

> We are lived by powers we pretend to understand.
>
> W. H. Auden
> "In Memory of Ernst Toller" (97)

When Vonnegut wrote commercial short fiction in the years spanning the Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy presidencies, he did so under the demands of providing for a family that grew to eight. He carried himself through these stresses with convictions about the role of a writer in his or her society. In 1973 he expressed as much in a *Playboy* interview: "Writers are specialized cells in the social organism. They are evolutionary cells. Mankind is trying to become something else; it's experimenting with new ideas all the time. And writers are a means of introducing new ideas into the society, and also a means of responding symbolically to life. I don't think we're in control of what we do" (Allen 76). When he introduces anti-aging products or state-run ethical Suicide Parlors or compulsory handicappings for the better-than-able in his stories, Vonnegut engages with topical issues of the era—the growing emphasis on youth, overpopulation, civil rights—but he also takes on supposedly exceptional American ideals. The trinity of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the nation's poetic foundation for independence, is the wellspring for American entitlement that repeatedly comes under scrutiny in Vonnegut's improbable stories. Reed iterates the playfulness that adjoins this sacred role in a profane age:

> The Cassandra in Vonnegut that always wants to warn, to alert his readership to what he sees as "real" issues confronting society, can speak out, but so can

> the comedian, the entertainer, who enjoys comic situations and childlike deconstructions of traditional assumptions about life. He finds a comfortable narrative voice in these pieces, and he can use science-fictional terms and futuristic settings with a comic hyperbole that banishes resistance to their implausibility. (*SFKV* 67)

"Where do I get my ideas from?" one of Vonnegut's screen prints asks, "I was goofing around like everybody else in Indiana, and all of a sudden stuff came gushing out. It was disgust with civilization" (*Armageddon In Retrospect* 233). "Certainly in most instances," writes Reed, "Vonnegut's motivation in the use of the science fictional is sociological. It comes not from a fascination with speculations about technology but from a desire to show the moral and practical consequences of patterns of behavior" (*SFKV* 5). It is also, as we shall see, mythological.

3.2 LIFE

> There are organizing principles in the universe which we can no more understand than my dog can.
>
> Kurt Vonnegut (kurtvonnegut.com)



Thanasphere

By KURT VONNEGUT, JR.

Something was terribly wrong with this rocket flight 2,000 miles above the earth. The pilot flew into the heart of a mystery that upset all the calculations of the scientist listening below

[Fig. viii: Art for "Thanasphere" by Tran Mawicke (18, 19)]

Vonnegut's second published story was "Thanasphere," appearing in *Collier's* (2 Sep. 1950) at a time when Stalin ordered the development of the S-25 Berkut anti-aircraft missile system in anticipation of an American attack. "Something was terribly wrong with this rocket flight 2,000 miles above the earth," reads the teaser, "The pilot flew into the heart of a mystery that upset all the calculations of the scientist listening below" (18). Mawicke provided two pieces of art for the story, the dominant one being Earth from space, painted before a photo of Earth from space existed. Just beyond the atmosphere, a rocket arcs upward, and, across the page fold, white smudges in the dark emptiness suggest heads, torsos, outstretched arms. Only later, in reading the story, does one return to this image and see the ghosts. The effect harmonizes with the story in that only Major Rice can see the dead while the others must be convinced of their reality. Those characters, a scientist, a Lieutenant General, and a radio operator, are painted in the lower right page in front of a radio. This smaller image's paint-stroke borders contrast against the sharp rectangular frame of the larger, roughing in Vonnegut's protagonist: not the man who touches the afterlife in the heavens but the myopic man on the ground, who has conceived of Project Cyclops, a mythological name evoking captivity, pride, and odyssey.

Dr. Bernard Groszinger is a "youthful rocket consultant for the Air Forces" (18). Bernard was the name of Vonnegut's older brother, who would become a chemist respected for his discoveries in cloud seeding. "Thanasphere" can certainly be read as the work of a youngest sibling ribbing the eldest, but here it is merely noted. Bernard derives from Germanic elements: "*bern* 'bear' combined with *hard* 'brave, hardy'" (*BTN*). If this Bernard is in any way a bear, his strength may be expressed in his ingenuity as architect of the experiment described. Bears are noted in ARAS's *Book of Symbols* as "often functioning as a 'tutelary figure' or spirit helper to mythic heroes" (272), worth considering given Bernard's supportive role for the astronaut. There are also those known as St. Bernard, eight men

canonized by the Roman Catholic Church and, of course, the dog breed bred for mountain rescues in the Alps. Bernard's surname is a variation on Grossinger—the change to Groszinger, however, turns the name into a pun. The "gross zinger" that awaits this scientist is the revelation of mysteries in the universe that transcend human capacity for understanding.

Major Allen Rice, on the other hand, the "sullen" widower astronaut whose mission is "To report weather conditions over enemy territory, and to observe the accuracy of guided atomic missiles in the event of war" (19), carries an appropriately indistinct name. This supports Groszinger's estimation that he is "as much like a machine as possible": "His specifications: Husky, twenty-nine years of age; fifty-five missions over Europe during World War II without a sign of fatigue; a childless widower, melancholy and solitary; a career soldier, a demon for work" (19). The description skims over his wife's death, a detail attentive readers will congratulate themselves for remembering when her spirit later appears. Allen/Alan has an ambiguous etymology: "little rock" or "handsome" to sixth century Bretons, "harmony" to the Celts (Thornbury xxiii), a fourth and fifth century Persian tribe (*BTN*). Rice is a nutritious but otherwise bland grain. By the end of the story, Rice, like that tossed at a wedding, falls back to Earth, signaling his re-union with his wife. He is an Orpheus who, finding Eurydice in orbit, sacrifices his life to join her on the other side. His wife is another of Vonnegut's "pearls," Margaret, from Greek μαργαριτης (*BTN*).[14]

Their designated radio names work like Homeric epithets. Ground Control is Dog Easy Charley—Charles being Germanic for "man" or "warrior" (*BTN*)—DEC in the old U.S. Army/Navy Radio Alphabet.[15] Rice is Able Baker Fox, or ABF. Communications from Dog Easy Charley are relayed by the nameless radio operator, the designation making him and those in the control room *men* or *soldiers* with *canine* loyalty who have it *easy*. Able Baker

[14] We recall that Colonel Kelly's wife in "All the King's Horses," the white queen, is also named Margaret.
[15] The International English Phonetic Alphabet would be standardized later, in 1955.

Fox, however, casts Rice, floating in the satellite, as one who can *ably* transform basic ingredients into *bread* with *vulpine* ability. Our relationship to the fox is complicated, some people showing the crafty animal admiration for its wiles while others victimize it with the hunt. Martin Wallen devotes a book-length study to "the ubiquitous, mercurial fox," who crosses "between wild forest and cultivated farmland, between unconventional, intuitive intelligence and collective social norms, and between animal, human and spirit worlds, both beneficent and demonic" (*Book of Symbols* 278). In this story, it is Able Baker Fox Major Allen Rice who meets the threshold of the afterlife and crosses into it.

Yet we follow Groszinger, a materialistic rationalist who deflects questions from the press about spaceship sightings: "He knew a great deal more than he was saying, but somewhat less than he himself thought. He did not believe in ghosts, for instance—and had yet to learn of the Thanasphere" (18). Possessed with science, he has no trouble accepting the possibility of war as a condition of conducting his work, for his is a programmatic life, one determined not by empathy but by intellect:

> Impending war had given him the opportunity to try the experiment. The threat of war was an incident, the military men about him an irritating condition of work—*the experiment* was the heart of the matter.
>
> There were no unknowns, he reflected, finding contentment in the dependability of the physical world. Young Dr. Groszinger smiled, thinking of Christopher Columbus and his crew, who hadn't known what lay ahead of them, who had been scared stiff of sea monsters that didn't exist. Maybe the average person of today felt the same way about space. The Age of Superstition still had a few years to run.
>
> But the man in the space ship two thousand miles from earth had no unknowns to fear. (19)

"No unknowns" calls to mind a statement made by U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in the 2002 lead up to the second Iraq War: "[A]s we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the

ones we don't know we don't know" ("Defense.gov News Transcript").[16] Polonius could not convolute knowledge of the world much better while managing to leave out, as Slavoj Žižek points out, "the 'unknown knowns,' the things we don't know that we know—which is precisely, the Freudian unconscious, the 'knowledge which doesn't know itself,' as Lacan used to say" ("What Rumsfeld Doesn't Know"). From a post-Jungian perspective, it is the collective unconscious, the biological dimension of archetypal energies. Vonnegut goes so far here as to describe the *experiment*, italicized, as the heart of the matter. It is a common metaphor employed coyly, for this story is about accepting unknown aspects of existence, an "unknown known," something the protagonist cannot at first conceive as a possibility.

At some point, a metaphor breaks down: an experiment does not actually have a heart. Not all metaphors cross the bridges they build—some metaphors fail—and this one, a cliché, fails on purpose. Groszinger is a glib young man, easily patronizing America's most controversial explorer from the comfort of his own thoughts. Columbus's fear of sea monsters can be read as a healthy awareness of the dangerous animating forces rising within the unconscious. Groszinger has yet to acknowledge those archetypal forces and that territory populated by the dead, here called the Thanasphere, an aspect of existence which transcends all human capabilities to know or understand. He is one of Moriarty's pitiable scientists living in a "nothing but" universe.[17]

The scientist's mechanistic view of life itself breaks down as soon as the astronaut parlays with the dead. This breakthrough is rationalized as a malfunction in "the lunatic who peered down at earth from his tiny steel moon and heard voices" (60). Groszinger blames a mechanically-construed fault in Rice's psychology, assuming the man has a screw loose, which itself is one of our mechanistic metaphors for the broad spectrum of mental illness:

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[16] Regarding Donald Rumsfeld, in 2005 Vonnegut contributed the following noun to *The Future Dictionary of America*:

rumsfeld *[ruhmz'-feld] n. one who can stomach casualties.* (117)

[17] As introduced in CHAPTER 2.5 ARMAGEDDON IN RETROSPECT

"The one thing he had not designed, the damn' [sic] man in it, had failed, had destroyed the whole experiment" (60). Throughout his career Vonnegut explored the dangerous metaphor, all too often taken literally, that people are machines, most extensively in his novel *Breakfast of Champions* (1973). How easy it is to forget that our bodies are not machines, that we are not machines; bodies are bodies and we are people. Saying that bodies are machines disenfranchises them of what machines lack: life.

The mechanistic attitude prevails in the West, illustrated in biologist Richard Dawkins's first preface to his book *The Selfish Gene*: "We are survival machines—robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes. This is a truth which still fills me with astonishment" (xxi). He repeats the claim in *The Blind Watchmaker*: "An individual body is a large vehicle or 'survival machine' built by a gene cooperative, for the preservation of copies of each member of that cooperative" (192). That Dawkins confuses metaphor for "truth" is all the more ridiculous given his public crusade against those who find "truth" in religious metaphors. David Abram takes Stephen Jay Gould to task for his criticism of the Gaia Hypothesis, the idea that Earth is a self-regulating entity: "[It] offers no new mechanisms. It just changes the metaphor. But metaphor is not mechanism!" "What Gould failed to state is that 'mechanism,' itself," Abram writes, "is nothing more than a metaphor" (66). The emperor has no clothes, society plays along, and, as in Andersen's fable, it takes a child, someone unlikely to be taken seriously—in this case Vonnegut—to come along and remind us that it is valuable to see through a metaphor that misses its mark.[18]

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[18] Ray Bradbury confronted this problem in "The Machineries of Joy" (1962). A contemporary dawning space age story, Fathers Brian and Kelly criticize Father Vittorini for watching rocket launches on TV. Vittorini sends them into a tizzy by lying about a Papal Encyclical on Space Travel: "They would not go check the item, for they feared its reality. I would not, in my pride, do research, for I feared it *did not exist*" (183). Making peace, he claims William Blake described people as God's Machineries of Joy. When challenged, he says: "The fact is [...] he might have [said it], if he'd lived today. I wrote it myself, just an hour ago. If it sounds mechanistic and against Church doctrine, remember I love to entertain such thoughts. To entertain does not mean I give them a lifetime's lodging. I let thoughts come and go, as they will. Shelter for the night is the least we can give any wild sweet tramp Idea" (183). Sly Vittorini refuses to make the mistake of dogmatizing a mechanistic metaphor.

But Rice is not ill. The voices are real and they belong to the dead, a population Jung would heed: "turn to the dead, listen to their lament and accept them with love" (*Red Book* 344). Just as the living characters cannot speak to the spirits, the spirits are unable to speak to the living—save Rice. Afterlife strangers pester him with messages for loved ones: Andrew Tobin, a twentieth-century American Abel, "claims his brother murdered him," and "Mrs. Pamela Ritter wants her husband Harvey to marry again for the sake of the children" (60). Rice becomes a psychopomp, in Jungian terms the "go-between connecting EGO and UNCONSCIOUS" (*CDJA* 123). Bridging the binary, life and death start a discourse. When the names Rice provides check out, Groszinger's dead mother, asking for him, relays a poem:

> "—saying something in German," continued the voice of Major Rice. "Can't understand it. Maybe you can. I'll give it to you the way it sounds: '*Alles geben die Götter, die Unendlichen, ihren Lieblingen, hanz. Alle*—"
>
> Dr. Groszinger turned down the volume. " '*Alle Freuden, die Unendlichen; alle Schmerzen, die Unendlichen, ganz*,' " he said faintly. "That's how it ends." He sat down on the cot. "My mother's favorite quotation—something from Goethe." (60)

Michael Hamburger translated the poem into English in 1958:

> All things the gods bestow, the infinite ones,
> On their darlings, completely,
> All the joys, the infinite ones,
> All the pains, the infinite ones, completely. (*Great Writings of Goethe* 278)

The poem comes from a letter Goethe wrote to Auguste Stolberg in 1777, consisting of those four lines. In this exchange between the living and the dead, a poem expressing the breadth of being's joys and sorrows is recited; hierophanic totality is more palatable coming from Groszinger's departed mother. This is mere speculation but one senses Vonnegut's mother, a suicide, a failed short story writer, the daughter of wealthy German-Americans, in the Goethe-quoting ghost of Rice's mother. And what about the presence of German poetry in a postwar American magazine? It is hard to imagine Goethe being quoted in a mainstream publication during WWII. German-Americans make up the largest segment of United States citizens and yet their ancestry, after WWI, was largely denied.

Once Groszinger accepts Rice is speaking with the dead, he faces a dilemma: "Did the world have a right to know, or didn't it?" (62). In discovering this unknown, he inherits the responsibility that comes with privileged knowledge. As he weighs options, Dane and the radio operator discuss the influence of Rice's wife's spirit, which has appeared to him. Here we see compassion from the General: "Says it's his wife Margaret. Guess that's enough to throw anybody, wouldn't you say?" (62). All are aware that Rice has means of safe landing but doubt he will take it, presented as he is with the chance of marital reunion. Groszinger, however, intellectualizes the situation:

> Maybe that was the spirit of this world of the atom bomb, H-bomb, God-knows-what-next-bomb—to be amazed at nothing. Science had given humanity forces enough to destroy the earth; and politics had given humanity a fair assurance that the forces would be used. There could be no cause for awe to top *that* one. But proof of a spirit world might at least equal it. Maybe that was the shock the world needed; maybe word from the spirits could change the suicidal course of history.
>
> [...]
>
> He was baffled, miserable. Would Death unmasked drive men to suicide or bring new hope? he was asking himself. Would the living desert their leaders, and turn to the dead for guidance? To Caesar . . . Charlemagne . . . Peter the Great . . . Napoleon . . . Bismarck . . . Lincoln . . . Roosevelt? To Jesus Christ? Were the dead wiser than— (62)

His line of thought wanders from the possibility that verification of the afterlife might bring the empirically-armed world into balance to the overwhelming anxiety that the dead might conquer the living. All of history presents itself; he is terrified of what the dead want to say. This fear of unconscious forces is the ego's kneejerk defense mechanism, desperately desiring control. It is telling that the scientist, a representative of U.S. interests in spying on Russia, should suffer imperial insecurities: dead empires—Roman, Holy Roman, Russian, French, German, and American—loom as if they might renew themselves. And just as Groszinger's private logic approaches Christianity, it is interrupted by Rice's transcendence:

> ". . . thousands of them, thousands of them, all around me, standing on nothing, shimmering like northern lights—beautiful, curving off in space, all around the earth like a glowing fog. I can see them, do you hear? I can see

> them now. I can see Margaret. She's waving and smiling, misty, heavenly, beautiful. If only you could see it, if—" (62)

His voice is jammed and Dane orders Groszinger, "The most important job you'll ever have to do, my friend, is to keep your mouth shut about those spirits out there, do you understand?" (62). Groszinger is forbidden from holding the channel open, an act that would vitalize the life in him and his society, by the political powers that be. Forced forfeit comes as anxious relief: "[He was] grateful to have no choice but to be quiet. He didn't want to be the one to tell the world" (62).

If Groszinger is a witness to Rice's connection and absolute assimilation with the funereal plane, readers are witnesses to Groszinger's inability to metabolize it. Vonnegut presents the modern day alchemist, a rocket consultant, achieving unexpected mythological outcomes while experimenting with base matter—and then suppressing the discovery. Like his namesake the bear, Dr. Bernard Groszinger suspends his secondhand experience of the afterlife with hibernation. All he can muster in letting it go is an oblique comment made to a reporter after the fact, explaining that "You can't say definitely where [the atmosphere] stops. Beyond it is just, well—dead space" (62). Off-the-cuff, he adds, "*Thanatos*, that's Greek for death, I think. Maybe instead of 'dead space' you'd prefer 'Thanasphere.' Has a nice scientific ring to it, don't you think?" (62). Categorized and labeled in a private joke with himself, Groszinger, in a parody of the scientific method, has reduced the significance of that unconscious zone, filed it away. At the same time, fear holds him from sharing it, fear of its forces, which are beyond his control. This denial of powers capable of superseding intellectuality, with its gifts of weapons of mass destruction, is a condition apropos for American life at the dawn of the Cold War.

3.3 LIBERTY

> If liberty means anything at all it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.
>
> George Orwell (107)

When *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* published "Harrison Bergeron" in October 1961, the page header billed it as "a mordant little tale with rather more to say than its size would indicate . . ." (5). Ten years earlier, Vonnegut sold stories for higher pay to mainstream magazines; the ability to make a living writing short stories was increasingly difficult, thanks, in part, to the spread of television—a force that did not go unnoticed in other mediums. Leiber and Stoller's 1959 pop song "Along Came Jones," an A-side single for the Coasters, bounces through the comic suspense its narrator feels watching a Gary Cooper Western on TV from the comfort of his easy chair. And "Bergeron," published two years later and set in the future—"The year was 2081, and everybody was finally equal" (5)—is about a married couple watching television. There is no description of setting until the very end, when the television tube burns out and George goes to the kitchen for a beer; all we need to know about where the protagonists are as events unfold is that "George and Hazel Bergeron were watching television. There were tears on Hazel's cheeks, but she'd forgotten for the moment what they were about" (5). The lack of orientation, amplified by Hazel's, compels us to find out what is happening to these people sitting in front of their TV.

What transpires is their witnessing, from home, the murders of a ballerina and their son. Harrison, aged fourteen, was taken from the home earlier in the month—April, the cruelest—by the H-G men, agents under the command of the United States Handicapper General, a satire on the office of the U.S. Attorney General, who oversees the Department of Justice, and the U.S. Surgeon General, who oversees the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. He is considered "extremely dangerous" by the powers that be, who

suspect him of trying to overthrow the government. When he escapes jail they interrupt a televised ballet to alert viewers, describing him as "a genius and an athlete" and "under-handicapped" (7). Making a grand entrance, Harrison crashes the ballet, entering the live televised dance looking "like a walking junkyard" (8); to hamper his unique, seemingly superhuman qualities—for instance, he stands seven feet tall—they have saddled him with three hundred pounds of weights, cuffed his ears with headphones blasting noise, covered his eyes with thick spectacles holding wavy lenses, shaved his eyebrows, covered "his even white teeth with black caps at snaggle-tooth random" (8), and forced upon him the red rubber ball nose of a clown. Denuding himself of these crosses, he rises up and declares himself Emperor:

> "I am the Emperor!" cried Harrison. "Do you hear? I am the Emperor! Everybody must do what I say at once!" He stamped his foot and the studio shook.
>
> "Even as I stand here," he bellowed, "crippled, hobbled, sickened—I am a greater ruler than any man who ever lived! Now watch me become what I can become."[19] (8-9)

Next he selects an Empress from the ballerinas on stage, honoring the one brave enough to step forward. Together they dance like superheroes, leaping to the thirty-foot ceiling and kissing it:

> And then, neutralizing gravity with love and pure will,[20] they remained suspended in air inches below the ceiling, and they kissed each other for a long, long time.
>
> It was then that Diana Moon Glampers, the Handicapper General, came into the studio with a double-barreled ten-gauge shotgun. She fired twice, and the Emperor and the Empress were dead before they hit the floor. (10)

After she reloads and threatens the studio musicians, the Bergerons' television burns out—and both succumb to a demential disorientation:

> "You been crying?" he said to Hazel, watching her wipe her tears.

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[19] The typesetter at *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* goofed the final four lines of the right column on page 8: "lowed, 'crippled, hobbled, sick- | ened—I am a greater ruler than | any man who ever lived! Now | 'Even as I stand here,' he bel-". I corrected this above.

[20] "Harrison Bergeron" predates psychoanalyst Rollo May's bestselling book *Love and Will* by about eight years (1969), though these characters seem to have, in their final moments, attained its revitalizing aims.

"Yup," she said.
"What about?" he said.
"I forget," she said. "Something real sad on television."
"What was it?" he said.
"It's all kind of mixed up in my mind," said Hazel.
"Forget sad things," said George.
"I always do," said Hazel.
"That's my girl," said George. He winced. There was the sound of a riveting gun in his head.
"Gee—I could tell that one was a doozy," said Hazel.
"You can say that again," said George.
"Gee—" said Hazel—"I could tell that one was a doozy." (10)

It is a devastating ending that, whimpering with that last repetition, echoes a legendary exchange—legendary because they never used it—between early TV comedy duo George Burns and Gracie Allen. "Say goodnight, Gracie," George is imagined saying, with Gracie responding, "Goodnight, Gracie." Mr. Bergeron is even named George.

The name George is Greek and means "earth worker" or "farmer" (*BTN*), which comes across in the character's down-to-earth manner. The family surname, Bergeron, is of French extraction, deriving from a German word, *berg*, and originally identifying "someone who lived beside a hill or mountain" (*House of Names*). George and Hazel, handicapped by the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, don't so much live next to a hill or mountain as they seem to live under it. Hazel comes from the Old English word *hæsel* for the species of nut-bearing tree, as well as a light shade of brown (*BTN*). Chevalier and Gheerbrant traced the hazel through European traditions, finding it often represented fertility but became associated with lust and the Devil after medieval times. "Germanic mythology," they note, "makes the hazel an attribute of the god Thor" (476). Hazel's son is described as "a man that would have awed Thor, the god of thunder" (9).

As for that son's name, which titles the story, Harrison derives from an English surname which means "Harry's son," Harry being a Medieval English form of Henry. Henry comes from German *Heimrich*, or "home ruler" (*BTN*). Harrison Bergeron is the *son of the home ruler* who *lives by a hill or mountain*. As far as home rule goes, George and Hazel are

both divested of their civil liberties; life in their house is infringed upon to an alarming extent—George's above average intelligence requires him to wear an ear radio that blasts breaking noises. And while the boy is set up to be a hero, a super-teen, usurper of a clearly oppressive America gone wrong, he goes down easily with a gun blast. The shooter, the Handicapper General, Diana Moon Glampers, bears a blatantly mythological name. Diana is the Roman goddess of hunting, the beasts, and the moon. The middle name here is even Moon, the celestial night sphere that waxes and wanes with reflected sunlight, that draws tides of ocean and menstruation. "Glamp" is a verb: "To grope, as in the dark. ***to glamp at***: to make snatches at" (*OED*). If Diana Moon glampers, Diana Moon is snatching at things in the dark, a rather terrifying constellation of characteristics for someone holding the office of Handicapper General.[21] She represents feminine energies, suppressed by masculinity-favoring and binary-stricken patriarchy, lashing out from the darkness of collective denial. In *Metamorphoses*, Ovid tells of Actaeon, the youth who stumbles upon Diana bathing in her grotto. As punishment she transforms him into a stag and delights in his death at the teeth of his hunting dogs:

> [...] Diana was not satisfied
> until, so mangled, young Actaeon died;
> for—so they say—that was the destiny
> the quiver-bearing goddess wished to see. (86)

Diana Moon Glampers appears in "Bergeron" like a perversion of the *deus ex machina*, wielding not a bow but a double-barreled shotgun—weapon of the American duck hunter—to murder the godlike boy and his Empress. "The Great Goddess as a goddess of the hunt and of war is for the males a goddess of death," writes Neumann (*Great Mother* 271). Note how

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[21] Another character named Diana Moon Glampers appears four years later in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (1965). In that iteration, she is an illiterate domestic servant for Senator Rosewater:

> [A] sixty-eight-year-old virgin who, by almost anybody's standards, was too dumb to live. Her name was Diana Moon Glampers. No one had ever loved her. There was no reason why anyone should. She was ugly, stupid, and boring. On the rare occasions when she had to introduce herself, she always said her full name, and followed that with the mystifying equation that had thrust her into life so pointlessly: "My mother was a Moon. My father was a Glampers." (*NS* 231)

This Diana Moon Glampers is portrayed as lonely, powerless, and suffering—an about-face from the character in "Harrison Bergeron." If we seek evidence of broad valence in archetypal figures, here it is.

Glampers is *not* handicapped, as if she is society's benchmark member—and is left bare when it comes to her physical description, although we are informed that "Hazel, as a matter of fact, bore a strong resemblance to the Handicapper General" (6). This transmits a maternal aspect to Diana Moon, who to the Romans was a virgin, and casts her as the archetypal Terrible Mother, a destroyer of her own young. Lady Liberty she most certainly is not.

Moriarty has called Actaeon's fate "the story of a hunter of animals engulfed by the animal in himself. And how terrible when, poisoned by repression or by over-insistent civility, the collectively engulfing animal is Beast" (*Night Journey* 58). Harrison, by contrast, is engulfed by an outwardly inflected Beast: his society. In *Metamorphoses*, people discuss Actaeon's death:

> Men heard his fate—and disagreed: some thought
> Diana was too cruel, too unjust;
> while others said her action, though severe,
> was worthy of a virgin so austere.
> Both sides brought suasive arguments to bear. (86)

No such discussion follows Glampers's murder of Harrison and the ballerina. George and Hazel, traumatized, only manage small talk. The government's handicapping torture keeps them in a constant state of anxiety as it is, but after seeing their son murdered they cannot orient themselves beyond an inhumane dictum: "Forget sad things" (10). Rollo May's perspective on anxiety incorporates orientation:

> The function of anxiety is to destroy the self-world relationship, i.e., to disorient the victim in space and time and, so long as this disorientation lasts, the person remains in the state of anxiety. Anxiety overwhelms the person precisely because of the preservation of this disorientation. Now if the person can reorient himself [...] and again relate himself to the world directly, experientially, with his senses alive, he overcomes the anxiety. (*Love and Will* 152)

Reorientation is not a possibility for the Bergerons. The burned-out television tube will be replaced and their suffering will continue. Reed has said "the story in depicting the action in a representational manner actually subverts its claims to realism by the sheer exaggeration of

what it shows. Thus rather than pretending to show what is real it exposes its fictionality. Having the dramatic events be on television within a story puts 'reality' at two removes, giving emphasis to Vonnegut's technique" (81). This is fine, but we must not forget George and Hazel. We witness everything over their shoulders—even though they are lost we have to keep track of them. Just as Dr. Groszinger is the unlikely protagonist of "Thanasphere," George and Hazel Bergeron are the central characters in "Bergeron."

It is hard to understand what Boon and Pringle mean when they declare that, "Although brief and primitive, 'Harrison Bergeron' is one of Vonnegut's better short stories" (*At Millennium's End* 187). What constitutes its primitiveness is never defined, and while they are right to point out its aura of futility, they trip over the symbol of handicapping:

> [The] handicaps that weight people down function as a metaphor for ideological systems, such as religion. Harrison's mother, for example, says that if she were Handicapper General, she would have the handicapper radios in people's ears play "chimes on Sunday—just chimes. Kind of in honor of religion." When her husband tell [sic] her that he "could think, if it was just chimes," she says, "Well—maybe make 'em real loud." The critique is obvious: if religion is chimed in our ears long enough, we will lose the ability to think, and we will all become the same. (*At Millennium's End* 189)

The handicappings are not metaphors for ideological systems. When Hazel suggests chimes, she does so "a little envious" (6), for with her average intelligence (as judged by the government) she does not wear a handicapping radio like her husband. She is rather one of the oppressed imagining what it would be like to be in power. Lacking the wickedness required for the job, the worst she can imagine is chimes, whose sound evokes for religious people a sense of spirituality. George rejects the idea without hesitation because many would *not* be handicapped by those sounds. The actual handicappings, not those conceived of by good-natured Hazel, are rather a spoof, a jibe, a satire on fear of the long reach of government.

Reed comes closer to the mark when he describes the story's focus as equality. We recall that the U.S.A. at the time was embroiled in a debate over Civil Rights for African

Americans, a connection he fails to make:

> The achievement of a truly egalitarian society has occupied politicians and philosophers for centuries, but was there a particular social context giving it relevance in 1961? [This] was the era of the cold war, where Sino-Soviet Communist (and, for that matter, European democratic socialist) claims of egalitarianism were ranged against Western ideals of capitalism and individualism. [...] This story clearly satirizes an obsession with equalizing; the predominant images are of the ludicrousness of the mental and physical handicaps, and the grimness of the inevitable reduction of the population to something close to its lowest common denominator. The implications of the kinds of bureaucratic and coercive oversight that would be required are also made frightening. (*SFKV* 81, 82)

The story throws a punch to the kidneys of American exceptionalism, imagining a United States that has turned from celebration of the individual toward an attack on him or her. Ironically, "Bergeron" was reprinted by conservative commentator William F. Buckley, Jr.'s *National Review* in 1965.[22] According to biographer Sam Tanenhaus, Buckley later called it a mistake that *National Review* did not support the Civil Rights legislation of 1964-65 ("Q&A on William F. Buckley"), but at the time he and his magazine opposed it.[23] One wonders if Vonnegut's satire was lost on conservative readers of the day, the joke being the ludicrousness of the anxiety dictating that extending rights to others will amputate the rights of those who already have them. There is no comfort here for the myth of the Great White Hope, Harrison Bergeron, who is simply obliterated when it looks like he might, as expected, save the day. The story works the way R. Crumb's comics "When the Niggers Take Over America!" and "When the Goddamn Jews Take Over America!" (1993) do—that is, by

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[22] *National Review* 16 Nov. 1965: 1020-1021, 1041.
Vonnegut's papers at the Lilly Library indicate he sold the reprint rights for $50 on 26 Dec. 1961, meaning *National Review* sat on the story for nearly four years before reprinting it (Box 13).

[23] Earlier, in 1957, Buckley even expressed approval of white supremacy in the South: "The central question that emerges—and it is not a parliamentary question or a question that is answered by merely consulting a catalog of the rights of American citizens, born Equal—is whether the White community in the South is entitled to take such measures as are necessary to prevail, politically and culturally, in areas in which it does not predominate numerically? The sobering answer is Yes—the White community is so entitled because, for the time being, it is the advanced race. It is not easy, and it is unpleasant, to adduce statistics evidencing the median cultural superiority of White over Negro: but it is fact that obtrudes, one that cannot be hidden by ever-so-busy egalitarians and anthropologists" ("Why the South Must Prevail"). This pseudo-intellectual attitude, we must remember—and be on the lookout for ourselves—is what those working in the Civil Rights Movement were up against.

expressing with hyperbole the absurdity of irrational fears that hold back equality—albeit without the underground cartoonist's focus on race or his overblown sensationalism.

Obviously, "handicapping," which Vonnegut also uses in *The Sirens of Titan* (1958) and *Between Time and Timbuktu* (1972), is not the answer to leveling the playing field, so to speak. Intelligence, beauty, physical prowess: all are valued through subjective means; there can be no objective measurement of any of these qualities. One question that goes unanswered: how is life different for those deemed disabled in the future America imagined in "Bergeron"? Are they somehow unburdened of their imagined shortcomings? The story does not say. It is concerned only with worries about rights plaguing the white American middle class family, whose exceptional children turn out to be privileged and, above all, mortal. "Bergeron," with its slapstick sound effects and grotesque exaggerations, is a false warning. It is not a dire vision like those put forth in Orwell's *1984* (1948) and Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953).

Rather, it is "a mordant little tale" that exposes the average American's insecurities with his or her own equality as it relates to the equality of others. While vicious and oppressive, instead of a government that is frightful for its realistic potential, the federal government is reduced to sitcom. Godhead Big Brother is swapped for the comically demonic Diana Moon Glampers—and what is more frightening to and parodic of American patriarchy than rearing feminine energies? The story is not "about" rights being taken away; it depicts the *fear* of rights being taken away in the process of extending them to all members of society, a fine distinction that has been lost on many. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights" is a collective commandment in constant conflict with the American myth of individual freedoms, a tension we see playing out in the U.S.A. today with the fights for marriage equality and the Affordable Care Act, as well as the Supreme Court's decision in

2013 to strike down Section 4(b) (thereby nullifying Section 5) of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a key piece of Civil Rights Legislation. "Harrison Bergeron" coyly draws attention to this distinctly American paradox.

"2BR02B" is another imagining of a future United States so orderly that its citizens' rights are impinged. Rejected by *Playboy* and *Esquire*, it was published in January 1962 in the pulp digest *If: Worlds of Science Fiction*. By this time, Vonnegut was near the end of his run as a short story writer. He only sold two more stories in 1962, "The Lie" to *Saturday Evening Post* and "Go Back to Your Precious Wife and Son" in *Ladies Home Journal*. In 1963 he sold two: "Lovers Anonymous" to *Redbook* and "Hyannis Port Story" to *Saturday Evening Post*—a story about the Kennedys which, due to the President's assassination, was not published until it appeared in the 1968 collection *Welcome to the Monkey House*. As discussed later in this chapter, that collection's title story, published in *Playboy*, features Ethical Suicide Parlors and virgin purple-clad Suicide Hostesses, echoing the Ethical Suicide Studios and defeminized purple-clad gas chamber hostesses in "2BR02B," which *Playboy* rejected six years earlier.

The title and basic premise of "2BR02B" also appears in Vonnegut's 1965 novel *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, described as a novel by Kilgore Trout:

> Trout's favorite formula was to describe a perfectly hideous society, not unlike his own, and then, toward the end, to suggest ways in which it could be improved. In *2BRO2B* he hypothecated an America in which almost all of the work was done by machines, and the only people who could get work had three or more Ph.D's. There was a serious overpopulation problem, too.
>
> All serious diseases had been conquered. So death was voluntary, and the government, to encourage volunteers for death, set up a purple-roofed Ethical Suicide Parlor at every major intersection, right next door to an orange-roofed Howard Johnson's. There were pretty hostesses in the parlor, and Barca-Loungers, and Muzak, and a choice of fourteen painless ways to die. The suicide parlors were busy places, because so many people felt silly and pointless, and because it was supposed to be an unselfish, patriotic thing to do, to die. The suicides also got free last meals next door.
>
> And so on. Trout had a wonderful imagination. (*NS* 203)

Vonnegut had not yet put himself into his fiction as a character, but here he gives the title and setting of one of his own stories to his character Kilgore Trout. In so doing, he teases himself over his own storytelling preferences, speaking of his "favorite formula." However, while Trout supposedly offers possible solutions to society's ills, Vonnegut typically lets discord hang in the air. His first iteration of a suicide parlor future, "2BR02B," much like "Bergeron," erupts with violence and then whimpers to a close without suggestions for improvement.

Like "Bergeron," "2BR02B" opens with an ironically idyllic declaration:

> Everything was perfectly swell.
>
> There were no prisons, no slums, no insane asylums, no cripples, no poverty, no wars.
>
> All diseases were conquered. So was old age.
>
> Death, barring accidents, was an adventure for volunteers.
>
> The population of the United States was stabilized at forty-million souls. (59)

The sense of order muddles once we realize the burden is on Edward K. Wehling, Jr., a father-to-be of triplets, to bring forward three willing suicides: "The law said that no newborn child could survive unless the parents of the child could find someone who would volunteer to die. Triplets, if they were all to live, called for three volunteers" (63). The orderliness set up around this system, underscored by the brief presence of an *orderly* working in the Lying-In Hospital, is maintained by the Federal Bureau of Termination. The obstetrician who brings Wehling's triplets into the world is also the man who set up Chicago's very first gas chamber.

This future U.S.A. is a scientocracy: "'In the year 2000,' said Dr. Hitz, 'before scientists stepped in and laid down the law, there wasn't even enough drinking water to go around, and nothing to eat but seaweed—and still people insisted on their right to reproduce like jackrabbits. And their right, if possible, to live forever'" (64). Advances in feeding people and keeping them alive to unfathomable ages (average age being 129) brought about a population explosion, responded to with what we must assume was a regulated cull that

remains ongoing. At the time of the story's publication, according to the 1960 United States Census, the total U.S. population was 183,285,000 people. The country's population in "2BR02B" is much lower, 40,000,000, which was roughly the U.S.A.'s aggregate population in 1870 (38,925,598).

Vonnegut's relationship to suicide is complicated, perpetually appearing in his fiction. At the turn of the millennium, he penned a series of vignettes published as *God Bless You, Dr. Kevorkian* (2001), in which Jack Kevorkian brings him to the brink of death so he may interview the dead. But suicide iterates itself as early in his career as "Thanasphere," where Rice crashes his satellite into the ocean and history is described as "the suicidal course" (62). Vonnegut deemed his mother's death from sleeping pills in 1941 a suicide. Writing to José and Maria Donoso after finishing *Breakfast of Champions* (1973), he identifies her death as a key element of the "formless anger" that plagued him: "Well—if I had to guess, I would say that it was caused by a combination of bad chemicals in my bloodstream and the fact that my mother committed suicide. I have finally dealt with that suicide, by the way, in the book I just finished. My mother appears in it briefly at the end, but keeps her distance—because she is embarrassed by the suicide. And so she should be" (191). "I *saw* my mother in the void," he writes in *Champions*, "My mother stayed far, far away, because she had left me a legacy of suicide" (*NS* 732-733). Such a tragedy cannot be dealt with once and for all in a rite of active imagination and set aside from then on; Vonnegut made an attempt on his own life with alcohol, antidepressants, and sleeping pills in 1984, on the thirty-ninth anniversary of the Dresden firebombing he survived.

Edward K. Wehling, Jr., the desperate father of "2BR02B," carries a name of resonances. Edward comes down from Old English and means "rich guard" (*BTN*), appropriate for one set on protecting the lives of his newborn triplets. Wehling imbues him with the quality of *welling*, that deep filling that carries him to the story's climax. The middle

initial of K. and suffix of Jr. point tantalizingly back to the author's name, who we recall had to make room in his family for three of his sister's sons, just four years earlier in 1958, when she and her husband died days apart. Described as a "mere stripling" at fifty-six (59), as "red-eyed and frowzy" (63), Wehling will kill two and die by his own hand by the end of the story.

When it seems the father-to-be is the story's central character, Vonnegut again shifts the focus to another character: "[The room] was being redecorated as a memorial to a man who had volunteered to die. | A sardonic old man, about two hundred years old, sat on a stepladder painting a mural he did not like" (60). Though so old, he looks to be about thirty-five because "Aging had touched him that much before the cure to aging was found" (60); Vonnegut will return to this so-called aging cure in "The Big Trip Up Yonder" and "Monkey House." This character, who oversees everything that takes place, is never named, referred to only as the muralist and the painter. "Mural" comes from Latin *murus* for "wall"; the *OED* traces the word "paint" back to the Indo-European base of "faw": "Coloured, stained, streaked; particoloured, variegated." He is almost a part of the wall he so grudgingly paints, marked within and without by the inhumanity American society has reached. The etymology of "sardonic," from Sardinian, reveals black humor that will eventually claim him: "the word had primary reference to the effects of eating a 'Sardinian plant' [...], which was said to produce facial convulsions resembling horrible laughter, usually followed by death" (*OED*).

Like Michelangelo did in the Sistine Chapel's *Last Judgment*, the muralist paints in specific people: "the faces of many of the figures in the mural were still blank. All blanks were to be filled with portraits of important people on either the hospital staff or from the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Termination" (60). The fresco is titled *The Happy Garden of Life*:

> The mural he was working on depicted a very neat garden. Men and women in white, doctors and nurses, turned the soil, planted seedlings, sprayed bugs, spread fertilizer.

> Men and women in purple uniform pulled up weeds, cut down plants that were old and sickly, raked leaves, carried refuse to trash-burners.
>
> Never, never, never—not even in medieval Holland nor old Japan—had a garden been more formal, been better tended. Every plant had all the loam, light, water, air and nourishment it could use. (60)

The work is heavy-handed allegory for the system of state-enforced voluntary suicide. The mention of medieval Holland points to the phantasmagorical triptych by Early Netherlandish painter Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1490-1510). That painting's center panel, full of naked people, humongous fruit, birds, and stone towers, has inspired and perplexed probably since it was unveiled. This work, on the other hand, lacks mystery, boring its own painter. When an orderly compliments his skill, he grumbles, "'You think this is my idea of what life really looks like?' [...] The painter gestured at a foul dropcloth. 'There's a good picture of it,' he said. 'Frame that, and you'll have a picture a damn sight more honest than this one'" (60-61). "His vision may resemble that of 'Jack the Dripper,' Jackson Pollock," writes Reed, "the abstract expressionist painter about whom Vonnegut has written" (85). Of Pollock, Vonnegut said, "this man was capable of depicting in photographic detail the crossing of the Delaware by the Father of our Country, if such a tableau had been demanded by the passions of himself and his century" (*Fates Worse Than Death* 42). The mature muralist, trapped in a future America demanding the inanity of a dictated metaphor, is not free to portray society as he sees it. This archetypally-identified character, called Grandpa by the orderly, displays qualities of the *senex*, Latin for "old man," an archetype which depth psychology recognizes as bearing "balance, generosity towards others, wisdom, far-sightedness [...] *Senex* pathology may be characterized as excessively conservative, authoritarian, over-grounded, melancholic and lacking in imagination" (*CDJA* 137). From his stepladder, the muralist certainly over-grounds the scene below with wisdom and melancholy. If he lacks the will to imagine and express finer work, that fault points to his society.

Another character, Chief Obstetrician Dr. Benjamin Hitz, is named for one of Vonnegut's high school friends, "Ben Hitz, who was later best man at his wedding" (*SFKV* 85). The name is not simply an inside joke. In the Old Testament Benjamin is the twelfth and youngest son of Jacob and Rachel, the founder of one of the southern tribes of the Hebrews. We might think of this Benjamin, the "blindingly handsome" (60), "tanned, white-haired, omnipotent Zeus, two hundred and forty years old," seven feet tall[24] and "[booming] with important accomplishments, and the joy of living" (62), as a son of the system he upholds. We recall Zeus as a patricidal son who carries on recklessly as chief god of the Olympians. Hitz, as a name, packs a punch, smacks of slapstick, strikes with violence, sharing also a first syllable with Hitler. If the muralist carries qualities of the *senex*, this life-and-death wheeler-dealer holds those of the *puer aeternus*, archetype of the eternal youth: "Jung [...] speculated that its recurring fascination springs from man's projection of his inability to renew himself" (*CDJA* 125). Depth psychology recognizes the *puer* as an animating daimon in immaturity and narcissism, pathologies we see exhibited in this character and the society's anti-aging dictum. "Obstetrician," incidentally, derives from the Latin *obstare*, "to stand in the way of" something (*OED*)—in this case individuation. Dr. Hitz becomes a victim of Wehling, who he has stood-in-the-way-of.

The second victim is gas-chamber hostess Leora Duncan: Leora is a Hebrew name for "my light"; Duncan is the name of the king murdered in *Macbeth*, also Isadora Duncan (1877-1927), famous for dancing and death: her neck broke when her scarf tangled in the wheel-spokes of an Amilcar. As a suicide hostess, this light-bound-for-death wears a uniform something like that of an airline stewardess of the early sixties: "Her shoes, stockings, trench coat, bag and overseas cap were all purple, the purple the painter called 'the color of grapes on Judgment Day'" (61). Purple is the color designated to the Ethical Suicide Parlors and

[24] The same towering height as Harrison Bergeron.

their Hostesses here, in the summary from *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, and in "Monkey House"—perhaps because purple "lies directly opposite GREEN [on the color wheel]. Thus it stands, not for the springtime passage from death into life, but for the autumnal passage from life into death"—noted also for its elementary colors, blue and red, brought into balance (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1069). The hostesses' sexualities are also suppressed, as are those of bishops, who wear purple vestments.

The muralist in "2BR02B" does not paint himself into *The Happy Garden of Life*, as Michelangelo is believed to have painted himself into *The Last Judgment*,[25] but *is* tasked with painting Leora's mustachioed face into it: "The woman had a lot of facial hair—an unmistakable mustache, in fact. A curious thing about gas-chamber hostesses was that, no matter how lovely and feminine they were when recruited, they all sprouted mustaches within five years or so" (61). Most American women, in the middle of the twentieth century and now, opt for epilation when facial hair appears, a natural occurrence so common that products and services for its removal are easily found. There is no explanation for suicide hostesses embracing the phenomenon, but a masculine pubescence arising through their role in euthanizing people in gas-chambers is assumed. Described as "A coarse, formidable woman" (61), Leora bears associations stereotypical of male warriors. In a time when fewer blinked at the notion of "men's work" and "women's work," carrying out so-called ethical suicides is cast as a career that displaces a woman's femininity. And yet, "She was demure about what she did. What she did was make people comfortable while she killed them" (62).

Duncan carries a bag bearing "the seal of the Service Division of the Federal Bureau of Termination, an eagle perched on a turnstile" (61). This detail melds the eagle emblems of the United States and Nazi Germany, whose swastika resembled a turnstile. Vonnegut's vision here presents a United States that has incorporated the gas-chambers synonymous with

[25] See John W. Dixon, Jr.'s "Terror of Salvation: The Last Judgment." *Crucifixion Fine Art*, n.d. Web.

the Holocaust.[26] Two characters in "2BR02B" react against the inhumanity, albeit in very different ways. Wehling faces something akin to *Sophie's Choice*: "'All I have to do is pick out which one of the triplets is going to live, then deliver my maternal grandfather to the Happy Hooligan,[27] and come back here with a receipt. [...] I want those kids,' said Wehling quietly. 'I want all three of them. [...] I don't want my grandfather to die, either'" (63, 64). When Dr. Hitz fails to placate him with an idiotic simile, likening overpopulation to the drupelets of a blackberry,[28] he spiels what Reed calls their "regulated paradise" (85):

> "Two centuries ago, when I was a young man, it was a hell that nobody thought could last another twenty years. Now centuries of peace and plenty stretch before us as far as the imagination cares to travel."
>
> He smiled luminously.
>
> The smile faded as he saw that Wehling had just drawn a revolver.
>
> Wehling shot Dr. Hitz dead. "There's room for one—a great big one," he said.
>
> And then he shot Leora Duncan. "It's only death," he said to her as she fell. "There's Room [sic] for two."
>
> And then he shot himself, making room for all three of his children. (64-65)

His weapon, a revolver, keeps the society revolving, making the act not so much a revolutionary murder-suicide as a perpetuation of the system as structured.

The muralist, witnessing the slaughter atop his stepladder, becomes reflective:

> The painter pondered the mournful puzzle of life demanding to be born and, once born, demanding to be fruitful. . .to multiply and to live as long as possible—to do all that on a very small planet that would have to last forever.
>
> All the answers that the painter could think of were grim. Even grimmer, surely, than a Catbox, a Happy Hooligan, an Easy Go. He thought of war. He thought of plague. He thought of starvation. (65)

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[26] This is a postwar motif in stories from the U.S.A. and Britain, stories that imagine the West complacently possessed by totalitarian governments. Other examples include the altered future which has become a police state in Bradbury's "A Sound of Thunder" (1952), not to mention his book-burning society in *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), Orwell's *1984* (1948), Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson's youth-culling city in *Logan's Run* (1967), the rise and fall of the Galactic Empire in George Lucas's *Star Wars* saga (1977, 1980, 1983, 1999, 2002, 2005), and so on.

[27] Happy Hooligan is one of many euphemisms for the Suicide Studios, "whose fanciful sobriquets included: 'Automat,' 'Birdland,' 'Cannery,' 'Catbox,' 'De-louser,' 'Easy-go,' 'Good-by, Mother,' 'Happy Hooligan,' 'Kiss-me-quick,' 'Lucky Pierre,' 'Sheepdip,' 'Waring Blender,' 'Weep-no-more' and 'Why Worry?'" (61).

[28] This detail is repeated by the narrator of "Welcome to the Monkey House": "The people were virtually packed together like drupelets. | Drupelets are the pulpy little knobs that compose the outside of a raspberry" (95). This repetition may account for the exclusion of "2BR02B" from *Welcome to the Monkey House* (1968), remaining uncollected until *Bagombo Snuff Box* (1999).

Schopenhauer, in what Campbell called his "dreadful phrase" (*MGOM* 262), declared "the world and man is something that had better not have been" ("On the Sufferings"). We sense this misery in the muralist's thoughts, horror at the constant and ceaseless feeding of life on life, justified and propagated in the Occident by Biblical scripture despite pain wrought through the entitlement of dominion, with no end in sight. The bloody climax has been too much for him: "He knew that he would never paint again" (65). Earlier, the orderly (who enters singing a pop song about ethical suicide) chides the muralist's statement that he would prefer to kill himself over going to a suicide studio:

> "A do-it-yourselfer, eh?" said the orderly. "Messy business, Grandpa. Why don't you have a little consideration for the people who have to clean up after you?"
>
> The painter expressed with an obscenity his lack of concern for the tribulations of his survivors. "The world could do with a good deal more mess, if you ask me," he said. (61)

When he decides he has "had about enough of life in the Happy Garden of Life" (65) and descends from his perch, he picks up Wehling's gun, "really intending to shoot himself. | But he didn't have the nerve" (65).

He does, however, have the phone number of the municipal gas chambers of the Federal Bureau of Termination memorized: 2 B R 0 2 B, or "to be or not to be." Hamlet's question has been repackaged as "the trick telephone number that people who didn't want to live any more were supposed to call" (61). He goes to the telephone booth in the corner of the waiting room and schedules an appointment later that afternoon: "'Thank you, sir,' said the hostess. 'Your city thanks you; your country thanks you; your planet thanks you. But the deepest thanks of all is from future generations" (65). Thus ends the tale, with a pending state-assisted suicide. There is no liberty in this imagined future, where the right to life in the U.S.A. is "stabilized at forty-million souls" and suicide is venerated in popular song and state-sponsored art. The muralist is unwilling—he has not the will—to add "a good deal more mess" to the world.

3.4 The Pursuit of…

> The right to pursue happiness is revolutionary: it is the end and goal of the state of independence.
>
> James Oliver Robertson (66)

The third ingredient in American independence is also its most subjective. While the U.S. Supreme Court constantly interprets the meaning of the Constitution, the individual citizen is left to interpret the Declaration of Independence's pursuit of happiness in his or her own way. "The Euphio Question" (*Collier's* 12 May 1951) asks if unqualified happiness is safe for society. It plays out as a transcript of one man's testimony to the Federal Communications Commission, warning them about the destructive effects and consequences of a new invention: the euphoriaphone, or euphio (à la radio) for short. The device amplifies a frequency from deep space that incapacitates listeners with joy, rendering them prone to deathly dangers.[29] When Lew expresses reservations, another is incredulous: "'People ought to be happy,' Fred said" (53).

Ought we? "Ought" suggests obligation and, if we are so obliged, the fact that happiness eludes many people despite the ardent pursuit of it can become a cause for despair. Happiness is but one of the uncountable feelings, experienced in our own individual ways, that happen to us. While establishing that people have an unalienable right to its pursuit, what makes some of us happy causes the opposite in others, not to mention that too great an emphasis on one emotional quality courts psychological imbalance. How many Americans, in 1951 and now, have internalized the narrative that something is wrong with them because they do not feel happy, or at least happy *enough*—when in fact they are something far more dynamic in being alive? The problem does not affect Americans alone, but a distinct strain infects plenty of U.S. citizens who have accepted their nationality as exceptional and undergo

[29] A similar effect erupts from the master tape in David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, not to mention the lotus in *The Odyssey*'s land of the Lotus-eaters.



The EUPHIO QUESTION

By KURT VONNEGUT, Jr.

How to be terribly happy, in one easy lesson. Just flick the switch, and something wonderful— and rather horrifying—comes stealing over you

[Fig. ix: Fred Steffen's illustration for "The Euphio Question" (22-23)]

crisis when they cannot "live up" to its subjective promises/premises. Some may argue the nation's founders merely pledged the pursuit, not the arrival. To plenty of human beings, the pursuit alone is a hell of a yoke. "The Euphio Question" is a fable built on the premise that easy happiness, the kind that can be exploited, packaged, and sold, is not the grounded variety encountered naturally, which is not and cannot be a constant.[30]

A more nuanced story exploring obstacles obstructing the pursuit of happiness was published as "The Big Trip Up Yonder" in the January 1954 issue of *Galaxy: Science Fiction*. It follows the extended Ford family, twenty-three of them cramped into a one-bedroom apartment, for in 2185 the world is this overpopulated, forcing people to eat "egg-type processed seaweed" (106) and "buckwheat-type processed sawdust cakes" (107). Science fiction writer Harlan Ellison "thought it was the very best Malthusian pastiche I'd

[30] We also sense in this story's device, the euphio, more anxiety over the rising technology of television, mentioned earlier in the discussion of "Harrison Bergeron." NBC Hollywood contacted Vonnegut about "The Euphio Question" in November 1963 to say Rod Serling wanted to write a script from it (*Letters* 93), likely for his TV show *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964). The episode never precipitated.

ever read" (228). Four generations crammed together, twenty-two of them vie for the patriarch's favor, dreading the common occurrence of getting in his way and being written out of his last will and testament. With mattresses and sleeping bags in the hallway, the most coveted place is Gramps's bedroom, which he keeps to himself. His bed, which everybody wants, is not a luxurious king; it is a standard double.



[Fig. x: Illustration by Kossin of Gramps (103)]

When grandson Louis decides to replace Gramps's age-defying medicine with water, and in the process breaks the glass bottle, he is written out of the will and replaced by his father, Willy (his name is a playfully adjectival form of "will"). After Gramps pulls a

disappearing act, the descendants erupt in a massive fight that draws cops and news media, sending the Fords to jail where they gleefully bask in the privacy of their own cells. Living conditions are so rotten that prison is a step up in the world. The illustration accompanying the story is a line drawing of Gramps thinking over his two-page will while the shadow figures of his warring children, grandchildren, great-grandson, nephew, grandnephew, great-grandnephew, great-grandniece, and assorted spouses storm around his head.

When included in *Canary in a Cat House* (1961) and *Welcome to the Monkey House* (1968), this story was titled "Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow"; Vonnegut's drafts collected at the Lilly Library indicate this was the original title.[31] It comes from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, spoken in the main character's final soliloquy (V.v.19), which also renders up the declaration that life "is a tale | Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury | Signifying nothing" (V.v.26-28); William Faulkner found the title for his novel *The Sound and the Fury* (1928) here, as did David Foster Wallace in titling one of the stories in *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* (1999). Upon word that Lady Macbeth is dead, he laments the drag of time:

> Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time (V.v.19-21)

In Vonnegut's story, human time has been strung to ridiculous lengths thanks to anti-gerasone, an elixir and highly-marketed product that stops the aging process. The eldest character is a startling 172 years old due to regular ingestion of this chemical compound, which we are told has an "almost imperceptible smell [...] like Worcestershire sauce" (105). "Anti-gerasone" and the implied "gerasone" are fictional, the former apparently blocking or inhibiting the latter. The etymology of "gerasone" combines the Ancient *Greek* γῆρας (geras) for "old age" and the suffix "-one," used in chemistry to form "unsystematically the names of

[31] Bradbury wrote a story called "Tomorrow and Tomorrow" in 1943, but any link to *Macbeth* seems tenuous.

organic compounds derived from other compounds" (*OED*). This suggests that in the fictional future of "Big Trip," as well as the stories "2BR02B" and "Monkey House," aging is caused by a chemical or hormone common to all people, and, thanks to a potion, it can be arrested.

Reports of waters of longevity in the West harken back to Classical Greek historian Herodotus (*The Histories*, III:23), while the myth of the fountain of youth became an obsession in the American Hemisphere during the early years of colonization by Europeans. In *Historia General y Natural de las Indias* (1535), explorer Ponce de León was said to have sought the youth-restoring waters of Bimini. Originally imagined to be in the Caribbean, these waters were later re-imagined to the Florida peninsula. Three centuries later, Nathaniel Hawthorne's story "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" (1837) presents men repeating youthful mistakes after imbibing the rejuvenating water and, when the effect wears off, leaving for Florida to "quaff at morning, noon and night from the Fountain of Youth" (167). The year before "Big Trip" was published, Disney released a theatrical short cartoon titled "Don's Fountain of Youth," in which Donald Duck tricks his nephews into believing the waters regress him back to the egg. The wish for waters that will restore youth is ancient, occurring long before the U.S. existed, and so we again find a "cannibalized" European myth. When Vonnegut, at the end of "Big Trip," introduces "safe, tested *Super*-anti-gerasone" (110), the new-and-improved medicine that will *reverse* aging, he dresses the old myth in the cloak of American television advertising, then arising in the early nineteen fifties.

Aging is one of the inevitables of living for an extended period of time. All mammals that live through adulthood experience it. Despite its universality, the process, which plays out differently for every individual, is a common source of anxiety. The changing of one's energies, the shifting of abilities, appetites, and enzymes is often enough bemoaned and denigrated as a cause for shame. Psychologically, it is possible to accept the tilt and rebalance

oneself in whatever phase of life one is unfolding into, but this is easier said than done. Philip Coleman and Stephen Matterson acknowledge the "larger cultural sense of the United States *as* youth: the young nation among older nations, the nation that enshrines promise and potential, where youth is listened to and nurtured" (*'Forever Young'* 5). A culture so focused on youth that its members will do whatever they can to reverse the aging process is one in which individuation marches in a procession of regression. Discussing Jung's esoteric *Red Book*, Hillman and Sonu Shamdasani grapple with calling individuation a process for the fact that it implies progress. Shamdasani, who spent five years translating *The Red Book*, says Jung first conceived individuation as a sequence but over the years began viewing it as a process:

> For me, sequence implies something that is simply happening. What one has to look at here quite closely is the act of construction. The *end result* in Jung's psychology is the idea of process. Look at it from a more science-studies approach, such as the work of Bruno Latour—nature is not what one starts with, nature is the result of a particular construction. What Jung arrives at in his theory is a notion of process. (*Lament for the Dead* 139)

"He's implying that there is a natural urge to fulfill, that there's an entelechy in there, in our lives," says Hillman (137). This understanding of individuation casts it as an openness to the movement of experience within as it participates with experience without. But life is full of hindrances and impediments to simply this. In "Big Trip," something as stultifying as a euphio device has been mass-produced, bottled, and sold as advertised: "Wouldn't you pay $5,000 to be indistinguishable from everybody else?" asks the ad for *Super*-anti-gerasone (110). Anti-aging wipes away possibility for individuality, rendering everybody unidentifiable. Maturity is denied manifestation, the result being this story about immature characters we can hardly tell apart.

Behind the collective dis-ease with aging is, of course, fear of the ultimate universal: death. Hillman identifies this: "[The] biggest of all collective problems [...] is the suppression of the dead. Not hearing the voices of history. Not hearing what we've lost. And

the fear of the dead, the fear of death, in our culture" (*Lament for the Dead* 151). We think back to Groszinger's struggle in "Thanasphere." Jung's *Red Book*, the illuminated fantasy he invested more time in than any of his other works, challenges us to recognize the dead in the characters arising from our imaginations:

> These figures are the dead, not just your dead, that is, all the images of the shapes you took in the past, which your ongoing life has left behind, but also the thronging dead of human history, the ghostly procession of the past, which is an ocean compared to the drops of your own life span. I see behind you, behind the mirror of your eyes, the crush of dangerous shadows, the dead, who look greedily through the empty sockets of your eyes, who moan and hope to gather up through you all the loose ends of the ages, which sigh in them. Your cluelessness does not prove anything. Put your ear to that wall and you will hear the rustling of their procession. (340)

Vonnegut met the dead, had direct experience moving the corpses of families, pulled them out of firebombed homes with his hands, carried them in his arms to pyres, as a P.O.W. after the aerial massacre of Dresden. That isolated experience was an atypical initiation for Americans of his generation. When the dead are denied access to the awareness of the living in Vonnegut's work, it is because he, having encountered them, sees them ignored in his culture. This future America pursues happiness at the expense of death, its citizens snubbing the dead with the attitude that joining their ranks should be avoided at all costs. The story unfurls the mystery of American fears of the mystery of death, death being the threat in Gramps's first utterance: "'Next one shoots off his big bazoo while the TV's on is gonna find hisself cut off without a dollar—' his voice suddenly sweetened—'when they wave that checkered flag at the Indianapolis Speedway, and old Gramps gets ready for the Big Trip Up Yonder'" (101). The story title extracted for the *Galaxy* publication is this euphemism for death.

Gramps's theatrics hinge upon his wills, both the document and his determination. Rollo May, harmonizing Hillman and Shamdasani's discussion of individuation, writes, "*Will is the capacity to organize one's self* so that movement in a certain direction or toward a

certain goal may take place" (*Love and Will* 218; italics in original). In one sense, Gramps divests himself of his family so that he might attain solitude, but this privacy merely opens him, in the final lines of the story, to the passivity of being entertained: "Life was good. He could hardly wait to see what was going to happen next" (110). He and his descendants engross themselves in The McGarvey Family, "a television serial that Gramps had been following since he was 60, or for a total of 112 years. 'I can't wait to see what's going to happen next,' he said'" (104). The sly old grouch, in sending off for age-reversing *Super*-anti-gerasone and re-uttering his line of anticipation, surrenders to the episodic melodrama of soap opera. His yearned-for enjoyment leaves him alone in a seemingly endless existence, a solitary audience member willingly watching life. This is not the wise old man, the balanced *senex* who has accepted aging and grown mature; Gramps is the pathological *senex*, who inconsistently lords and denies his station as an elder. And where has Granny gone? There must have been a woman in order for there to be descendants. The maternal and matriarchal feminine powers are fully denied in the Ford (à la Henry?) apartment, his missing spouse never even mentioned.

When Gramps pulls his disappearing trick, and the reader doesn't know he is still alive, it seems he might have actually died in sacred fashion:

> The door swung open before her fist. In the middle of the room, the soft, deep, wide, canopied bed, the symbol of the sweet by-and-by to every Ford, was empty.
>
> A sense of death, as unfamiliar to the Fords as Zoroastrianism or the causes of the Sepoy Mutiny, stilled every voice, slowed every heart. Awed, the heirs began to search gingerly, under the furniture and behind the drapes, for all that was mortal of Gramps, father of the clan. (107)

"But Gramps had left not his Earthly husk but a note" (107), the narrator tells us. This event riffs off the rolling back of the stone from Christ's tomb in the New Testament, when the myrrh bearers discover Jesus' body has vanished. Instead of encountering an angel, however, the Fords find what reads like a suicide note. The ensuing argument over inheritance

escalates into familial war, drawing police and news cameras—a situation prescient of the American documentary television series *COPS*. The Fords' infighting strife becomes entertainment for "500,000,000 delighted viewers on the Eastern Seaboard" (109). Suffering as entertainment. We might hope witnessing violence and pain would evoke compassion, but that is not always the case; often enough it brings out delight, even happiness. A haunting touch reveals the emptied apartment subjected to the calamity all over again: "In the stillness of the three-room Ford apartment on the 76th floor of Building 257, the television set had been left on. Once more the air was filled with the cries and grunts and crashes of the fray, coming harmlessly now from the loudspeaker" (109). The apartment, however, is not empty. Having returned from his hideout, the Idle Hour Tavern, "which commanded a view of Building 257 from across the square of asphalt known as Alden Village Green" (110), Gramps Ford scratches down the address for *Super*-anti-gerasone and settles into his own passive regression.

In January 1968, more than four years since a Vonnegut short story had been published, "Welcome to the Monkey House" appeared in *Playboy*. All of the Vonnegut stories examined thus far were written between 1949 and 1962, making this one, sold in 1967, an outlier. I intended to limit the scope to stories written up to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy—a historical demarcation in the American psyche—but this work would be incomplete without addressing this story, particularly given its connections to "Big Trip" and "2BR02B"—and, peculiarly enough, the Kennedys. The social and political soul of the U.S.A. had changed, and some of the differences stand out in the issue of *Playboy* at hand. Essays and ideas unimaginable in the years between WWII and the end of "Camelot" are printed alongside the magazine's standard fare: Harvey Cox explores contemporary Christianity in relation to the youth movement in "God and the Hippies," John Clellon Holmes prematurely announces the arrival of Postfeminism, and novelist Norman Mailer, in

the extended interview, imagines what the U.S.A. might be like if Kennedy hadn't been murdered. The issue also features an essay by Bradbury on the collective need for imagining death, in which he iterates an attitude that would please Jung, Hillman, and Shamdasani: "To fantasize is to remain sane" (252).

WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE



fiction By KURT VONNEGUT, JR. *hidden in that future world where all that was pleasurable in sex had been destroyed was an outlaw poet with revolutionary ideas*

SO PETE CROCKER, the sheriff of Barnstable County, which was the whole of Cape Cod, came into the Federal Ethical Suicide Parlor in Hyannis one May afternoon—and he told the two six-foot Hostesses there that they weren't to be alarmed, but that a notorious nothinghead named Billy the Poet was believed headed for the Cape.

A nothinghead was a person who refused to take his ethical birth-control pills three times a day. The penalty for that was $10,000 and ten years in jail.

This was at a time when the population of Earth was 17 billion human beings. That was far too many mammals that big for a planet that small. The people were virtually packed together like drupelets.

Drupelets are the pulpy little knobs that compose the outside of a raspberry.

So the World Government was making a two-pronged attack on overpopulation. One pronging was the encouragement of ethical suicide, which consisted of going to the nearest Suicide Parlor and asking a Hostess to kill you painlessly while you lay on a Barcalounger. The other pronging was compulsory ethical birth control.

The sheriff told the Hostesses, who were pretty, tough-minded, highly intelligent girls, that roadblocks were being set up and house-to-house searches were being conducted to catch Billy the Poet. The main difficulty was that the police didn't know what he looked like. The few people who had seen him and known him for what he was were women—and they disagreed fantastically as to his height, his hair color, his voice, his weight, the color of his skin.

"I don't need to remind you girls," the sheriff went on, "that a nothinghead is very sensitive from the waist down. If Billy the Poet somehow slips in here and starts making trouble, one good kick in *(continued on page 156)*

ILLUSTRATION BY CHARLES SLACKMAN

[Fig. xi: Charles Slackman's illustration for "Welcome to the Monkey House" (95)]

Charles Slackman's illustration for "Monkey House" shows a redheaded woman in a purple nightgown standing hip-deep in the grip of a giant chimpanzee's foot. Perched in the cousin of Kong's hand idles a redheaded man in spectacles reading a book. The chimp, red-eyed, grins a row of yellow teeth, sitting in the starry night on a field of green. From the neck down his body holds the forms of a multitude of outward-staring primates. The man held and woman grabbed by the towering primate-composite chimpanzee calls to mind Nietzsche's post-Darwinian discovery: "I have *discovered* for myself that the old human and animal world, indeed the entire prehistory and past of all sentient being, works on, loves on, hates on, thinks on in me" (Hollingdale 146). Moriarty picks up on this, calling "[our inner psychological ancient condition the] regime of cravings, hungers, impulses, energies, which, for the most part, were biologically instituted in the Palaeozoic. The ancient regime we innately are" (*TGLT2* 91).

Darwinism does not claim we evolved from chimps or monkeys, but rather that we and the great apes and monkeys share a common ancestor. Here we see people in the clutches of an ape, which is itself made up of monkeys, illustrating the commonly held—and unscientific—myth of our evolutionary lineage from animal to human. There are no gargantuan chimpanzees in the coming narrative, so where the image succeeds is in this sense, integral to Vonnegut's story, that primal aspects, inherited from our genetic ancestry, live on within us. Unsurprisingly for *Playboy*, patriarchy is at play as well, for the woman is gripped to inaction by a foot while the intellectually-stimulated man lolls in a bestial hand known to make use of tools. This is appropriate, for the monkey house in question is located in the zoo of human sexuality as dictated by white American heterosexual men of the forties and fifties, who were trying to maintain their authority in the late sixties.

Again we find an overpopulated future with 17 billion human beings on Earth—"That was far too many mammals that big for a planet that small" (95)—where anti-aging is bought

and consumed and citizens are encouraged to undergo euthanasia at Federal Ethical Suicide Parlors. This time, however, Americans fall under the jurisdiction of a World Government and "compulsory ethical birth control" (95):

> [Ethical] birth-control pills, the only legal form of birth control, made people numb from the waist down.
>
> Most men said their bottom halves felt like cold iron or balsa wood. Most women said their bottom halves felt like wet cotton or stale ginger ale. The pills were so effective that you could blindfold a man who had taken one, tell him to recite the Gettysburg Address, kick him in the balls while he was doing it, and he wouldn't miss a syllable.
>
> The pills were ethical because they didn't interfere with a person's ability to reproduce, which would have been unnatural and immoral. All the pills did was take every bit of pleasure out of sex.
>
> Thus did science and morals go hand in hand. (156)

Again we are presented with life in an oppressive scientocracy where Vonnegut has taken an aspect of American culture—the combined oral contraceptive pill—and amplified it to the *n*th degree. The Pill, granted caps for its perceived godlike revolution of women's sexuality, met FDA approval in 1960 and by 1968 its use was widespread. Consider Holmes's three points on its liberation of American women in "The New Girl: an appreciative appraisal of the emergent modern female . . .," published in the same issue: "[The Pill] freed women from their own biology, putting into their hands (rather than men's) an inexpensive, simple-to-use, foolproof method of preventing conception and even controlling menstruation [...] It freed her to [the body's] desires [...] It freed [women] from men as well and from men's wishful images of them" (186). The final point alone appearing in the pages of a magazine famous for publishing men's wishful images of nude women is a contradiction, to say the least—these points show men were trying to figure out what the Pill meant to *them*. As Vonnegut comically tells us of the future, "America had changed in many ways, but it had yet to adopt the metric system" (156).

Turning to the seriousness of a story coated in comedy, what unfolds in "Monkey House" is abduction culminating in rape. The victim is Nancy McLuhan, a Hostess in the

Ethical Suicide Service. Unlike those in "2BR02B," these Hostesses do not sprout mustaches. Actually, they receive the sort of sexualized attention one might stereotypically expect from *Playboy*:

> Their uniforms were white lipstick, heavy eye make-up, purple body stockings with nothing underneath and black leather boots. [...] All Hostesses were virgins. They also had to hold advanced degrees in psychology and nursing. They also had to be plump and rosy, and at least six feet tall. [...] All Hostesses were experts at judo and karate. [...] All nothingheads were [attracted to Hostesses]. Bombed out of their skulls with the sex madness that came from taking nothing, they thought the white lips and big eyes and body stocking and boots of a Hostess spelled *sex*, *sex*, *sex*. (156)

"A nothinghead," as it goes, "was a person who refused to take his ethical birth-control pills three times a day. The penalty for that was $10,000 and ten years in jail" (95). The name Nancy was a medieval diminutive of Annis (where we get Agnes), deriving from Greek ἁγνος for "chaste" (*BTN*); McLuhan conjures Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian communications theorist who authored *Understanding Media* (1964), in which he coined the phrase "the medium is the message." The character's name then triggers awareness of the manner in which the story is presented and received: on pages interspersed throughout a so-called "gentlemen's magazine." Nancy's co-Hostess and friend, Mary Kraft, bears both the name of the Occident's venerated Virgin and Kraft Foods, manufacturer of boxed macaroni and cheese—an American staple.

Though not mentioned, anti-gerasone or something like it is being ingested, for, despite her youthful appearance, Nancy is sixty-three years old, another arrested youth. She is also sarcastically referred to twice by the story's notorious nothinghead as Juno, Roman fertility and marriage goddess wed to Jupiter: "Young, but fully mature, at the height of her powers, commanding, aggressive and fertile, she symbolizes the female principle" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 560-561). Indeed, Nancy and Mary begin the story utterly defiant of the sheriff's warning, delivered in person, about the serial rapist who has come to Hyannis to prey on Hostesses. The patriarchal narrative they perpetuate casts blame for the crime on the

victims: "'I'm not as mad at *him* as I am at the women who let him do it to them without a struggle'—said Mary—'who let him do it and then couldn't tell the police what he looked like. Suicide Hostesses at that!'" (156).

It is worth addressing Vonnegut's relationship with women, acknowledged in his *New York Times* obituary as "a lifelong difficulty." He first became aware of vitriolic conflict between men and women through his mother's verbal abuse of his father:

> I have heard and seen hatred that pure coming from women maybe ten times since she died on Mother's Day in 1944 (about a month before D Day). I don't think the hatred has much to do with the particular man who gets it. Father surely didn't deserve it. Most likely, it seems to me, it is a response to aeons of subjugation, although my mother and all the other women who have displayed it for my supposed benefit were about as enslaved as Queen Elizabeth or Cleopatra.
>
> My theory is that all women have hydrofluoric acid bottled up inside, but my mother had too much of it. When the clock struck midnight (and we really did have a grandfather clock which struck the hours with authority), out it came. For her it was like throwing up. She had to do it. Poor soul! Poor soul!
>
> This is a self-serving theory, insinuating that Father and I did not deserve to be so hated. Forget it. (*Fates Worse Than Death* 36-37)

Vonnegut's awareness of women's historical subjugation and his allowance for its influence in women's behavior of his day has something to do with Auden's sense that, "We are lived by powers we pretend to understand" (97). Hillman claims the concept in the service of depth psychology: "The only axiomatic basis I have is that we are lived by powers we pretend to understand, so the axiomatic basis are these powers. They're our mysteries, they're our figures, they are occasions of invasion and they are our lives, or at least determine our lives in strong ways" (*Lament* 201). Vonnegut's shame is not merely personal; it is collective. Notice the generations of maleness he presents, with the son, the father, and the authoritative clock, known and coveted as a grandfather, pointing backward through time with minute and hour hands to a long-accepted ancestry of patriarchy, as well as forward with guilt and doubt to the possibility of shedding it. To throw the hydrofluoric acid back in Vonnegut's face and brand him a misogynist would miss the complexity of the problem as he experienced it. Woodman

picks up on it, too, when she says, "The rage in both sexes comes out of centuries of abuse" (48).

A brief letter in response to Marianne Brown, a thirty-six-year-old widow with three children who wrote to Vonnegut, shows his compassion toward women:

> It can't be said often enough, "It is the woman who pays." The miracle is that so many can and do somehow. I was in love (still am) with a widow with four kids (two not her own). She somehow raised them all on a teeny weeny salary. I told her one time, "I worry about women." She said, "Don't." ("It is the woman who pays")

The widow he refers to with love is Loree Rackstraw, his former student in the Iowa Writers' Workshop and a scholar. What is most telling is his acknowledgment that this relationship allowed him to abandon his outworn savior complex. Rackstraw taught him that he and all men, by extension, are not responsible for rescuing women; respect and appreciate women, yes, but the projection of damselhood on all women is narcissistic, a narrative that inflates men's notions of their own greatness. The letter and the previous passage were written in 1990, more than twenty years after "Monkey House," which, after all, we are reading in the context of its own history. Vonnegut's attitudes were not the same in 1968.

Long after Wild West outlaw Billy the Kid's death and a couple years before Billy (the?) Pilgrim made his author famous, Vonnegut issued forth Billy the Poet, the nothinghead serial rapist of this story. Is this character a satire of the contemporary image of the philandering U.S. poet, embodied by John Berryman and James Dickey? His title comes from his penchant for harassing Suicide Hostesses, his chosen prey, with salacious poems. A master of disguise, no one can identify him, imbuing him with boogeyman virility. When warned in person by the local sheriff that this vagabond is on the loose and may be headed in their direction, Nancy says, "I thought that was all anybody *did* know about Billy the Poet: that he specializes in deflowering Hostesses in Ethical Suicide Parlors" (156). But this phantom of the parlor is not the disfigured, unloved, lovelorn Phantom of the Opera, who

transforms after receiving his first kiss when his own act of abduction fails. He is a revolutionary, a fundamentalist activist whose cause rebels against the government's regulation through compulsory ethical birth-control pills. His acts of terrorism involve "deflowering" the women who oversee the voluntary suicide of citizens—thus do sex and death go hand in hand, as Billy will later say.

While the government has not inhibited reproduction, it has vanquished pleasure from the act itself: natural desire unnaturally suppressed. Disguised as a Foxy Grandpa named Mr. Howard—"A Foxy Grandpa was any old man, cute and senile, who quibbled and joked and reminisced for hours before he let a Hostess put him to sleep" (156)—Billy conflates the history of the pills' invention by a druggist from Grand Rapids and a television play set at a zoo that is broadcast every Easter. "There is nothing like an Easter morning to make a man feel clean and reborn and at one with God's intentions," he says, claiming he was there—and spiritually tainted by what they found at the monkey house: "We saw a monkey playing with his private parts! [...] Yes! And J. Edgar Nation was so upset he went straight home and he started developing a pill that would make monkeys in the springtime fit things for a Christian family to see" (196). Nothing shatters some people's at-one-ment like a masturbating monkey. In blending the holiday celebrating Christ's resurrection with repulsion at animal sexuality, which lives on in us, Billy packages the legend of the pills' creation as a new mythic narrative. American readers, as Reed discusses, would recognize actual people in the druggist's name: "The druggist's name is a portmanteau derivation from J. Edgar Hoover and Carrie Nation. Hoover, as the FBI Director of the time, was vigorous in his rigid moral judgments, despite some peculiar proclivities of his own, while Carrie Nation sought to purge the society of alcohol-induced sin" (*SFKV* 100). The spectres of Prohibition and federal surveillance combine.

Once Billy reveals himself, armed with a "snub-nosed" revolver, he bombards Nancy

with another sophomoric poem:

> *I'm five foot, two,*
> *With eyes of blue,*
> *With brown hair to my shoulders--*
> *A manly elf*
> *So full of self*
> *The ladies say he smolders.* (198)

The self-confessed narcissist takes her out the window and through the sewers of Hyannis to his gang's hideout: the Kennedy Compound, which is a summertime museum preserved under a geodesic dome.[32] Here the statues of all fourteen Kennedys to have been Presidents are frozen in a game of touch football. "Monkey House" was published six months before Robert F. Kennedy, a presidential hopeful, was assassinated; a dynasty of Kennedys in the White House, while exaggerated, is topical—Berryman wrote "Formal Elegy" for Kennedy and, in "Dream Song 105," refers to "dynasty K" (122). There is even, we discover, a Kennedy leading the World Government: "an ex-Suicide Hostess named 'Ma' Kennedy" who is denied by most as being "the real thing. People complained of her lack of style, found her vulgar" (198). This is like a Vestal Virgin becoming Emperor of Rome, but the fact she is regarded as unworthy of the Kennedy name indicates that a patriarchal attitude is thriving.

Billy's gang of at least eight, "men and women in equal numbers" (198), holding her down in the servant's bedroom of the middle frame house, while a former Suicide Hostess subdues her with an injection of truth serum. When asked how it feels to be a virgin at sixty-three, "Nancy heard her own answer through a velvet fog. She was amazed by the answer, wanted to protest that it couldn't possibly be hers. 'Pointless,' she said" (200). Nancy does not live a life devoid of sex by choice; she lives so because her culture dictates that sexual desire must be numbed away at threat of imprisonment. She has never experienced arousal, so when she later awakens and the ethical birth-control pills have worn off, "Nancy was a dream of mosquitoes and bees. Mosquitoes and bees were extinct. So were birds. But Nancy

[32] As Billy Pilgrim will be when transported to the planet Tralfamadore in *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

dreamed that millions of insects were swarming about her from the waist down. They didn't sting. They fanned her. Nancy was a nothinghead" (200). She awakens then to the birds and the bees, to the urges that motivate living beings, even the insects who are as mysteriously alive as we are.

Nancy is shuttled to the cabin of the *Marlin*, a yacht that belonged to Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, progenitor of the Kennedy clan. There, amid antique furnishings and leaded glass, she encounters Billy, dressed in the uniform of a 1960s playboy—as stylized, by *Playboy* publisher Hugh Hefner, with pipe and smoking jacket: "He was wearing purple silk pajamas with a Russian collar. They were piped in red, and writhing across Billy's silken breast was a golden dragon. It was belching fire" (200). Dragons, we recall from Campbell, are stockpilers of gold and captors of virgins, selfish monsters that have no purpose beyond hoarding life's potentials and bounties: "The problem of the psychiatrist is to disintegrate that dragon, break him up, so that you may expand to a larger field of relationships" (*POM* 149-150). Instead of being freed from state-dictated sexual oppression, Nancy is trapped by a new dragon:

> "And what am I supposed to say—that you're stunningly handsome? That I feel an overwhelming desire to throw myself into your manly arms?"
>
> "If you wanted to make me happy, that would certainly be the way to do it."
>
> "And what about *my* happiness?"
>
> The question seemed to puzzle him. "Nancy—that's what this is all about."
>
> "What if my idea of happiness doesn't coincide with yours?"
>
> "And what do you think my idea of happiness is?"
>
> "I'm not going to throw myself into your arms, and I'm not going to drink that poison, and I'm not going to budge from here unless somebody makes me," said Nancy. "So I think your idea of happiness is going to turn out to be eight people holding me down on that table, while you bravely hold a cocked pistol to my head—and do what you want. That's the way it's going to have to be, so call your friends and get it over with!"
>
> Which he did. (201)

We return to the pursuit of happiness and the fact that any two happinesses may not coincide. In this case one's happiness subjugates the other's. For all the stories we read of people who

connect beyond their individual concepts of self, we need other stories that acknowledge the violence sometimes wrought across the interpersonal chasm. Of this rape: "[Billy] didn't hurt her. He deflowered her with a clinical skill she found ghastly. When it was all over, he didn't seem cocky or proud. On the contrary, he was terribly depressed, and he said to Nancy, 'Believe me, if there'd been any other way—'" (201). The notion of rape without hurt is a false argument, denying culpability by insisting the victim must have enjoyed the violation. Using "deflower" as a floral euphemism to potpourri the event of a woman's virginity being "taken" is another such construct. If Nancy is not hurt physically, she certainly is psychologically—as narration indicates when she is revealed in the next sentence as having "a face like stone—and silent tears of humiliation" (201).

Reed raises questions:

> [The] fact of Billy's rape of Mary [actually, it's Nancy] remains hard to dismiss. His judgment that his assault is no more revolting than a typical first night for a "strait laced" bride of that and earlier times may have some validity but provides little justification. Does Billy have any more right to do this than the world government had to make Nancy numb? He assures her that many wives endured such a first night but came to enjoy satisfying sex. But how many were inhibited in their marital sex forever by such initiations? And what of perhaps taking men, making them "nothingheads" and teaching them something of tenderness, rather than teaching women to endure their clumsiness? Even in comedy, there may be a little too much to laugh off here. (*SFKV* 102)

This story's place in the pages of *Playboy* plays a role in how we read it and how it was read. Coleman has noted the dichotomy between the magazine's ethos and a Chuck Palahniuk story "where eroticism yields to violent self-abasement and dangerous abuse": "The publication of 'Guts' in *Playboy* is particularly interesting [...] because of the way that the story interrogates ideas of the sexualised body and embodiment" ("Hauntedness" 8). In a similar way, after one has flipped through the January 1968 issue and seen the nude photographs, reading "Monkey House," in which a woman reacts with disgust to a man's sexuality being forced upon and within her, might dampen the sense of sophistication and

carefree sexuality editors tried to assemble; men did not buy *Playboy* for the opportunity of being told they were revolting creatures in the eyes of women. At one level, this story, with its playboy poet, is satirizing the magazine it has been published in, subverting the very nature of *Playboy* by depicting a character wearing its publisher's iconic uniform as a rapist. Nancy, hiding her face under a war-surplus blanket—the sort Vonnegut was surely wrapped in when repatriated at Le Havre—chastises Billy's masculinity when he chokes on post-coital cigar smoke. Billy's tactic, faced with her pain, is more manipulative rhetoric: "They've all been like you." When she asks why the others haven't killed him, he tells her, "They're *grateful*" (201).

Billy emphasizes his aided-and-abetted superiority over her by saying she will eventually be grateful, too, because it was no worse than what brides typically experienced on their wedding night one hundred years earlier. In a disturbing twist, he reveals that his silk dragon pajamas are the same his great-great-grandfather wore on his wedding night: "According to his diary, his bride cried all that night, and threw up twice. But, with the passage of time, she became a sexual enthusiast" (201). Billy wears the uniform of his own ancestral patriarchy. His is an inherited abusive reign that he sheepishly attempts to downplay with self-depreciatory magniloquence: "If you dare to think about it now, you'll realize that you're angry because I'm such a bad lover, and a funny-looking shrimp besides. And what you can't help dreaming about from now on is a really suitable mate for a Juno like yourself" (201). Billy reveals himself to be truly pathetic.

But something upsetting happens, something I am struggling with in this analysis: Nancy begins to accept his narrative. "She understood the tale. It frightened her to understand so easily that, from gruesome beginnings, sexual enthusiasm could grow and grow" (201). The similarities between a painful or even humiliating wedding night loss of virginity and one where the woman is held down and raped with a gun to her head are incongruous. Sexual

initiation may very well hurt in any number of ways, and in time this eventually passes on to enjoyment for most people. But even with a just-victimized Nancy being "frightened" by the realization, I do not see Vonnegut earning this moment. One thinks of the controversy over the rape in Sam Peckinpah's film *Straw Dogs* (1971), in which Amy may seem to take pleasure as she is attacked, a depiction Melanie Williams claims "purposely catered to entrenched appetites for desired victim behavior and reinforces rape myths" (71).

Is this a case of chauvinistic storytelling? Might a person who has just been raped "with a clinical skill" anticipate a fulfilling sexual appetite in the future? One of David Foster Wallace's briefly interviewed hideous men asks, "Alls I'm saying is who are we to say getting incested or abused or violated or whatever or any of those things can't also have their positive aspects for a human being in the long run. Not that it necessarily does all the time, but who are we to say it *never* does, in a knee-jerk way?" (99). Sexuality refuses universal manifestation. It is fired and tempered by fantasies, experiences, cultures, relations, hormones, organs: a constellation of powers we are lived by that we pretend to understand. The American sexual climate in the late 1960s was undergoing significant changes. Perhaps, as with Holmes's essay, what we see here is the difficulty WWII generation men had in trying to figure out where shifting attitudes relating to a phenomenon as old as life itself led. Kathy L. Phillips, critiquing reductive binary understandings projected upon mid-twentieth-century American sexuality, argues "The false notion of women as the 'passive' partner reinforces an odd, recurrent myth that women do not really have any sexuality":

> [A] chorus of misinformed voices setting up false expectations can instill self-doubt and even prevent self-discovery. Generations of wives must have judged themselves inadequate if they (like most women) did not respond to intercourse alone, and considerate husbands must have wondered why "they" could not satisfy their wives. Basic female anatomy and physiology, which do let women desire, initiate, and experience pleasure as actively as any man, are still apparently not widely understood. (179)

Billy's tale of his great-great-grandmother, which causes Nancy to "understand so easily" the mystery of her own sexuality, falls short of hierophany. Vonnegut's conceit in reaching for her revelation distends beyond acceptance, whereas those hierophanies experienced, for instance, in stories by Flannery O'Connor, who he called "the greatest American short story writer of my generation" (*BSB* 10), transcend.[33] There seems to be a point pushing through the story: The Pill has not freed women at all.

Billy the Poet rounds out his spiel like a Bond villain, railing against the agreeably oppressive government and its sexualized Suicide Hostesses: "they have been absolutely disgusted and terrified by the natural sexuality of common men and women. [...] The only sexual beauty that an ordinary human being can see today is in the woman who will kill him. Sex is death. There's a short and nasty equation for you: 'Sex is death, Q.E.D.'" (201). He describes himself in savior terms and, explaining, "I'd like to read this poem to you, to have you know I've loved you" (201), gives her, against her wishes, the first four lines of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "How Do I Love Thee?" It is the same poem his grandfather read to his wife at dawn after their wedding night. Before leaving her, he also gives Nancy a bottle of birth control pills to be taken once a month that will preserve all sexual desires and urges without numbing; its label, the story's ending detail, reads "WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE" (201).

Gregory D. Sumner, who misses the connections to "2BR02B" and *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* in his long essay on the writing of "Monkey House," finds an "ultimately redemptive message" in the story, claiming "it alerts us to the costs that come with suppressing our animal nature, and it urges us to accept and love ourselves as we are, to celebrate our capacity for pleasure and joy" (342). But the pill bottle does not read "WELCOME TO THE AUSTRALOPITHECINE SAVANNAH" or "WELCOME TO THE OLIGOCENE TREES"

[33] See "Revelation," "Greenleaf," "Everything That Rises Must Converge," "The Artificial Nigger," "A Temple of the Holy Ghost."

or "WELCOME TO THE TROGLODYTE CAVE"—whatever image we might seize in our evolutionary understanding of human beings' primal state. It reads "WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE." These Monkey House pills do not restore natural sexuality. What they do is take people back to the monkey house, an enclosure within a zoo, a controlled environment, some would say a prison for animals.[34] Billy's libertinism is not a path to liberty. We do not know Nancy's next move, but clearly Billy has attempted to replace the existing system with the deeply flawed antique system of his forefathers. The inhumanity of compulsory birth-control pills is attacked not by a luminous liberator, but a pathetic fellow who would happily reinstate outworn patriarchal power. The return to the monkey house is a grim prognosis for humans, a damnation to our inherited, unpredictable, masturbatory, manipulative, power-brokering, and at times violent sexual urges as they play out in caged conditions. It also renders null and void Holmes's assumption that The Pill had brought an end to the "man's world"—Americans, it dreams, will suffer in pursuing happiness under monolithic reductions of sexuality for generations to come.

3.5 Independence Myths

> Jesus, Knox—isn't this a paltry generation? Depression, wars, atomic weapons, and the old buggers living forever, building bigger and bigger institutes for the painless gelding of the young.
>
> Kurt Vonnegut, letter to editor Knox Burger, 25 Oct. 1955 (*Letters* 63)

In 1972, Harlan Ellison published a new Vonnegut short story in *Again, Dangerous Visions*. Titled "The Big Space Fuck," Ellison introduces it with the understanding that Vonnegut might be ending his run as an artist of the form, saying, "to think that even a story as hilarious and incisive and deadly as this one is to be his last, is a sad-making thing" (229). It proved to

[34] Which, of course, is where Billy Pilgrim ends up, en-zooed on planet Tralfamadore, in *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

be the last he wrote. If the stories we have unpacked unfurl the fragility of the egalitarian trinity of American independence, this one, brief as it is, sallies forth as if its plot wants to fall apart. Set in 1979, a future much nearer than most of the others Vonnegut created in his short fiction, two cultural shifts have taken place: twenty-one year olds can sue their parents for the way they were raised, and the nation has thrown itself into a space program initiative to shoot a rocket carrying 800 pounds of the freeze-dried "jizzum" of intelligent, athletic, or artistic Americans toward the Andromeda Galaxy. This latter event is called the Big Space Fuck. When the rocket, named the *Arthur C. Clarke*, passes through one of Andromeda's chronosynclastic infundibulae, or time warps, the ship will be multiplied a trillionfold, appearing everywhere in space and time, increasing chances that the seed will encounter fecundity and multiply. Never mind, of course, that freeze-dried sperm do not spring to life like Sea Monkeys, that no eggs are sent along, that the entire phallic act of shooting a rocket full of semen into space constitutes jingoistic onanism—Americans are behind this patriarchal idiocy with great enthusiasm.

As in "Bergeron," we meet a married couple watching television. As in "Monkey House," the local sheriff comes to the door with bad news. Reed has noted numerous intertextual links to Vonnegut's other fiction, mostly in recurring character names, and the effect, for one who consumes his body of work, is that of a series of shout-outs. He even borrows Flem Snopes from Faulkner, casting him as a Mississippi Senator and Chairman of the Senate Space Committee who wears a codpiece emblazoned with the Confederate flag. The bad news Dwayne and Grace Hoobler receive from the County Sheriff is that their daughter is suing them for her upbringing in a bid to get herself out of jail for leading a shoplifting ring. As the television broadcasts coverage of the Big Space Fuck launch, the Sheriff and the Hooblers are overcome with grief.

Where does Vonnegut take it from here? Visionary puppeteer Jim Henson had a rule for ending a skit that seems to be going nowhere: "It all ends in one of two ways: either someone gets eaten or something blows up." Early in the story, thirty-eight foot long "man-eating lampreys," as innocuously placed as Chekhov's rifle on the wall, are said to live nearby in the sewage of "what used to be Lake Erie" (230). Here is what happens: "[The Sheriff] left sobbing, and stumbled right into the mouth of a lamprey. The lamprey ate him immediately, but not before he screamed. Dwayne and Grace Hoobler rushed outside to see what the screaming was about, and the lamprey ate them, too" (234). As in "Big Trip," the television broadcasts to an empty room. The story is over before we know it. Each story in Ellison's collection bears an afterword written by its own author. Laconically cheeky, we might take Vonnegut's to be the epitaph to his entire career in writing short stories, merely repeating, as it does, the refrain following every instance of death in *Slaughterhouse-Five*: "And so it goes" (234).


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Chapter 4

DYNAMIC DOMESTICITIES

Bradbury Splits the Nuclear Family

4.1 ALL IN THE FAMILIES

> If you have a family to bring up, you're concerned for the family. These are all very important concerns, but they have to do with physical conditions, mostly. But how are you going to communicate spiritual consciousness to the children if you don't have it yourself? How do you get that? What the myths are for is to bring us into a level of consciousness that is spiritual.
>
> Joseph Campbell
> (*POM* 14)

After the Great Depression, Ray Bradbury was rejected for military service in WWII (poor eyesight) and soon found himself happily married with children, a professional writer riding the current of postwar prosperity, participating in the Baby Boom proliferation of the mythologically labeled nuclear family. We ought not to think of a monolithic American Family—for such a conception reduces an archetype, which exists in valence, to a dogma—but rather of American families. The following stories analyzed depict white middle class American families in ways that defy a reductive understanding of them as representative of all white middle class American families. The cookie cutter shape of the patriarchal narrative will not render these characters flat on Betty Crocker's baking tray. Bradbury's gift is humanizing and individualizing characters the statisticians happily lump together demographically. Our role is in exploring how these families relate to, represent, buck, and toe our inherited and all-too-often easy conceptions of mainstream American families between WWII and the Kennedy assassination. Bradbury wrote endlessly of families, they

appear in nearly everything he produced, but space and focus call for a shrewd selection of his stories depicting families, from origin to dissolution.

4.2 Father Death

> Hey Father Death, I'm flying home
> Hey poor man, you're all alone
> Hey old daddy, I know where I'm going
>
> Allen Ginsberg
> "Father Death Blues" (139)

Heinrich Zimmer maintains, "Birth and death and rebirth in unending cycle is the permanent character of the process of life" (85), and that we find in "The Scythe," first published in *Weird Tales* (July 1943). In analyzing Bradbury's treatment of American families in short fiction, this one's setting historically bridges the Great Depression and WWII. Though he went on to revise it a number of times,[35] our focus rests on its initial publication. Fred Humiston's title page illustration draws from Grim Reaper imagery dating at least to the fifteenth century and recognizable through the West: Death personified carrying a scythe with which it harvests life. In Humiston's drawing, an ordinary man, looking a lot like Al Capp's comic strip hillbilly Li'l Abner, wields the scythe, spooked by outreaching, hooded wraiths. These spectres do not appear in the tale, but the disembodied head sitting atop the handle is likely the scythe's previous user, the farmer found dead in his house at the beginning of the story. A skull on already-mown ground shows what is about to happen to six figures in the wheat. The field stretches on with dark hills and dark sky above, a huge moon or sun either rising or setting—an ambiguous and disorienting detail thanks to the simplicity of the art. The drawing, the title, the hook—"*Can you oppose the forces that see that people die just when*

[35] As collated meticulously by Eller and Touponce in *The Collected Stories of Ray Bradbury: A Critical Edition, Vol. I: 1938-1943.*

they are supposed to die—not too soon, not too late?" (46)—confront the reader upfront with death.



[Fig. xii: Title page of "The Scythe" with Fred Humiston's illustration (46)]

"When Bradbury had trouble starting his idea for this story," write Eller and Touponce, "the more experienced [Leigh] Brackett wrote the first five or six hundred words" (*Ray Bradbury: The Life of Fiction* 73). Brackett, who went from pulp writing to sharing

screenwriting credit with William Faulkner and Jules Furthman for *The Big Sleep* (1946), was Bradbury's most significant mentor, criticizing his juvenilia until his work sold. Her contribution to this story, essentially beginning it for him, is acknowledged. In this version, the year is 1939, the season is spring, and the Kansas farmer traveling west with his family is Tom Joerg. Tom as a diminutive of Thomas, the doubting apostle, is also the Greek form of an Aramaic name meaning "twin," fitting for a man who inherits a role twinning him to the farmer he finds dead in his farmhouse. Tom Joerg evokes Tom Joad, Steinbeck's protagonist in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), who travels west to California with his family in search of a better life; this decision was Brackett's and may explain why in future versions, from the collection *Dark Carnival* (1947) onward, Bradbury names him Drew Erickson, wanting to make him his own without too obvious a connection to Joad. Joerg also looks to be an Americanized Jörg, a German form of George, meaning "farmer" or "earthworker" (*BTN*). Aptly named, we meet the "twin farmer" just as the family car runs out of gas and into the realm—or field—of the metaphysical wheat field: "Quite suddenly there was no more road. It ran down the valley like any other road, between slopes of barren stony ground and live oak trees, and then past a broad field of wheat standing alone in the wilderness. It came up beside the small white house that belonged to the wheat field and then just faded out, as though there was no more use for it" (46-47).

The road, the path, the way that has led this family into the valley is an agent of inevitability, drawing them into the undefined and expansive frontier. A mention of the hoped-for destination of California and mountains would put this location somewhere from Colorado to Nevada, though a precise place is never given because this valley, with its possessive wheat field (the house "belonged" to it), is the supernatural Land of No Return. It exists beyond the physical frontier so prominent in American consciousness, where it is believed that strength, courage, and ingenuity can conquer all. This is the mortal frontier,

feared by most of us because all who live will enter it and be conquered by death. A most ideologically un-American place: the fact that this family follows a road that could only take them to the Valley of Death, suggesting predestination, is disquieting to American belief in Opportunity. Perhaps this is because one of the only universals is the guarantee that everybody dies.

In the house, Joerg finds an old man dead in a bed, wearing a suit for the grave: "A scythe leaned against the wall beside the bed. Between the old man's hands there was a blade of wheat, still fresh. A ripe blade, golden and heavy in the tassel" (47). A note on the pillow introduces the corpse as John Buhr, bequeathing the farm "*with all pertaining to it, to the man who is to come. Whatever his name or origin shall be, it will not matter. The farm is his, and the wheat; the scythe, and the task ordained thereto. Let him take them, freely, and without question—and remember that I, John Buhr, am only the giver, not the ordainer. To which I set my hand and seal this third day of April, 1939*" (47-48). He signs it with a postscript of "*Kyrie eleison*!" (48), Ancient Greek for "Lord have mercy," an acclamation kept alive in Christian worship even though the phrase antedates it: "It was used in various forms of pagan worship including the imperial cult in which the emperor was called *kyrios* (lord)" ("Definitions"). Why April third in 1939? On that day Adolf Hitler ordered his military to prepare for Fall Weiss, the strategic plan to invade Poland, which later figures in the story's climax.

Joerg takes to the scythe and the mysterious wheat field due to Depression-Era American stresses. As a farmer fleeing the droughted Midwest for hope of work on the west coast, a move Bradbury's own family made in the thirties, Joerg is urged by his wife to work the field even though he senses it may be too good to be true. His initial doubts, which become enduring anxieties, are a credit to his intuition: "How it was too big for one man to tend, and yet one man had tended it. How it ripened only in separate clusters, each set off far

from others. And, most important how when he cut the wheat it rotted within a few hours, and the next day dug in and come up with roots with green sprouts, born again" (48). But Joerg works on and the verb we anticipate arises: "reaping" (48). The scythe itself "[gleaming] like a half moon" is "scratched" with words, expanding its numinousness: "*Who wields me—wields the world*" (48).

The tool is a step back for Joerg, who like the half moon is halfway through life, who, nearly halfway through the twentieth century, arrives in an already old automobile. In the twenties and thirties, mechanized wheat farming using binders and combines was practiced; as far back as the mid-nineteenth century, the scythe and cradle were replaced with a horse-drawn machine tantalizingly called a grain reaper. To take so readily to a long outmoded method of harvest speaks to both Joerg's desperation to feed his family and the power this valley has of stripping all notions of advancement from a human being, reorienting him to the primordial conditions of life and death. Zimmer, in his analysis of the fourteenth-century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, identifies the Green Knight as personified death and comments upon his weapon of choice, an archaic axe: "Death, caring absolutely nothing about progress and the developments of human invention, remains unalterable, and, despite everything man can do to change him, sticks to his tradition" (85). This is the motif at work in the inherited scythe.

The responsibility Joerg now wields is that of ending human lives around the world through the abstraction of cutting wheat, unwittingly becoming the Grim Reaper. He begins hearing pleading voices in the grain, and the sun, when he neglects the threshing, burns inside his head. We might consider this solar detail in relation to our next chapter's exploration of wholeness in Bradbury's short stories. The totality of the sun hounds him from within to fulfill his task of maintaining the continuing natural cycle of death on a plane transcending binary notions. Dying has been heaped with any number of death-vanquishing traditions and

beliefs throughout history, from spiritual immortality to reincarnation to simple acceptance. But no matter one's grounding, death is not a moralist. Death is and was and will be. Joerg's dilemma then is that of the individual's conscience in relation to his inadvertent role in this unending cycle. The consequences of his actions strike with horror when he commits matricide, remaining ignorant until he has done it: "Oh, God, Molly, I just killed my mother! [...] I did it by cutting down the stalk of wheat that was her! I killed her. I felt her dying" (50). His devout wife, Molly, will not let them leave the farm: "We're stayin' on here. Where we're sure of eatin' and sleepin', where we're sure of livin' decent and livin' long. Look here, Tom, I'm not raisin' my children like skin and bones again!" (50). And so life joins hands with death.

With no empirical way of historicizing the field, Joerg turns to his own imagination: "The valley seemed ancient, mummified, secretive, dried and bent and powerful. When the Indians danced on the prairie it had been here. The same sky, the same wind, the same wheat. And before the Indians? Some Cro-Magnon, gnarled and shag-haired, wielding a crude wooden scythe, perhaps, prowling down through the living wheat. . . ." (51).[36] Joerg is limited by his own frame of reference, which, if held to literal scrutiny, fails to provide an acceptable explanation of the field's history. In taking the field as an enduring geographical feature of the American West, he passes the baton of its tending back to the Indians, that generic amalgamating construct pinned over the diversity of peoples indigenous to North America. He takes it one step further though, bestowing the agricultural tradition on Cro-Magnon, a distinctly European prehistoric modern human, today believed to have first existed some 43,000 years ago. Current scientific data about human presence in the Americas place people there around 14,000 years ago. Bradbury and, more importantly, his character Joerg were not privy to the facts as assembled today—and, it might be noted, many people

[36] In CHAPTER 5.5, we examine "Golden Apples of the Sun," in which a space rocket captain, on the edge of the sun, also imagines a primordial human first wielding fire. Joerg and the captain both experience a need to fill in an ancestral back story that can only be speculated.

currently reject scientific interpretations in preference of any number of understandings of human prehistory and origins.[37]

However, this field is mythic, a field of supernormal experience, which a literal, historicizing interpretation cannot accept. At the same time, the impulse behind the archetypal images Joerg's imagination brings forth is correct: the ceaselessness of living and dying and rebirth is ancestral to all living things. Reframed, his notions stretch back in an attempt to narrativize the dawning of our awareness of personal implication in the perpetual cycle. A child of patriarchy, he imagines it being a "man's job"; a westward-headed American a generation or two on from the Indian Wars, he imagines Death's responsibility as having passed to his culture from the romanticized and mistakenly vanished Indians.

Immortality presents itself as a possibility when Joerg realizes he could spare the stalks that are him and his family, if only he could find them. Find them, he does:

> Trembling, he knelt down and looked at the three strands of life. The energy of them struck at him.
>
> It wasn't fair. So soon after he had been forced to kill his mother. And now, on the heels of it all, after ages of unfair starvation and sweating and praying, this was his reward.
>
> He had to kill Molly and young Tom and his sister.
>
> He didn't. He grabbed the scythe and ran back to the house. (51)

Over a blanched-white supper of pork, white bread, and cool milk, Molly urges Joerg to consult with the Agricultural Bureau about entirely plowing the field. When he asks if she believes him about the scythe's power, she shuts him down: "'No, Tom, I don't. And please don't talk about it'" (52). Made to feel more alone in his duty, he harvests after dinner, cutting down six of his "old, loved friends" (52). Ashamed, he locks the scythe in the cellar but later finds himself compelled beyond reason to reap: "In the middle of the night he found himself walking in the field, with the scythe in his hands. Walking like an automaton, crazy with fear, drugged with terror, but walking and walking. He didn't remember unlocking the

[37] I am not thinking only of Creationists. For a Sioux exploration of human origins rejecting Darwinism *and* Judeo-Christian Creationism, see Vine Deloria Jr.'s *Evolution, Creationism, and Other Modern Myths: A Critical Inquiry* (2002).

cellar door, getting the scythe, but here he was awake in the moonlight, walking in the grain" (52-53).

Joerg is consumed by the job but an explosion at the house interrupts his work. Running back he finds it ablaze, his wife and children inside. When the flames settle, Molly and the kids sleep in the smoldering ashes of their beds, their flesh "perfectly intact" (53). Or so it seems at first. All three sleep in a coma: "She wasn't dead. She wasn't alive" (54). Joerg discerns this supernatural sleep, this succumbing to unconscious forces nullifying their lives while preserving the crude matter of their bodies, has occurred because of his refusal to cut their wheat stalks: "They *should* have died in the fire. That's the way Fate wrote it. But since he had not reaped their grain, nothing could hurt them. A house had flamed and crumpled and still they lived. But there was nothing for them to do. They were caught halfway, not dead, not alive. Simply—waiting" (54). Driven by an awful mercy, Joerg goes to the field and cuts his family down. We see this motif, of death violently befalling an American family, in works published later in this same era: Steinbeck's *East of Eden* (1952) has Cathy Ames killing her parents in a house fire, O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find" (1953) shows a family gunned down on their drive to Florida, *The Bad Seed* (1954) by William March presents Christine, who tries to poison Rhoda, her murdering daughter, before shooting herself dead. Familicide is the antithesis of family values, upsetting the narrative of family as a stabilizing unit of civilization. And yet headlines then and now tell us so often that people are often murdered by family members.

Thereafter Joerg is consumed by the office he holds, slaying the wheat "with a fierce unrelenting insanity of vengeance against Fate in every muscle" (54):

> The blade swung up in the rising sun and came down in the sun, singing and whistling.
> Hitler marched into Austria.
> The blade swung insanely.
> Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia.
> The blade sang crimson wet.

> Poland fell.
> The grain leaped up, green, falling left and right.
> Bombs hurtled down, shattering London, shattering Moscow.
> And the blade went on rising, crashing, scarring with the hot fury of a man who has fought and lost his loved ones and does not know or care what he does to the world. (55)

His tragic harvest murders the victims of Hitler's conquest. But his scything is not the cause of geopolitical catastrophe any more than his earlier refusal to scythe was the cause of the fire that should have killed his family; Joerg merely acts to maintain the cosmic system of death determined by Fate. By this reckoning, individual lives are scheduled to die thanks to an organic algorithm calculated beyond human understanding, bucking the concept of free will in favor of predestination. Hillman writes of a sense of fate in *The Soul's Code* (1996), in which he puts forth the acorn theory, "which holds that each person bears a uniqueness that asks to be lived and that is already present before it can be lived" (6). Favoring fate over fatalism, Hillman argues that "fate causes only events that are unusual, that oddly don't fit in. Not each and every thing is laid out in a superior divine plan. That sort of comprehensive explanation is fatal*ism*, which makes for paranoia, occultist Ouija board prognostics, and passive-aggressive behavior combining meek submission to fate with bitter anger against it" (193). Fate in "The Scythe" is fatalism and both Joerg and the story itself succumb to it.

Depth psychology proposes that the individual experiences the life of the collective within. If we approach the story in this way, "The Scythe" renders itself as a fever dream of American anxieties born out of the U.S.A.'s rise as an intervening power on the world stage. Like Joerg, who resists the job he has wandered into, the nation avoided military involvement in WWII for three years. Read in this light, responsibility for death at large in the world is taken up by American hands. Published in the middle of the war, a time of intense nationalism, doubting burden of responsibility was anathema. Fatalism is a surrendering to this burden, the assumption being that due to warring events beyond American borders the U.S.A. had no choice but to unleash itself. Hillman explains this in an American context:

"Fatalism is the seductive other side to the heroic ego, which shoulders so much in a do-it-yourself, winner-take-all civilization. The bigger the load, the more you want to put it down or pass it off to a larger, stronger carrier, like Fate" (*SC* 192).

The story ends not on a decisive note but a slow fade, shifting to present tense, explaining that Joerg continues to reap the unripe wheat, not even pausing to give directions to California-bound motorists, no end to his fury in sight. In 1943 no one could guess how much longer the war would last but most Americans accepted the idea that it had to continue until it was done. That attitude is present in "The Scythe," as is the anxiety that in surprising the world by becoming a superpower, the U.S.A. would inevitably cause unseen and far-reaching death the world over. The price of America's full scale international military intervention is blood on the hands of those family men astute enough to conceive of ramification—while those who can't, the jalopy drivers pulling over to ask for directions, continued to head west.

4.3 Be My Baby

> Mothers and children may worship at very different altars and serve very different gods, even if they are placed all day long in the same family. No matter how close physically, they may have immensely different fates.
>
> James Hillman (*SC* 72)

"A third element has come in. Before, it was just you and me. We protected each other, and now we protect the baby, but get no protection from it. Do you understand?" (69). So confides new mother Alice Leiber to her husband David in "The Small Assassin," one of Bradbury's most anthologized stories. Eller contextualizes the tale, which first appeared in pulp digest *Dime Mystery* (Nov. 1946): "'The Small Assassin' emerged from Bradbury's abiding conviction that he retains neonatal memories, including recollections of the birth

trauma itself. His extrapolation was pure fantasy, but horrifyingly simple: can this trauma, as psychologists such as Melanie Klein have argued, manifest as infant hatred toward the parents? And is such a child capable of using the nursery environment to kill?" (*CSRB* 463). Though Bradbury and his wife would become parents to four daughters, this story was published the year before they wedded and three years before the birth of their first child. It was not written under the duress of early parenthood, though that situation's stresses are the story's basis. And while Bradbury remembered his birth, or at least claimed to, this story is situated from the parents' and Dr. Jeffers's points of view, not the baby's.

Infants transform people into parents and the psychological shift required for their care is profound. The arrival of a child is the creation of family, an archetypal unit of human relations that has a vast array of configurations determined by innumerable factors in America, let alone the history of the world. The mid-century notion of the nuclear family—of a mother and a father and two and a half children—is a cliché we collectively project onto postwar American culture. Families (and cultures) of many kinds existed then, as they do today, as they always have. Yet certain master narratives, such as that of the unconditionally loving mother, persist. As "The Small Assassin" begins, Alice is giving birth in the care of doctors and nurses but she is convinced she is being murdered. Her amorphous dread was foreshadowed the previous month by "things as deep as sea tides in her" (66), what depth psychology recognizes as fluctuations in the unconscious. When her child is born, a boy, she wants nothing to do with him because she identifies him as the entity that wants to kill her. The same year this story appeared, Dr. Benjamin Spock's bestseller *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* was published and sold over 500,000 copies. Its opening sentences prove a bit dire for Alice Leiber's situation: "Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do" (1).

A mother's inability to connect with her infant was and remains taboo, high treason

against the patriarchal American understanding of motherhood. Today there is some recognition of postpartum depression in the mainstream, but Bradbury's Dr. Jeffers expresses a sense of it himself, taking David aside and telling the new father, "It's been a hard thing for her. The whole thing. She'll need a lot of love in this next year" (68). His prescription for tenderness is accompanied with instructions that the trio come back if "things don't get along" (68). Calling it a "scientific fiction," psychologist Diane E. Eyer criticizes the idea of mother-infant bonding as a cultural construct:

> Bonding is, in fact, as much an extension of ideology as it is a scientific discovery. More specifically, it is part of an ideology in which mothers are seen as the prime architects of their children's lives and are blamed for whatever problems befall them, not only in childhood but throughout their adult lives. [...] I would like to urge the impossible—that we discard the word [bonding] entirely [... which] would force us to notice that children are not merely putty in our hands. They are born with vastly different personalities and capabilities. (2, 199)

Hillman draws comparison between her assertion and his own regarding what he calls "parental fallacy," which reductively holds that "the primary instrument of our fate is the behavior of your mother and father" (*SC* 63): "The parental fallacy does not help anyone grow down. It pulls us away from the acorn and back to Mom and Dad, who may already be dead and gone though we remain stuck with their effects. I am then a mere effect myself, a result of their causes" (*SC* 77). Such a narrative denies the myriad influences, forces, accidents, serendipities, fates, myths, and incalculable factors beyond parental control that affect how our individual lives unfold in time and stand at any given moment. Alice's fearful intuition, butting heads with David's rationalism and expectations that she exhibit innate attentiveness to the baby, honors the infant's unknowable potential. She tells him, "a baby is so new, so amoral, so free of conscience" (69). He is undeniably their own offspring, but he is also, already, a distinct individual. In Hillman's terms, he possesses his own acorn and there is no telling how his calling will coalesce.



THE SMALL ASSASSIN

By RAY BRADBURY

CHAPTER ONE

The Third Element

JUST when the idea occurred to her that she was being murdered she could not tell. There had been little subtle signs, little suspicions for the past month; things as deep as sea tides in her, like looking at a perfectly calm stretch of cerulean water and liking it and wanting to bathe in it, and finding, just as the tide takes your body into it, that monsters dwell just under the surface, things unseen, bloated, many-armed, sharp-finned, malignant and inescapable.

A room floated around her in an effluvium of hysteria. Sharp instruments hovered and there were voices and people in severe sterile white masks.

My name, she thought. My name, what is it?

Alice Leiber. It came to her. David Leiber's wife. But it gave her no comfort. She was alone with these silent whispering white people and there was great pain and nausea and death-fear in her.

I am being murdered before their eyes. These doctors, these nurses don't realize what hidden thing has happened to me. David doesn't know. Nobody knows except me and—

Here is a story, so unusual and yet so compelling in its strange power, that, like it or not, we guarantee that you will experience the arctic chilling tingle along the spine which comes only once in a red moon, when reading a classic of eerie, sinister mystery fiction. . . . WARNING: If you suffer from a weak heart—don't read this story!

"I'm going to have him christened next Sunday. Know what name I'm giving him? I'm going to call him—Lucifer!"

66

[Fig. xiii: Uncredited illustrated spread for "The Small Assassin" (66-67)]

The illustrated spread by an uncredited artist shows in comic book pen and ink two images. The panel over the title and bleeding onto the next page shows Alice dead at the base of the stairs, the patchwork doll placed so she would slip and fall. This depicts the scene David returns to at the end of CHAPTER TWO, the editor at *Dime Mystery* having split the tale into three chapters. The other drawing shows David and Alice cowering under a towering baby, big as the Incredible Hulk.[38] He wears a diaper like a sumo wrestler's *mawashi* and capes a blanket over one shoulder, his stance imperious. Something in the lower right corner, a lampshade or scribbled-over coloring book—hard to tell what—bears a crude drawing of Disney's iconic hothead, Donald Duck, and David seems about to fall backward on a rubber ducky. At no point in Bradbury's story does the baby grow like Gargantua; this is artistic license, a stylization of the parents' despair under their baby's sinister nature. *L'enfant*

[38] Marvel's Incredible Hulk did not appear until May 1962.

terrible is not only unconventional and iconoclastic; in this instance he actually is terrible, successfully outwitting and murdering his parents.

After failing to kill David with the patchwork doll[39] on the stairs, the baby succeeds in dropping the mother down them with the same trap. Later, when David expresses his desire to kill the baby, finally believing his wife's worries, Dr. Jeffers sedates him with sleeping pills. The baby presumably takes his father's incapacitation as an opportunity and releases a gas jet at floor level, poisoning him dead as he sleeps. The baby also, we might say, murdered their married-life home of two by being born to begin with. In any case, the story ends with Dr. Jeffers discovering David's corpse and becoming convinced of the infant's parricidal feats. In a sensational and desperate act, the doctor announces, "I had to operate to bring you into this world. Now I guess I can operate to take you out of it. . ." (75). He draws the baby's attention with something shiny; the final paragraph is a grim two-word sentence: "A scalpel" (75).

It is a stock pulp ending, leaving the reader hanging with his or her own uncomfortable freedom to imagine what happens next. Like the adult characters, we have been restricted to the realm of adult consciousness in this story, which further divides us from the baby's inner life. At no point are we privileged with seeing the baby creeping around, setting up the murders. We are left to wonder. The condition of wondering what goes on inside others ought to be familiar to us in our encounters with anybody and everybody, though we often take people's presented selves for granted. But there is something special about babies that makes us want to know who they are within their small bodies, as new parents and people entrusted with their care will attest.

Between the deaths of the mother and father, David and Dr. Jeffers enter into a brief Socratic dialogue, speculating upon the nature of babies and their effects on parents.

[39] The temptation to link this doll/instrument of murder to L. Frank Baum's Patchwork Girl of his Oz books may yield greater significance for another scholar. Baum was included in Bradbury's personal pantheon of literary influences. If this is intertextual, I struggle to make the connection.

Bradbury runs free, unspooling raw questions, inquiries anathema to standards of the mainstream that could never be comfortably answered. David's suspicions of the baby he wants to name Lucifer take him to the unknowable, though once experienced and since forgotten, recesses of infant consciousness:

> "How many [mothers] have suckled strange little improbabilities who cause death in one way or another? Strange, red little creatures with brains that function in a scarlet darkness we can't even guess at. Elemental little brains, aswarm with racial memory and hatred and raw cruelty, with no more thought than self-preservation. [...] I ask you, doctor, what is there in the world more selfish than a baby? Nothing!" (74)

When Jeffers challenges him to name the baby's motive, a cornerstone of the mystery genre—this story, remember, is published in *Dime Mystery*—David falls back on notions of infant separation anxiety:

> "What is more at peace, more dreamfully happy, content, at ease, at rest, fed, comforted, unbothered than an unborn child? Nothing. It floats in a sleepy dark effluvium of timeless wonder and warm nourishment and silence. All is an enclosed dream. Then, suddenly, it is asked to give up its berth, is forced to vacate, propelled out into a noisy, uncaring, selfish, swift and merciless world where it is asked to shift for itself, to hunt, to feed from the hunting, to seek after a vanishing love that once was its unquestioned right, to meet confusion instead of inner silence and conservative slumber! And the newborn resents it! Resents it with all the soft, small fibres of its miniature body." (74)

David supposes that the family is a self-contained unit sitting apart from the greater world, not amid it. Existence is reduced to relationships between three individuals bound by reproduction without space for outside influences. Though thinking of himself as bucking "a thousand years of accepted medical belief" (74), David manages to project a heavy load of gendered parenting ideology onto the baby. Hillman cites this tendency as an archetype gone wrong:

> [The] myth of the mother as the dominant in everyone's life remains constant. For behind each birth-giver and care-provider sits the universal Great Mother, upholding the universe of that belief system I am calling the parental fallacy, which keeps us bonded to her. She appears shaped by the style of your personal mother, and she is as bad as she is good. Smothering, nourishing, punishing, devouring, ever-giving, obsessive, hysterical, morose, loyal,

> easygoing—whatever her character, she too has a daimon, but her fate is not yours. (*SC* 68)

If the baby in this story is a murderer, he is also a victim of the assumptions postwar American parents made—and continue to make—about babies' fears, comforts, loyalties, grudges, and resentments. Hillman also mentions that psychologist Mary Watkins has observed how the twentieth-century psychological theorists who stressed "the mother-child relation as *the* determinant of life ever after worked out their ideas while bombs were falling and buildings burning in England, or just before and just after World War II" (*SC* 79).[40] That is, they essentialized the mother-infant bond at the expense of acknowledging the developmental effects of the geopolitical turmoil surrounding them. "The Small Assassin" defies the mainstream narrative of an innate loving connection between every mother and baby. It takes us to the uncomfortable reality that all relationships are complex and babies, with all of their unknowable capacities, can arrive accompanied by profound fears.

Bradbury offers another inflection of fear in "The Shape of Things," which would be titled "Tomorrow's Child" after its initial publication in *Thrilling Wonder Stories* (Feb. 1948). First drafted in 1943, again we have a story expressing anxieties surrounding childbirth and infant care written by a man in the years preceding his induction into fatherhood. Perhaps it is inappropriate to make such a point; returning to parental fallacy, parenting belongs not only to two human beings who create a child together. As Hillman puts it: "We are parented by everything around us—if 'parenting' means watching, instructing, encouraging, and admonishing" (*SC* 86). If we are involved in life and happenings, we are also, by that logic, called upon to parent. In "The Shape of Things," Peter and Polly Ann Horn find themselves called upon to raise their small, newborn *pyramid*: "The blue pyramid had six blue snakelike appendages, and three eyes that blinked from the tips of projecting structures" (48).

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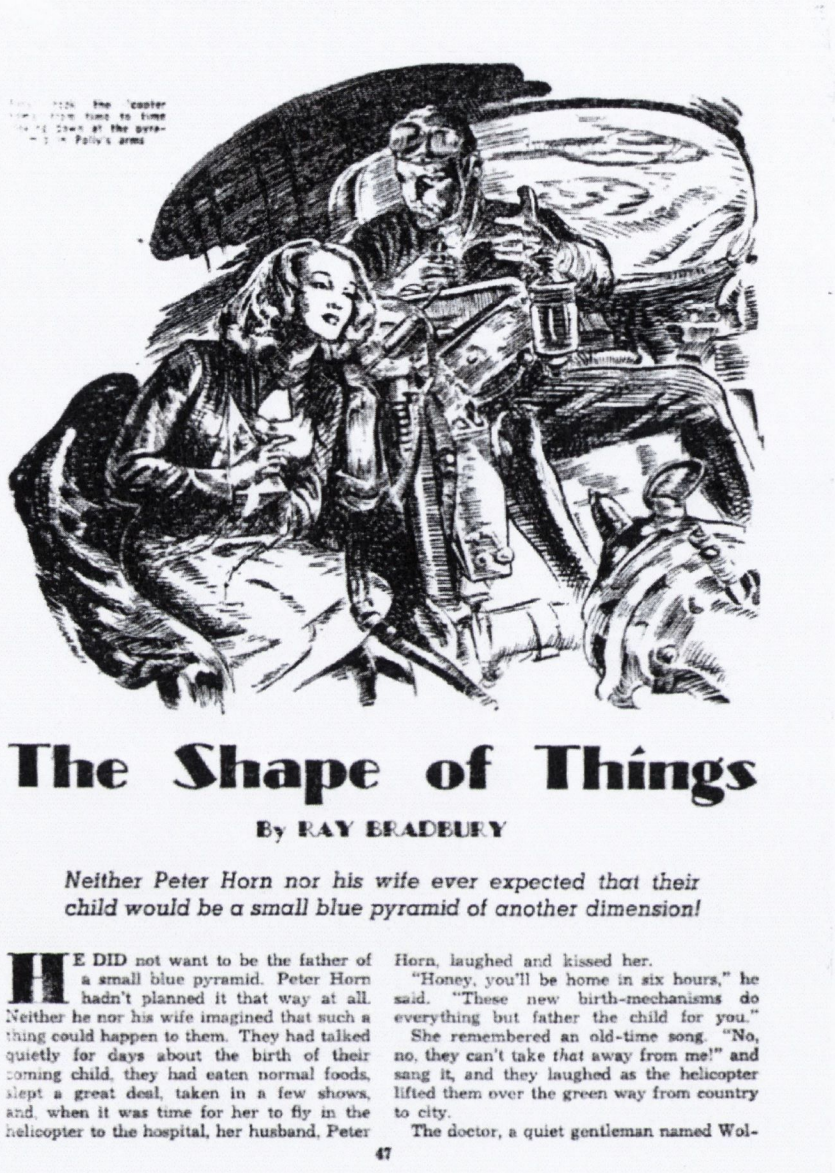
[40] Hillman names D. W. Winnicott, Melanie Klein, René Spitz, John Bowlby, and Anna Freud.



The Shape of Things

By RAY BRADBURY

Neither Peter Horn nor his wife ever expected that their child would be a small blue pyramid of another dimension!

HE DID not want to be the father of a small blue pyramid. Peter Horn hadn't planned it that way at all. Neither he nor his wife imagined that such a thing could happen to them. They had talked quietly for days about the birth of their coming child, they had eaten normal foods, slept a great deal, taken in a few shows, and, when it was time for her to fly in the helicopter to the hospital, her husband, Peter Horn, laughed and kissed her.

"Honey, you'll be home in six hours," he said. "These new birth-mechanisms do everything but father the child for you."

She remembered an old-time song. "No, no, they can't take *that* away from me!" and sang it, and they laughed as the helicopter lifted them over the green way from country to city.

The doctor, a quiet gentleman named Wol-

47

[Fig. xiv: Illustration title page for "The Shape of Things" (47)]

Set in the then-far-off year of 1969, where people travel by 'copter or beetle and faith in technology is high, the Horns' inauguration to the shared office of parenthood is sullied by a glitch in new birthing gadgetry at a place called the Institute. As Dr. Wolcott explains, "'There was a dimensional distructure caused by the simultaneous short-circuitings and malfunctionings of the new birth-mechs and the hypnosis machines. Well, anyway,' the doctor ended lamely, 'your baby was born into—another dimension'" (48). As a result, their newborn appears as it would in that dimension—fourth, fifth, or sixth, the doctors aren't

sure—while it is simultaneously stranded in that dimension in human form. Py—his temporary name, as shortened from pyramid and evocative of π, the mathematical ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter—is so alien in shape that his sex is indeterminable, leaving them only to guess that he is a boy. As plot devices go, the interdimensional birthing gizmo calls for a significant suspension of disbelief from the reader. It is utterly absurd, even for those of us who are not theoretical physicists and/or don't know anything about birthing babies, for a machine used in delivering a child to send him to another dimension—let alone how a woman could birth a pyramid. But Bradbury's strength is his way of humanizing supernormal happenings. Pete and Polly undergo understandable pain and challenges in caring for their baby. The uncredited illustration on the title page shows the new family 'coptering home, Py rather hard to make out in Polly's arms.[41] Pete's face, under flight goggles on his forehead, expresses perplexity; Polly's, hope.

The story opens with Pete's disbelief: "He did not want to be the father of a small blue pyramid. Peter Horn hadn't planned it that way at all. Neither he nor his wife imagined that such a thing could happen to them" (47). The shock of unforeseen complications takes the new parents on a difficult path of anger and shame. It is worth considering the Latin origin of "complications," that plural word we use for medicine's unanticipated, unwanted and threatening outcomes: *complicare* means "to fold together" (*OED*), and as we shall see the child's state will eventually fold the family together like polygonal origami. When told before his wife that the pyramid is their son, Pete thinks a friend must be playing an April Fool's prank: "That's not human! That's a crime against God!" (48). Yet when given the option for the doctors to raise him at the Institute (evoking institutionalization), he says, "He still belongs to me and Polly. I'll raise him. I'll give him a home. Raise him like I'd raise any kid. Give him a normal home life. Try to learn to love him" (49).

[41] Perhaps because of the artistic ambiguity, the editor floated text in the upper left of the page: "Peter took the 'copter home from time to time looking down at the pyramid in Polly's arms" (47).

Breaking the news to Polly, her concerns inspire the worry that she is somehow to blame for what has happened:

> "Did I *make* the child that way?" asked Polly.
>
> "You most certainly did *not*!"
>
> "The child isn't a monster, genetically?" asked Polly.
>
> "The child was thrust into another continuum. Otherwise it is perfectly normal."
>
> Polly's tight, lined mouth relaxed. She said, simply, "Then bring me my baby. I want to see him. Please. Now."
>
> They brought the "child." (50)

The scientistic marriage of monstrosity with "faulty" genetics occurs to her as an explanation. Syndromes certainly have genetic components but monstrosity is defined by any number of factors that fall outside the borders of objectivity. Leveling "bad" genes or the idea of an "unfortunate" combination of chromosomes at a condition is a persistent twentieth-century superstition that persists. When it comes to scapegoating birth defects and disabilities, the sins of the father myth has been replaced by the myth of deficiencies in that father's DNA, which, tapping back into the old cycle, may have been impaired through the sins of father's hard living.

Parents hope their unborn babies will arrive in good health: "perfectly normal." The mysteries of embryology and gestation astound us despite medical advances and pre-natal screening—no babies to date, to my knowledge, have accidentally been zapped to another dimension during a sonogram. And conception itself, though witnessed and recorded using an array of technologies, can only be *seen*, as Hillman notes:

> What goes on in that massive, virginly intact, single, round ovum that allows only this particular miniscule sperm among millions to enter? Or is the question more correctly addressed to the sperm? Is one of you more wily, more pushy, and more sympathetically congenial? Or is it just the randomness of "luck"—and what is luck, really? We know about DNA and the results of joinings, but we are left with the mystery that Darwin spent a life with, the mystery of selection. (*SC* 64)

Polly's insecurities come marinated in a value-basted understanding of genetics, but there may be another explanation for her worry of culpability: Is she an alcoholic? As the demands

of caring for Py persist, she develops a drinking problem. Were she already prone to drinking before the birth, Polly may legitimately fear having insulted the fetus. Context is limited without description of the pregnancy, so we can only speculate. However, if she *were* drinking while pregnant, the doctor has made no such diagnosis, assuring her the baby is otherwise "perfectly normal." That is, it is only freakish in its appearance.

"The Shape of Things" can be read as a meditation on the plight of parents raising from birth a child whose needs go beyond the conventional. It measures their struggles and successes with compassion, challenging readers to empathize. From the 'copter ride home (these characters fly "'copters" like postwar Americans drove cars), after the doctors promise to find a way to reverse the effects, Polly expresses suicidal despair:

> "I can wait. As long as I know something good will happen. I won't let it hurt or shock me. The mind is a great thing. If it has some hope, then it's cushioned all around. I'll wait six months," she said. And she looked over the edge of the helicopter. "And then I'll kill myself. [... If] the doctor can't help us, then a mind can't take it, a mind can only tell the body to climb out on a roof and jump." (50)

Sent home with Bluebeard instructions that Py must not be seen by anyone, one of the culprits against her confidence in the task ahead is society. The placement of quotation marks around *child* when Py is brought to her suggests the intrusion of a master narrative. These invasive quotes occur again later, when the neighbors first lay eyes on the pyramidal baby: "Polly was walking the 'child' in the yard" (52). They assume the form is a new exotic pet acquired by Pete on his business travels abroad. "He looks dangerous, but he's not," an inebriated Polly explains, "He's friendly as a baby. My husband brought him from Afghanistan the other day. Has anybody got a drink?" (53). When Pete shoos off the neighbors, sarcasm and intoxication cannot hide the depth of her care:

> "Don't you want to see my baby? *Don't* you? Yes, he's my *child*, my very *own*! Isn't he simply beautiful!"
>
> He slapped her face.
>
> "My baby," she said, brokenly.

> He slapped he[r] again and again until she quit saying it and collapsed. He picked her up and took her into the house. (53)

Pete's physical abuse comes from the hand of patriarchy, as well as frustration over the fact that men, who botched the birth, cannot fix the interdimensional "distructure," a word of Bradbury's coinage sounding a lot like "destruction." Pete has been struggling with the nearly yearlong ordeal as well, just not as obviously. And despite the dictated gender roles typical to mid-century American families, when Polly begins drinking herself unconscious Pete takes over caring for the infant at night.

Meanwhile, Py seems to get along okay. Three sections briefly present Baby's point of view in the other dimension, where the environment is described as "a crystalline plateau" (49). Men appear as gray-white cubes and Polly as a white cube with three eyes: "There was something about this White Cube that Baby liked. There was an attraction. Some relation. There was an odor to the White Cube that reminded Baby of itself" (49). The baby emerges as the story's optimist, its great adapter. For while the adults lament his state of being, he only knows—and accepts—himself in this form, a most mythological form. The pyramid calls to mind some of the oldest examples of human architecture, both the towering structures at Giza and those hidden in the jungles of Central America. Theories behind their construction are diverse, sometimes fantastically attributed to supernatural forces, Atlantian technologies, aliens from outer space. No one can be utterly sure what they once meant to the cultures that built them; their mystery is left for us, along with connections to symbols in our own contemporary societies.

The pyramid has held day-to-day economic significance for Americans since 1935, when both sides of the Great Seal of the United States were first printed on the backside of the dollar bill. The seal's reverse depicts a truncated pyramid with the all-seeing Eye of Providence as the capstone. Scots-Irish-born Charles Thomson, who became one of the U.S.A.'s founding fathers and designed the Great Seal with help from William Barton,

explained the reverse design to Congress in 1782: "The pyramid signifies Strength and Duration: The Eye over it & the Motto allude to the many signal interpositions of providence in favour of the American cause. The date underneath is that of the Declaration of Independence and the words under it signify the beginning of the new American Æra, which commences from that date" ("Explanation of the Great Seal's Symbolism").[42] The perspective on children held by Zimmer, who Campbell joked would unpeel the symbolism of French onion soup when out to dinner, might season our sense of Py's shape and how it reflects his character: "The child is the self reborn in pristine perfection, the perfect being that we ought to be, that we are striving to become, and that we hoped to become, so to say, when we entered our present body. It is the symbol of the entelechy, or secret model, of our destinations" (180). Pyramidal Baby is a mysterious embodiment of providence, a force the adult characters have shrugged off.

Speaking to Herman Harvey in 1962, Bradbury expressed belief in the healing function of art: "I would like to say to the creative people—especially to writers; this is my field after all: 'You are in the same profession as the doctors of the world.' [... The] writers come along, and help to cure the minds. They are working in the same field as with psychologists and psychiatrists" (Aggelis 9). He viewed the office as sacred, casting the writer as doctor, witchdoctor, medicine man, shaman. With this sanctifying appraisal he stressed the responsibility of offering readers a way of expelling the anxieties a story evokes:

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[42] In *Breakfast of Champions* (1973), Vonnegut clowned around the symbol:

> If they studied their paper money for clues as to what their country was all about, they found, among a lot of other baroque trash, a picture of a truncated pyramid with a radiant eye on top of it, like this:
>
> 
>
>
> Not even the President of the United States knew what that was all about. It was as though the country were saying to its citizens, "*In nonsense is strength.*" (*NS* 507-508)

> If we're going to write a play about a very unpleasant thing, let us say, if we're going to tell the worst there is to tell about human beings—and it must be told; I'm not saying that we shouldn't do it. But, if we say to people, "I'm going to tell you such a story, I'm going to write you such a play, or show you a film that at the very end you'll want to be sick," then we must give permission to throw up. [...] It is up to the artist, then, to look into that tension and see if he can relieve it, not by playing the Pollyanna, not by giving happy endings, but by making sure that the sickness is a whole, and that the sickness finally results in a cleansing by being really sick. (Aggelis 10, 11)

"The Shape of Things" is a story that relieves its tension, in which a family eventually finds an imperfect but psychologically balanced compromise with the fate unanticipated events have rendered. Eller notes that the story's first draft did not end gently: "In his initial version, Bradbury had chosen psychological trauma so severe that the child was driven insane" (Textual Apparatus, *Collected Stories: Vol. II*). That version was rejected by several editors.

The solution, both for Pete, Polly, and Py *and* the story's publication, sees the parents transported into the same dimension as their baby. Though the doctors are unable to reverse the effects, they can reproduce them. Once the parents agree to sacrifice their typical forms in our dimension and lead life as moving shapes, the family is united in the other continuum. What was first seen as a terrible deformity has been re-visioned, bringing forth an enriching transformation for all. In order to save their own life together, Peter and Polly buck the narrative that has trapped them into only seeing the culturally-dictated monstrosity of their baby and, undergoing the same complications—or "folding together"—become origami figures of their own individual shapes, described through the eyes of Dr. Wolcott as "the White Oblong and the White slim Rectangle holding the Blue Pyramid" (55). On the other side, they finally see Py as the baby that he has been all along: "It was Peter Horn's son. A living, pink-faced, blue-eyed boy, lying in her arms, gasping and blinking and crying" (55). At last, for the Horns, union. As the old axiom goes: If you can't beat the dimensional distructures caused by the simultaneous short-circuitings and malfunctionings of the new birth-mechs and the hypnosis machines, join 'em.

4.4 But What About the Children?

> Then we have to take into account the problem of the transformation of children into adults. That transformation is a fundamental concern throughout the ritual life of people. We have it today. There is the problem of turning ungovernable children, who express just the naive impulses of nature, into members of the society. That takes a lot of doing.
>
> Joseph Campbell
> (*POM* 83)

In "Bradbury on Children," Lahna Diskin applies Mr. Howard's prejudice in "Let's Play 'Poison'" (1946) to Bradbury's canon: "'You are another race entirely, your motives, your beliefs, your disobediences [...] You are not human. You are—children'" (543):

> As a separate race, Bradbury's children are uninhibited earthly creatures with an unalloyed, undiluted exuberance. Their innocence enables them to transcend the forces that influence and often control the lives of adults. In his fiction, children live and move in a dimension where they are generally exempt from the dilemmas that afflict their elders. Each sphere of activity—home, town, wilderness—has heightened or enhanced elements which, to them, give it a psychological credence that it does not possess for the adults with whom they share it. (49)

The divide, at least for Mr. Howard, is more an unfortunate example of fates coinciding with his worst fear than an illustration of a sound theory. Mr. Howard, a teacher, has come to his pedophobic conclusion after profound trauma: sixteen of his students defenestrate a boy to his death and go unpunished when deemed too young, at eight and nine, to have understood what they were doing. His inevitable breakdown sends him out of the classroom and to a new city, where, of course, one day, as a favor to a friend, he is put in the unenviable position of substitute teaching. Taking out his stagnant grief on a new group of kids, they pay it back by burying him alive and cementing him under a patch of sidewalk bearing his name. Diskin rightly points out, "His dread of children inspires dread in the children who know him" (49), which makes it extreme to adopt his discrimination, deeming them "another race entirely," in the service of understanding Bradbury's fictional children. In his short stories, they enjoy a

broad range of significances, only sometimes behaving as ruthlessly as Golding's do in *Lord of the Flies*. Especially in relation to postwar American families, these characters don't fit neatly into Othering generalities and are best taken case by case.

And yet "The World the Children Made" is another take on the wicked capacities of children, especially in relation to new technologies in the home. Collected after its first publication in *The Saturday Evening Post* (23 Sep. 1950) as "The Veldt," Diskin files it under "the theme of the insidious struggle for total power and control that children wage behind the façade of innocence" (46). Peter and Wendy, their names pointing directly at characters in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, never even have to leave home to find Neverland; it and any other environment they wish to conjure is right there in the home thanks to the state-of-the-art nursery. Set in a technologically-convenient future, the Hadleys' Happylife Home is as automated as the home that continues to function after nuclear war in Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains," published earlier the same year in both *Collier's* (6 May) and *The Martian Chronicles*.

But whereas that story picks up after human life is blasted away, this focuses on a family at terrible odds with and within their own home. Imaginings of a house humming "with a soft automaticity" (26), a "shoe tier" (66), an "automatic scrub bath" (62), an "air closet" pneumatic flue that spirits family members to their "slumber rooms" (65) and beds that rock them to sleep—and the centerpiece nursery: "all dimensional superreactionary, supersensitive color film and mental-tape film behind glass screens [with] odorphonics and sonics" (26)—are printed alongside advertisements for the Universal Stroke-Sav-r: "America's Fastest Iron" (62) and the General Mills Automatic Toaster: "the only *double* automatic toaster you can buy" (68). This disparity reveals that those of us living in the second decade of the twenty-first century are daydreaming about the future from a vastly different technological baseline than middle class Americans were in 1950.



[Fig. xv: Al Parker's illustration for "The World the Children Made" (26-27)]

Al Parker's title page spread is one of the most exciting pieces of magazine art to accompany Bradbury's work. The turmeric yellow of the savannah highlighted with green foliage on distant trees and watery blue sky present Technicolor vibrancy for the landscape projected from the nursery's walls and floor. The male lion that will eat George Hadley, split vertically by the hinge gap, lurks in the grass on the backside of the door as he leans in. The house beyond is plainly white, sterile, brightly lit, devoid, and casting harsh light, enough to define shadows behind Peter and Wendy, while the world they have made teems, an idealized natural environment. They seem interrupted, Peter standing imperiously with hands on hips while Wendy is sprawled on the ground, spoon in hand, ready to get on with the tea party. Their backs to us, we can only guess at the expressions on their faces. They are also similarly and sparingly clothed, in orange: both wear knee boots but she has a skirt while he wears what look like boxer-briefs. Their shirtlessness is odd, particularly Wendy's, given that their wardrobes are otherwise gendered. Perhaps Parker is trying to "futurize" their clothing; Bradbury does not describe their costumes. George, in red t-shirt, is merely looking in on the

kids, the sort of thing a parent does when their children are occupying themselves without want of attention. His position in relation to the lion is most telling, both facing us, both being the patriarch of family and pride respectively, both opposing each other with increased tension as the story progresses.

That lion is not so much a creation of the nursery as it is an intuitively compiled representation of the children's psyche. The room only projects what Peter and Wendy project upon it: "Remarkable how the nursery caught the telepathic emanations of the children's minds and created life to fill their every desire" (62). Were it a room of mirrors we would speak of reflection of their projection, but those walls work more like television screens: instead of matching a projection, which a mirror does, the room amplifies a projection. In Jungian terms, the room facilitates inflation: "an IDENTIFICATION with the collective psyche caused by an invasion of unconscious archetypal contents or as a result of extended consciousness. [... As Jung put it,] An archetypal content 'seizes hold of the PSYCHE with a kind of primeval force and compels it to transgress the bounds of humanity'" (*CDJA* 81, 82). The children's sense of themselves as "world" creators has overstepped the bounds of their reality.

George and Lydia become concerned after she notices that Africa has become the children's favorite nursery environment. Of course, it isn't Africa at all, but their conception of it; the distinction is lost on the Hadleys: "[The] walls began to purr and recede into crystalline distance,[43] it seemed, and presently an African veld appeared in three dimensions, on all sides, in color, reproduced to the final pebble and bit of straw" (26). Heat and smells accompany the visual display, convincing in what is only a *simulation* of authenticity:

> And here were the lions now, fifteen feet away—so real, so feverishly and startlingly real that you could feel the prickling fur on your hand, and your mouth was stuffed with the dusty upholstery smell of their heated pelts, and

[43] I am reminded of Py's other-dimensional environment, "a crystalline plateau" (49) in "The Shape of Things." Here we have something like interdimensionality built into the home as an entertaining feature, as opposed to imposed debilitating physiological features.

> the yellow of an exquisite French tapestry, the yellow of lions and summer grass, and the sound of the matted lion lungs exhaling on the silent noontide, and the smell of meat from the panting, dripping mouths. (26)

What of the lion, a creature unknown to these American characters living in the future? Without experience of or interactions with real life lions, this pampered family has invited the so-called King of the Beasts into their home.

Stressing "[t]here can be no single interpretation of the dream lion," Hillman challenges us to see *the lion* of the lion: "It is a lion inside an image, and it is this image as a whole that transmits the lion to our consciousness. The image is its carrier. To take the lion only as such, to see it only as a meaning, lifts it from its habitat in the dream in which its meanings are enfolded" (*Animal Presences* 92). Dealing as we are with a story, not a dream, we must be careful to not isolate it from its nursery habitat within the story. Consulting ARAS provides further insights from a depth psychological perspective:

> In dream images such as a great cat prowling in the house or the backyard, psyche warns us that physically or affectively we are identified with a big cat libido and need to get some distance. To respond to such urges by killing, caging or degrading the great cat is to brutally repress one of nature's most extraordinary incarnations of creative aggressiveness and sovereign instinct. The resolution seems to be in balance and boundaries. (*Book of Symbols* 268, 270)

The Hadleys' problem with these lions is not that lions have been conjured; it is rather how these lions have been confined. When George and Lydia retreat, they are distressed to see the nursery door "tremble as if something had jumped against it from the other side" (62). Peter and Wendy, resenting denied permission to travel to New York unattended, possess a strong desire for control. If anything, the illusion of creation in the nursery, of easily framing the fearful symmetry not of tygers but of lions, has dramatically skewed the family dynamic.

Gheerbrant and Chevalier, tracing the lion through Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, ancient Egypt, and psychoanalysis, find what could serve as a profile for George: "Although [the lion] may be the embodiment of power, wisdom and justice, overweening

pride and self-confidence, on the other hand, may turn him into the symbol of the father, the master and the monarch dazzled by his own power and blinded by his own light to become the tyrant when he believes he is the guardian" (611). George and Lydia have forfeited their responsibilities as parents to the conveniences of comfortable living. Both are infantilized, sleeping in separate (this is 1950 middle class America, after all) beds that rock them to sleep like cradles. Lydia, for lack of anything to do, expresses a desire to return to life *without* automated amenities even if it means taking up the predictable gender roles: "I feel like I don't belong here. The house is wife and mother now, and nursemaid. Can I compete with an African veld? Can I give a bath and scrub to the children as efficiently or quickly as the automatic scrub bath can? I cannot. And it isn't just me. It's you" (62). It turns out George, patriarch of the home, has been smoking, drinking, and taking sedatives a little more every day. Considering the family as a pride, with its strict gender roles, he is the lion whose authority stands challenged. When he fearfully wanders into the nursery and attempts to reset it, he calls up the Emerald City: "I demand Oz!" (62). As if sensing a coward already in the room, the veldt resists with its decidedly uncowardly lions.

Prompted at last to ponder the inner lives of his children, of which he knows next to nothing, the best he comes up with are, "Death thoughts. They were awfully young, Wendy and Peter, for death thoughts. Or no, you were never too young, really. Long before you knew what death was you were wishing it on someone else. When you were two years old you were shooting people with cap pistols" (62). Fantasies of violence and death aimed at other people emerges normalized, understandable, and not that surprising to him—which suggests these cubs are definitely his. Later when he consults his friend David McLean, a psychologist, it is drastically recommended that he tear down the nursery and bring Peter and Wendy in for treatment every day for the next year. The immediacy with which George shuts

off the nursery, however, is tyrannical. Impatiently attempting to reassert his control over the children's he goes about murdering the house:

> "Lord, how we need a breath of honest air!"
>
> And he marched about the house turning off the voice clocks, the stoves, the heaters, the shoe shiners, the shoe lacers, the body scrubbers and swabbers and massagers, and every other machine he could put his hand to.
>
> The house was full of dead bodies, it seemed. It felt like a mechanical cemetery. So silent. None of the humming hidden energy of machines waiting to function at the tap of a button.
>
> "Don't let them do it," wailed Peter at the ceiling, as if he were talking to the house, the nursery. (66)

George invokes the Lord while his son appeals to the house, father and son worshipping very different gods. Rage finally finds expression through Peter's mouth, telling his father that he hates him and wishes him dead. George replies, "We were, for a long while. Now we're really going to start living. Instead of being handled and massaged, we're going to live" (68).

Not for long. Preparing for a vacation to Iowa—not a destination most kids beg to visit—George and Lydia are called downstairs to the nursery by the children. Or rather, lured. Shut inside the expanse of veldland, they succumb to their children's lions. When McLean checks in on everybody, he only finds Peter and Wendy, calmly picnicking in Africa, their great cats nearby at the watering hole. "'A cup of tea?' Wendy asked in the silence" (68), and the story ends. There are shades here of the 1882 short story by Frank R. Stockton, "The Lady, or the Tiger?" Stockton leaves his character's fate up to the reader, describing an elaborate punishment in an Orientalized society, whereby the accused is made to choose between two doors in an arena while thousands watch. Behind one door is a beautiful lady; behind the other is a ferocious tiger. If the door reveals the lady, he is taken off to marry her; if it reveals the tiger, he is eaten as entertainment. Stockton complicates the character's door choice with the ambiguity of a princess's gesture to the right, but what he finds behind the door is never told.

If there is any ambiguity in the ending of "The World the Children Made," we might

ask where responsibility lies and how far does it stretch? Surely George and Lydia share some culpability with the children, but the fact that such a potential deathtrap is available for purchase points a finger at the manufacturer or even a lack of regulation in the law. The temptation is to label the nursery as an allegory for television, then rising across the United States in 1950. However, instead of blaming the messenger, I think the story acts better as a parable about parenting. As in "The Small Assassin," readers are never privy to the thoughts of the children, following perspectives of the adults. It anticipates a chasm in communication within American families as distraction provided by doohickeys becomes more prevalent. George and Lydia Hadley's symbolic failure is not simply a sin of materialism, but in underestimating Peter and Wendy's capacities and, worse, not investing in knowing who they are.

This brings us to "Jack-in-the-Box," published in Bradbury's first collection, *Dark Carnival* (1947), a story about a boy whose mother oversteps her responsibilities from parenting to dictating. Drawing inspiration from a newspaper article about an abused child in Chicago raised in seclusion with no outside contact, Bradbury created thirteen-year-old Edwin, Mother, and their World: a mansion built by his father that he has never left. This is a story of abuse perpetrated on an only child by a severely neurotic mother whose pathological manipulations are losing their stranglehold on his life. Diskin draws attention to the story's psychological elements: "Perhaps more than any other child in Bradbury's fiction, Edwin is an innocent incarcerated by adult neuroses, subjugated by the delusions and defenses erected as compensation by adults in retreat from life. Like his toy, the jack-in-the-box, he is confined, even trapped" (45). But Edwin's capacities are outgrowing the life his mother has provided. In his cornerstone essay on myth, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," Jung discusses how individuation begins with this image of the child: "[The child archetype] represents the strongest, the most ineluctable urge in every being, namely the urge to realize

itself" (1940/1968, *CW 9.I*, ¶289). Edwin, nearly fourteen, is an adolescent, a teenager, and he wants to become himself.

The story begins with a preamble in second person plural and present tense: "Let us imagine a Jack-in-the-box, stuffed, compressed in upon its coiled body, its head against a locked lid" (159). The metaphor may be obvious but it carries nuances: "The lid stays locked thirteen years on the little trapped animal. The animal within does not know of the World, but senses it is there" (159). A Jack-in-the-box often contains a spring-loaded jester or clown but can also feature a plush animal. There is usually a jangling melody, typically "Pop Goes the Weasel," that accompanies the turning of the crank. The toy is one of the first a child has, appropriate for one-year-olds, the simplicity of its hand crank making it a staple of practicing manual dexterity. The force with which the figure inside pops out is both startling and harmless, giving a fright babies are usually capable of handling, for they quickly stuff it shut to do it all over again. A thirteen-year-old is profoundly outgrown for this kind of toy, an amusement of infancy. Once presented, Bradbury does not return to the metaphor of the animal in the Jack-in-the-box. After a page break he switches to mostly third person and past tense in telling the story of Edwin and Mother.

"Edwin" is Old English for "rich friend" (*BTN*), a curious name for a friendless boy. "Mother" is entirely archetypal, and if we are to unbox Edwin's vitality we must examine her insanity. Described as "blazingly lovely, like an angry white flower" (160), she is also spooky in a sense Bradbury assumes readers would recognize from their own communities: "She was the pale woman you saw in old houses in third floor cupola windows, each morning at nine, each afternoon at one and four, each evening at eight, and, also, if you happened to be passing at three in the morning, there she would be, in her window, silent and white, high and alone and quiet" (160). Her causes for self-and-son-cloistering have become a debilitating mythos, going unchecked through lack of interaction with others. Moriarty warns that,

"Myths and cosmologies aren't daydreams that never engage with reality. They are, very often, damaging actions, damaging ways of being in the world" (*TGLT2* 101).

Mother's way of being is just such a myth, where her dead husband is called God, the mansion he built is the World, and automobiles and planes and people lurking out beyond the ring of chestnuts and elms and walls of her property are "Them," "Beasts" (160), "Things" (162), "Beings" (164), "Wicked Killers" (169), "Monster[s]" and "Chaos" (171). We glean through this warped view that the boy's father was knocked down and killed by a car or truck, realities she has hidden. Her imprisonment of the boy has led to a geographical orientation within the mansion, whose frontier grows with a newly opened room upon the occasion of his birthday:

> On his sixth birthday it had been the school in the Highlands. Seventh birthday? The playroom in the Lowlands. Eighth? The music room. Ninth: the kitchen all glittery chrome. Tenth birthday—the phonograph room where angels sang from moving discs. Eleventh: the garden room, a grass plot with a carpet that really *grew*, and had to be cut instead of swept. Twelfth and thirteenth birthdays, the wonders of Mom's cosmetic room and a new room for himself. Now, keenly disappointed, he looked into the fourteenth room. A dim brown closet. (171)

The room turns out to be an elevator, which she explains as flying them to a higher floor. She gifts it by jogging his fourteenth birthday ahead two months when his uncontainable curiosity threatens her authority.

One of the more disturbing aspects of her need for control has her costuming herself to play the part of Teacher Granleigh, who educates the boy daily. She provides him with a "book from which pages had been razored and torn and censored, from which certain lines had been inked or erased, from which all pictures had been ripped, some books glued shut, or locked in bronze straps, because Edwin might see, read, understand" (168). The book she thrusts into his hands is the Diary, a cosmological scripture of her own making that even starts "In the Beginning…" (168). He has not copped on that Mother and Teacher are one and the same, though he dares to figure it out and poignantly refuses to accept it in the end. Edwin

has been cut off from society and the outside world of his own yard thanks to Mother's powerful myth of isolation: "He was to grow into a Presence. He was to fit the odors of God and the voice of God, he was one day to stand tall and dark and very malignantly pale by that window and make the house boom with his shout. He was to be God, himself, and nothing was to stop this. Not the sky of the trees or the Things beyond the trees" (165).

This is clearly a perversion of the goal of parenting. While plenty of mothers think their sons are the best thing since sliced cheese, few set about actually deifying them. The pressure is too great for anyone to match such expectations, especially in a state of confinement. Mother's inability to let her son grow as he must, versus how she wants him to, proves too much for her already shot nerves. On his preemptive birthday she goes on a champagne bender, shattering bottles down flights of stairs and smashing glasses in the hearth after he has gone to sleep. He finds her in the morning dead, but, having never learned about death, he does not know that she is gone. Early on he asks her, "What's—dying? You talk about it all the time. Is it a—*feeling*?" (161). Denied an answer, Edwin assumes she is asleep and dreaming.

Jung might say Mother is suffering the ill effects of a mother-complex, specifically in an inflection he labeled Hypertrophy (Ancient Greek for "excess nourishment") of the Maternal Element:

> The exaggeration of the feminine side means an intensification of all female instincts, above all the maternal instinct. The negative aspect is seen in the woman whose only goal is childbirth. [...] Even her own personality is of secondary importance; she often remains entirely unconscious of it, for her life is lived in and through others, in more or less complete identification with all the objects of her care. First she gives birth to the children, and from then on she clings to them, for without them she has no existence whatsoever. [...] Women of this type, though continually "living for others," are, as a matter of fact, unable to make any real sacrifice. Driven by ruthless will to power and a fanatical insistence on their own maternal rights, they often succeed in annihilating not only their own personality but also the personal lives of their children. (1954/1968, *CW 9.I*, ¶167)

Hillman blames this phenomenon not on the collective obsession with children but on its lesser identified counterpart: the obsession with parents: "The elevation of the parents, of the mother in particular, to the neglect of all other realities—societal, environmental, economic—shows that adulation of an archetype can obliterate common sense. [... The] archetypal myth of the completely surrounding mother, insulating from all influences, prevails over the actual world of collective pain" (*SC* 79). As such, he places some of the blame in America for imbalanced relationships between parents and children, and even parents and other parents, on ideologies growing around the myth of the Great Mother:

> Psychologically, as a nation, we seem ever to be trying to put the past behind us, trying to recover from past abuses. Perhaps recovery begins only when we have put the mother myth behind us. For we are less the victims of parenting than of the ideology of parenting; less the victims of Mother's fateful power than of the theory that gives her that fateful power. (*SC* 77)

Absolute blame for life's pain is too much to pin to the vast majority of parents; by the same token, assuming absolute responsibility for how one's children "turn out" is altogether inappropriate. If children are not at first autonomous, depth psychology maintains they *are* autochthonous, in the sense that their spirits arise where we find them, exhibiting personality and being beyond our control from their earliest days.

And while Mother succeeds in destroying herself, Edwin finally emerges. Hillman insists that children require contact with the natural world in order to flourish: "Imagination does not grow all by itself in the household, or even out of imaginative tales told by parents. Children are 'by nature' at home in the world; the world invites them to grow down and take part" (*SC* 87). Edwin exhibits early signs of this, thrilling at the sight over the trees from a tower window he accesses when its door is left unlocked. Mother's death is what finally releases him, bravely venturing in search of Teacher. Having found her costume and one of her grey gloves folded under Mother's dead body—and refusing to connect the dots in a defensive decision against breakdown—he crosses the threshold of his small World:

> If I go beyond the trees I'll die, he thought. Mom said so. What's dying? What is it anyway, what's it like? Is it another room? A blue one? A green one? There's a big green one, ahead. Oh, Mother, Teacher.
>
> His feet hurried, increased their pace, knowing not why. The legs that carried him were no longer his own; his voice, his yelling, belonged to something new. The path rushed under him, the Universe behind dwindled and vanished. He began to laugh. . . . (175)

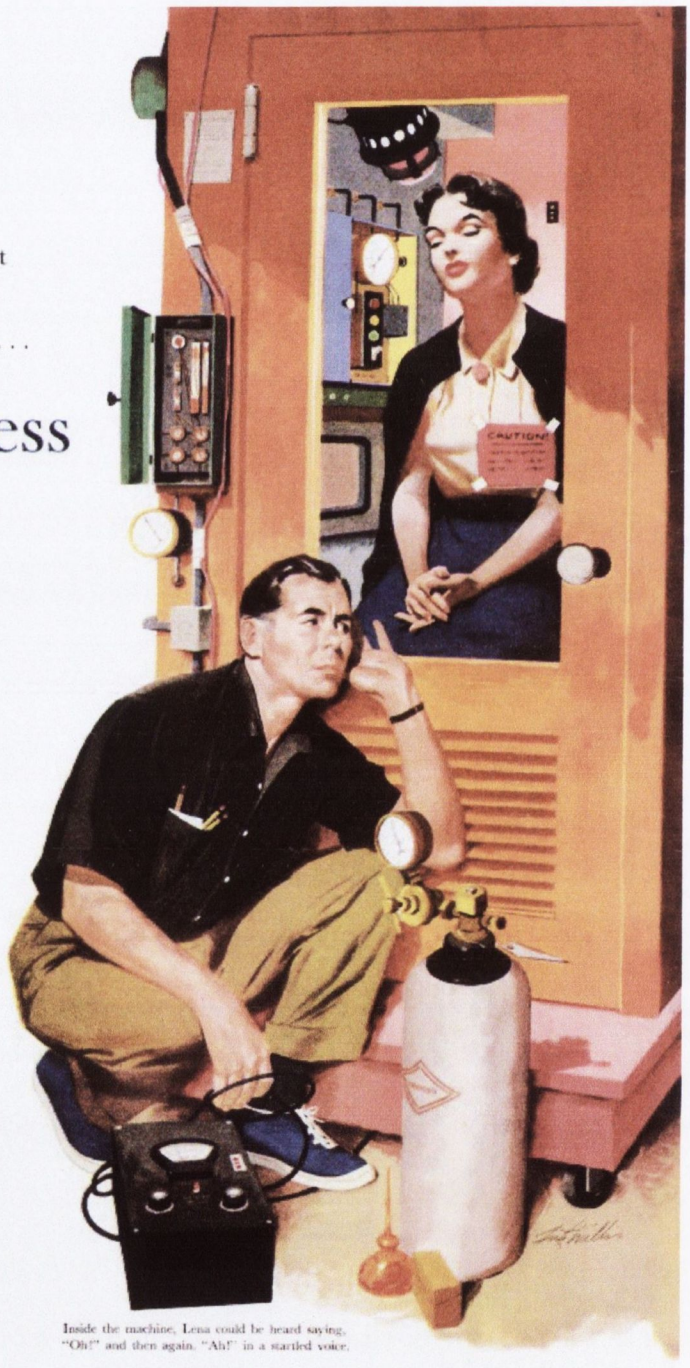
After a page break, we are suddenly introduced to a policeman puzzling over something he just witnessed: a boy running down the street laughing, touching everything, and yelling. As he explains to a pedestrian, "He kept yelling, 'I'm dead, I'm dead, I'm glad I'm dead, I'm dead, I'm dead, it's *good* to be dead, I'm dead, I'm dead, I'm glad I'm dead!'" (176). In a way Edwin really has died, as the cosmology forced upon him has been obliterated by his new and overwhelming expansion of experience. In depth psychology, thresholds of growth are often talked of as deaths. And while he is unhabituated to society, a feral somewhat-civilized child, there is a sense of hope that, instead of being ruined by the abuse he suffered under his mother, he will thrive.

4.5 Nuclear Families

> I have often yearned for a philomythic *Mabinogion*, a suite of myths, traditional or modern, that would mediate the highest truths to us. I am persuaded that myths can bring the whole psyche into conformity with their apprehensions in a way that arguments, however cogent, cannot.
>
> John Moriarty (*TGLT3* IX)

At last we come to stories of families trying to "get it right," trying to live out American myths of happiness and individualism. These families stick together despite overwhelming circumstances. 1957 saw the publication of *Dandelion Wine*, a lyrical representation of Bradbury's own childhood in Waukegan, Illinois, set in the summer of 1928. Early in the novel, spread across three chapters and interrupted by other episodes, is the story of Leo Auffmann's Happiness Machine and what it brings to his family. We are concerned,

however, with the story as it stands on its own, published the same year in *The Saturday Evening Post* (Sept. 14). No mention of *Dandelion Wine* accompanies "The Happiness Machine," no indication that the story is published as an extract. Green Town of the novel is not named, wiping away the regional aspect that grounds the novel. The story was read on its own terms as a separate entity, and so we shall approach it as such.



It was the most incredible apparatus ever built. But not even the inventor knew the amazing things it could do. . . .

The Happiness Machine

By RAY BRADBURY

In front of the corner cigar store this evening the men were gathered to burn dirigibles, sink battleships, blow up dynamite works and, all in all, savor the very bacteria in their mouths that would someday stop them cold. Clouds of annihilation loomed and blew away in their cigar smoke about a nervous figure who could be seen dimly listening to the sound of shovels and spades and the intonations of "ashes to ashes, dust to dust." This figure was that of Leo Auffmann, the town jeweler who, widening his large liquid-dark eyes, at last threw up his child's hands and cried out in dismay.

"Stop! In heaven's name, get out of that graveyard!"

"Leo, how right you are," said Grandfather Spaulding passing on his nightly stroll with his grandsons Douglas and Tom. "But, Leo, only you can shut these doom-talkers up. Invent something that will make the future brighter, well-rounded, infinitely joyous. You've invented bicycles, fixed the penny-arcade contraptions, been our town movie projectionist, haven't you?"

"Sure," said Douglas. "Invent us a Happiness Machine!"

The men laughed.

"Don't," said Leo Auffmann. "How have we used machines so far—to make people cry? Yes! Every time man and the machine look like they will get on all right—boom! Someone adds a cog, airplanes drop bombs on us, cars run us off cliffs. So is the boy wrong to ask? No! No."

His voice faded as Leo Auffmann moved to the curb to touch his bicycle as if it were an animal.

"What can I lose?" he murmured. "A little skin off my fingers, a few pounds of metal, some sleep? I'll do it, so help me!"

"Leo," said Grandfather, "we didn't mean ——"

But Leo Auffmann was gone, pedaling off through the warm summer evening, his voice drifting back, ". . . I'll do it."

"You know," said Tom in awe, "I bet he will."

Watching him cycle the brick streets of evening, you could see that Leo Auffmann was a man who coasted along, enjoying the way the thistles ticked in the hot grass when the wind blew (Continued on Page 134)

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Inside the machine, Lena could be heard saying, "Oh!" and then again, "Ah!" in a startled voice.

[Fig. xvi: Title page with Fritz Willis's illustration (43)]

Greeting readers on page 43 is Fritz Willis's illustration of Leo Auffmann kneeling beside his eight-foot-tall, orange-painted Happiness Machine with his wife Lena sitting inside. Lovely as Disney's Snow White and still, with eyes closed, as Sleeping Beauty, she sits amid gauges and switchery, her hands in her lap, a cardigan over her shoulders. A pink sign taped onto the door's window reads "CAUTION!" Leo, the concerned innovator and spouse, listens against the glass, attentive to her experience within the booth. He looks to be forty, his temples greying, his hair shellacked in its aging retreat. Three Dixon Ticonderoga pencils and paper are tucked into his breast pocket, the casual uniform of the at-home-inventor including highwater trousers and canvas sneakers. A tank of helium, an oil can, a brown box for file cards, and a black box with dials and a needle (either an ammeter or a voltmeter), sit in the foreground. Note how Willis dresses Leo and Lena in clothing of 1957, not the 1928 of the novel.

The Auffmanns are Leo and Lena and their six children: Saul, Marshall, Joseph, Rebecca, Ruth, and Naomi. Leo is the town jeweler, which likely includes the repairing duties of horology as he is given to timepiece metaphors in his thoughts, let alone his mechanical knowhow. That fact of career and the history of Jews as jewelers, along with the names Saul, Joseph, Rebecca, Ruth, and Naomi being Hebrew (*BTN*), I posit that the Auffmanns are Jewish. Bradbury never provides their religious tradition—he seldom does in his canon, typically writing explicitly about priests when approaching issues of religion. But if we read this family as being Jewish, and of the story taking place contemporary with its publication in the late fifties versus the pre-Depression summer of *Dandelion Wine*, their relationship to life in America shifts dramatically. They are post-Holocaust American Jews, a minority for whom the pursuit of happiness carries a distinct and poignant significance. The opening paragraph resonates in hindsight of the Shoah:

> In front of the corner cigar store this evening the men were gathered to burn dirigibles, sink battleships, blow up dynamite works and, all in all, savor the

> very bacteria in their mouths that would someday stop them cold. Clouds of annihilation loomed and blew away in their cigar smoke about a nervous figure who could be seen dimly listening to the sound of shovels and spades and the intonations of "ashes to ashes, dust to dust." This figure was that of Leo Auffmann, the town jeweler who, widening his large liquid-dark eyes, at last threw up his child's hands and cried out in dismay.
>
> "Stop! In heaven's name, get out of that graveyard!" (43)

Leo was the name of Bradbury's father, but while there may be aspects of him in the character of Leo Auffmann, they would enter as privileged information the common reader would not possess. It is more compelling to downplay this autobiographical detail in favor of considering the character a middle class American *Jewish* father.

When challenged by Douglas, Tom, and Grandfather Spaulding,[44] to "Invent us a Happiness Machine!," Leo is reluctant: "How have we used machines so far—to make people cry? Yes! Every time man and machine look like they will get on all right—boom! Someone adds a cog, airplanes drop bombs on us, cars run us off cliffs" (43). Later, "pleasured in sleepless nights of brooding on the great clock of the universe running down or winding itself up" (154), he accepts the challenge. While contemplating the stages of life, "Getting born, growing up, growing old, dying" (154), and what can be done about improving the last three, Leo imagines possibilities:

> The wheels of his Happiness Machine spun whirling golden light spokes along the ceiling of his head. A machine, now, to help boys change from peach fuzz to brier bramble, girls from toadstool to nectarine. And in the years when your shadow leaned clear across the land as you lay abed nights with your heartbeat mounting to the billions, his invention must let a man drowse easy in the falling leaves. (154)

Here again is the positivist bugaboo metaphor of life as a machine, first in Leo's clockwork cosmology and then in the potential for a device that *does* happiness in service of life's thresholds. We recall Abram's criticism of the metaphor of mechanism in the previous chapter: "The mechanical model of the world entails a mentalistic epistemology, the assumption that the most precise knowledge of things is a detached, intellectual apprehension

[44] More autobiography: Douglas was Bradbury's middle name, Spaulding his father's middle name.

purged of all subjective, situated, or bodily involvement. It is an abstract, disembodied knowledge" (71).

Leo is trapped under the restricting dome of the mechanical model, the metaphor, hiding in plain sight, routing his imagination away from life-affirming potentialities. Equipped only with a mechanical way of imagining, he can only conceive of fixing life's sorrow by creating another machine—with a mechanism for happiness and, by proxy, happiness reduced to mechanism. It is interesting to note that, on the magazine page, standing alongside the text in which Leo dreams his machine is a sidebar advertisement for Victor Business Machines—two adding machines and a cash register—real world "business machines" standing sentry for the Economy alongside Leo's hopes for his Happiness Machine. He has no monetary profit in mind, just the ethic that "sometimes you got to build for others" (154). This project, however, is flawed from conception. Early construction sees him appraising the materials as inert, meaningless, "dead tools and the inanimate lumber" (156), a devaluing attitude that is symptomatic of a ruling metaphor that Abram says "denies our perceptual experience [... and] our sensory involvement in the world" (69) and what Moriarty called commonage consciousness: "the one consciousness that is manifested in rocks, animals, human beings, and stars" (*TGLT1* XVII).

The chief barometer of well-being in the Auffmann family is Lena. "A man who thinks like that—how it runs, how things work—falls off the trapeze in the circus," she says, "chokes wondering how the muscles work in the throat. Eat, sleep, breathe, Leo, and stop staring at me like I'm something new in the house!" (154). In asking her to help him arrive at a definition of happiness, they have their first fight in six months. When he finishes construction, her concern for him trumps its unveiling: "Sure, the machine is ready. But happy? Who can say? Leo, leave off with the clock you're building. You'll never find a cuckoo big enough to go in it! Man was not made to tamper with such things. It's not against

God, no, but it sure looks like it's against Leo Auffmann. Another week of this and we'll bury him in his machine!" (156).

Their home functions under the stereotypical gender roles we might expect from the American fifties, with Lena cooking for the family and doing the housework. At this point in the story, a two-page advertisement for Lennox home heating spreads across two magazine pages, bisecting the layout horizontally, taking up the lower half, and reinforcing the white middle class patriarchal narrative. Page 156 shows cartoon drawings of a girl going from ill in bed to smiling at breakfast thanks to a Lennox Super-Quiet Blower; next to her a cartoon woman/mom, hair in kerchief and bent over dusting, goes to smiling with a sparkling white napkin thanks to the Lennox Hammock Air Filter and the claim that, "You've less housework, fewer cleaning bills with Lennox!" Beyond the gutter, on page 157, a cartoon man/dad lamenting an empty pocket goes to smiling with money in hand thanks to the Penny-Pincher Heat Exchanger; "More families buy LENNOX" according to the ad. Happiness Machines, indeed, judging by curves of those cartoon mouths.

This is the monolithic representation of the American Family we are actively trying to avoid in our exploration of archetypal valence. We are not told if the Auffmanns have a Lennox furnace, but Lena expresses the practical aspects of life—and death—as they know it: "Also, how does death look when you hide in there with all that Happiness?" she asks him (156): "Also tell me, Leo, how is our life? You know how our house is. Seven in the morning, breakfast, the kids; all of you gone by eight-thirty, and it's just me and washing and cooking and socks to be darned, weeds to be dug, or I run to the store or polish silver. Who's complaining? I'm just reminding you how the house is put together, Leo" (156). Lena is cast as neither victim nor abuser in the family; she comes off as confident, articulate, and practical. Despite the very life she thrusts back in his face, Leo, being stuck in his programmatic way of seeing the world, marvels at her as if she, too, is a machine: "She was

miraculous. Her hands, like his, were always thinking for her, but in a different way, shaping the children or moving the bread dough like floured wrestlers on the wooden board. There seemed no long period of thoughts for her; thinking and doing moved from her head to her hand and back in a natural and gentle circuiting he could not and cared not to blueprint" (154).

The other family member who indicates the family's equilibrium is Saul, presumably the eldest child. He is the first to test out the Happiness Machine, sneaking into it when his father is exhausted upon its completion. Before putting two and two together, Leo hears Saul sobbing in his room and his attempt to comfort his son fails. Staying until his boy falls to sleep, Leo goes down and checks the garage, finding the Machine still hot. Realizing Saul had used it—and left wondering why he would need to—he is startled by movement:

> Above, quite suddenly, something white was exhaled from Saul's bedroom window. Leo Auffmann's heart thundered. Then he realized that the window curtain had blown out into the open night. But it had seemed as intimate and shimmering a thing as a boy's soul escaping his room. And Leo Auffmann had flung up his hands as if to thwart it, push it back into the sleeping house. (156)

In this instant he experiences a flash of his own illusionment, the unconscious breaking through his mechanical mode with enough force to excite his heart. To explain this phenomenon, Moriarty borrows the Hindu concept of *mayashakti*—which we catch ourselves experiencing when we mistake a coiled rope for a snake:

> Viksepashakti it is called, the power by which a snake is projected into a rope, by which a world is projected into Divine Ground.
>
> Avaranashakti it is called, the power that veils the rope by projecting a snake into it, that veils Divine Ground by projecting a world into it.
>
> Viksepashakti and avaranashakti are forms of mayashakti, the power that projects the world-illusion. (*TGLT2* 5)

Leo has unconsciously projected his son's soul into the billowing curtain, calling his attention to his failure in tending to his boy's spiritual needs while obsessing over the machine.

Leo, a reluctant lion-father made of slightly more attentive stuff than George Hadley in "The World the Children Made," finally takes his cue and goes back up to lock Saul's

window and guard over him as he sleeps. Both stories bear relation to the rise of television, but reading the Happiness Machine as a stand-in for TV is reductive. As a so-called family man's solo project aiming to provide his family with happiness, that subjective feeling held up, for better or worse, as an unalienable right in the U.S.A., the Happiness Machine might as well be fueled by myth. There is only so much a father can provide. He will never, for instance, harbor and nourish a growing fetus within his own flesh. But whether he is a single parent or parenting in tandem, shrewdly practical needs are of utmost importance in the raising of a child or children: they must be fed, they must be sheltered, clothed, their health needs attention as do the individual demands of their spiritual development. To move an abstract concept that has no absolute definition to the top of that list—in Leo's case happiness—throws everything off balance and risks collapsing the family altogether.

The incident with Saul upsets Lena enough to threaten separation. As she goes through "sorting out the community property" (156), which consists of a comedic doling out of Dickens novels according to how their titles reflect the current situation, she agrees to try out the Happiness Machine for herself. The family watches her enter, listens as she experiences its offerings. She narrates as it shows her Paris, London, Rome, the Pyramids, the Sphinx, plays *The Blue Danube*, spritzes perfume, makes her think she is dancing. Breaching Leo's expectations, she weeps: "'Oh, it's the saddest thing in the world!' she wailed. 'I feel awful, terrible! [...] I never even thought of being in Paris in my life. But now you got me thinking: Paris! So suddenly I want to be in Paris and I know I'm not!'" (157). Their children are distressed by her distress, leading to her final verdict: "It lies, that Sadness Machine! [...] Leo, the mistake you made is you forgot that some hour, someday, we all got to climb out of that thing and go back to dirty dishes and the beds not made" (157-158). Disbelieving her, he gets into the machine to test her claims but it overheats and catches fire. His sons drag him

out and once the machine is "burning very well indeed" (158), Lena finally lets Saul call the Fire Department.

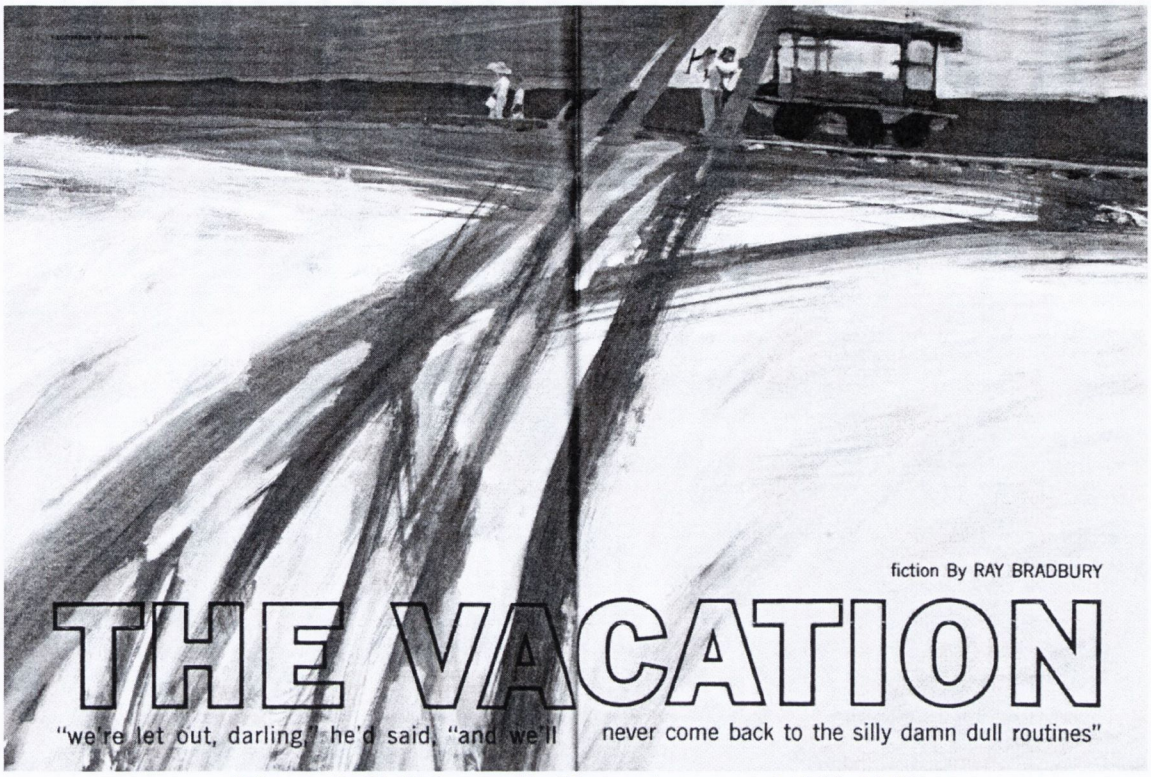
Looping back into the story at the end, Grandpa Spaulding, Douglas, and Tom reappear to watch the Auffmanns' garage burn. They chat with Leo, the self-effacing schmuck, after his family heads indoors to prepare dinner, giving him the chance to express his own revelation: "The first thing you learn in life is you're a fool. The last thing you learn in life is you're the same fool. [...] You want to see the real Happiness Machine? The one they patented a couple thousand years ago. It still runs; not good all the time, no! but it runs. It's been here all along" (158). Leading them to the front window he exhibits the Auffmanns inside going about their business as a collective: "And he watched with now gentle sorrow and now quick delight, and at last quiet acceptance as all the bits, the pieces of this house mixed, stirred, settled, poised and ran steadily again" (158). Infected by the mechanical metaphor, the Spauldings watch him tend to his family like a mechanic: "Inside, Grandfather, Douglas, and Tom saw him tinkering, make a minor adjustment here, eliminate friction here, busy among all those warm, wonderful, infinitely delicate, forever mysterious and ever-moving parts" (158). It is a patriarchal ending, his assuming the role of maintenance man for the family machine in which the wife and children are parts. And while lifting us out of the story on the hopeful note that Leo finally appreciates the dynamism of his own family, one wonders if American families living under a mechanistic cosmology can structure their lives in such a way that the mystery of existence, that soul blowing through the window at night, can manifest beyond projection and be appreciated.

Capstoning the trouble with happiness, the final story we shall discuss in light of Bradbury's American families is "The Vacation." One of his shorter pieces, it was published in the tenth holiday issue of a groundbreaking and controversial magazine at a watershed moment in American history: *Playboy* (Dec. 1963). Since magazines are dated a month ahead

of publication to ensure their presence on stands until the next issue appears, "The Vacation" was likely being sold on November 22, 1963, that cataclysmic day for the U.S.A. Examining short stories published between WWII and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, this particular story takes us as close as possible to the end of that period.

Beyond the story, the issue of *Playboy* preserves a few last glimpses of an America that was not dreaming its young President could be murdered. Jack Davis offers a lampooning Christmas card of the grinning Kennedy clan trailing in a multitude of family members into the distance (128). Humorist Robert Paul Smith contributes an ill-timed opinion piece titled "Everybody Shinny on His Own Side," its lowercase editorial blurb reading, "*a smart rap on the first family's knuckles for the way it sticks its fingers in america's cultural pie*" (123). Taking umbrage with what he perceives as President and Mrs. Kennedy's desire "to be the cultural leader of the United States" (219), Smith closes with direct address: "But as President—I'll make you a deal, Jack. If you won't make statements about art, I won't buck for Commander in Chief. | You see, neither of us knows what part, if any, of our culture, if any, will be part of history. That comes under the Department of Posterity" (219). This cheeky jab was rendered chilling while still selling on newsstands, the immediacy of tragedy guaranteeing American culture in 1963 would be preserved beyond snapshot in twenty-six seconds of 8mm Kodachrome.

Phill Renaud's long brush strokes of beige and mud sketch out a desolation across all but the upper fourth of these pages, a red line of railway cutting across a strip of blue sea and yellow and mud sky above the horizon. A man heaves a pick behind a handcar while woman and child, she in yellow sunhat and he in red shorts, wander away. We can see that expressionism is mainstream enough by 1963 to appear in *Playboy*, a style we have not encountered in the illustrations accompanying earlier stories in this thesis. There is also an aspect of American Regionalism present, which makes sense given Renaud's studies at the



[Fig. xvii: Phill Renaud's illustration spread (100-101)]

Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. The art is exact in its roughness, peering through the empty outline of the title in its block capitals.

All of this matches the tone and feel of the story, its three characters nearly indistinct as individuals beyond their sexes and roles within a family. Bradbury presents "a man, his wife and their small seven-year-old son" (102). The man, costumed impractically in "his business suit and vest and tie and hat," is at times "Papa," "the husband" (102), and "Dad" (110). His wife, who wears a "great shadowing straw hat which had been tied over her golden hair with a bright yellow ribbon," is also "the woman" (102), though her introduction as his wife puts her under his possession, existing foremost in relation to him and, by proxy, patriarchy. Their son is also "the boy," but surfaces as his parents do not with a name: Jim (102), diminutive of James, the name of two apostles in the New Testament. This badge of identity, a name, sets him apart from his parents, illustrating an understanding in depth psychology that in the first half of life the psyche focuses on defining oneself as an individual

and the latter half, occurring after a crisis of middle age, seeks to reunite us with the collective mystery of being.

This trio of characters forms that potentially dogmatic archetypal image of the American Family. Here it is: the white, middle class, American father, mother, and child, together, committed, and existing without outside influence, the American Family as island unto itself. For this profoundly vulnerable social unit, as the story goes, is the last one to exist: "They had wakened one morning and the world was empty" (102). No bodies, no carnage, nothing but the works and architecture of humanity—and these three people—are all that is left of people in America. When we join the family, they are traveling by handcar on a rusting railroad track toward Monterey and Palo Alto, with tentative plans to travel in the coming years on this extended "vacation" to Sacramento, Seattle, Yellowstone, Tucson, Florida, New York, Chicago, Mexico City. The handcar is a curious choice of transport, dependent as it typically is on cooperative physical effort to make it go. The family vehicle relies on family involvement to get them anywhere, although, being restricted to rail lines, their path is set ahead of them. When we first meet the family, they have to stop because, as the man can see, "There's a break ahead. We may have to wait while I set a few back in place" (102). This is not the freedom of the American highway, although we recall in "The Scythe" how the Joerg family, following the seemingly free road, inevitably arrive in the valley of death. Roads in America, though forming a vast circulatory system for the nation, are still pathways, not granting absolute access to the land; railroads are twice as fickle.

The cause of the mass disappearance, similar to the evangelical Christian concept of the rapture, is an absolute mystery. The family has no answer for it, neither does the narrator. Just as there is no explanation for the catastrophe that ruins America in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), there is none here, although both settings differ profoundly. Bradbury's situation is made ironic by the fact that the night before it happens, the man asks his wife, "'I

wonder when He will get tired of us and just rub us all out? [...] Wouldn't it be nice' – he lit his pipe and puffed it – 'if we woke tomorrow and everyone in the world was gone and everything was starting over?'" (102). When she entertains the idea and asks, in that age of nuclear fear, if he would "press a button right now and make it happen," he does not hold back: "'I think I would,' he said. 'Nothing violent. Just have everyone vanish off the face of the earth. Just leave the land and the sea and the growing things like flowers and grass and fruit trees. And the animals, of course, let them stay. Everything except man, who hunts when he isn't hungry, eats when full, and is mean when no one's bothered him'" (102). She lets him talk but expresses a devastating con to his list of pros: "Wouldn't we be *lonely*?" (102).

They took to this "new world," as Bradbury calls it, "with remarkable calm at first, perhaps because they had not liked the city for so many years and had had so many friends who were not truly friends, and had lived a boxed and separate life of their own within a mechanical hive" (102). And yet the sudden and persistent absence of people, even the disingenuous ones, shows early signs of becoming unbearable. "'I feel guilty,' she said. 'They gone and we here. And . . . I feel happy. Why? I *should* be unhappy'" (110). The husband's response expresses the emptiness of his own selfishness: "Our only responsibility *is* being happy" (110). And again, as in "The Happiness Machine," Bradbury presents a father prioritizing happiness as the family's responsibility, overstepping the exceptionally American unalienable right to its mere pursuit. And this is no post-Flood narrative. When the wife worries that they must be fruitful and multiply, the husband refuses: "No. Let Jim be the last. After he's grown and gone let the horses and cows and ground squirrels and garden spiders have the world. They'll get on. And someday some other species that can combine a natural happiness with a natural curiosity will build cities that won't even look like cities to us, and survive" (110). Their son, by this decree, will be far lonelier than either of them. Their refusal to expand the family is a damnation to their isolated community of three.

The man finally feels the pang of loss, a delayed response, crying into the sand. He offers up a wish that runs counter to the one before: "Wouldn't it be nice if we went to sleep tonight and in the night, somehow, it all came back. All the foolishness, all the noise, all the hate, all the terrible things, all the nightmares, all the wicked people and stupid children, all the mess, all the smallness, all the confusion, all the hope, all the need, all the love. Wouldn't it be nice?" (110). Jim retreats in tears to the seashore below and casts a message in a bottle into the water. There is no reason to expect it will be found and read, not in this empty world. The woman wonders what he has written, if it was their wish or something for himself, perhaps a wish that she and her husband would disappear and leave him free. When he returns to the handcar, "She searched his colorless eyes, could not read the answer; dared not ask" (110). The colorlessness of his eyes is another emptying, a voiding of vitality in the organs of seeing. And again, at the end, when they re-board the handcar with a pail full of shells, his seven-year-old sight is distant:

> The boy nodded, his eyes faraway.
>
> They looked back at where they had come from, and then ahead to where they were going.
>
> "Goodbye, place," said the boy, and waved. (110)

Thinking back, earlier in the story, to when the family has to stop on the tracks—"There's a break ahead. We may have to wait while I set a few back in place" (102)—this family is railroaded, much the way Americans were by the actions of Lee Harvey Oswald. The extracted quotation stretching across the bottom of Phill Renaud's two page painting could very well apply to the passing of the era that President Kennedy's assassination marked: "'we're let out, darling,' he'd said, 'and we'll never come back to the silly damn dull routines'" (100-101). Nothing shatters a people's identity as a civilized group and shocks routine quite like the murder of their political leader by one of their own.

Writing the following year of the mythic significance of President Kennedy's funeral weekend, Campbell viewed it as an unprecedented collective ritual:

> For here was an enormous nation; yet during those four days it was made a unanimous community, all of us participating in the same way, simultaneously, in a single symbolic event. To my knowledge, this was the first and only thing of its kind in peacetime that has ever given me the sense of being a member of this whole national community, engaged as a unit in the observance of a deeply significant rite. [...] The system of sentiments essential to our survival as an organic unit was effectively reactivated and evoked, emotionally and tellingly represented for and to us, during that weekend of unanimous meditation. (*Myths to Live By* 53-54)

Unforeseen, on the other side of December 1963, would be the Beatles, President Johnson's War on Poverty, "Great Society," and Jobs Bill, escalation of American military action in Vietnam, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 followed by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, popularization of lysergic acid diethylamide, increased broadcasting of color television, the Black Panthers, the first heart transplant, the first Super Bowl, the first handheld calculator, Warhol's Campbell's Soup cans, Thurgood Marshall becoming the first black Justice of the Supreme Court, the assassinations of Kennedy's brother Robert and Martin Luther King, Jr., the protest of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Shirley Chisholm becoming the first black woman elected to Congress, a presidential win for Richard Nixon, the Tet Offensive and the My Lai Massacre, hippies, Yippies, John and Yoko, Tiny Tim, R. Crumb, Woodstock, the Occupation of Alcatraz by Indians of All Tribes, Neil Armstrong becoming the first living thing to imprint the surface of the moon, the Weathermen and their declaration of war against "Amerikan Imperialism," the Kent State massacre, Watergate, and so on, and so forth. All of that and more awaited readers of the man, the woman, and the boy. They are, these characters in this story, turned out, cast away. It is an attempt at sending off the archetypal image of the American Family, an exploration of how isolating and trapping that construct is as an ideal. There is no safety for them in a country where the President is not safe, and so, as this short fiction and that major historical moment coincide, the patriarchal family of the middle class white majority at the time is unmasked as not enough. It will not do.

4.6 Family Myths

> "Each of us to our own. None of us the same. All wild. That's how the Family goes."
>
> "The Traveler"
> (*Stories of Ray Bradbury* 36)

Worthy of their own study, Bradbury's Elliott clan, known as the Family, appears in seven of his short stories. Four were published during the era at hand: "The Traveller" (*Weird Tales*, Mar. 1946), "The Homecoming" (*Mademoiselle*, Oct. 1946), "Uncle Einar" (*Dark Carnival*, 1947), and "The April Witch" (*Saturday Evening Post*, 5 April 1952).[45] The Elliotts are a lineage of paranormal oddballs living in a rural Illinois mansion, a sort of Midwestern Addams Family—Charles Addams, whose own macabre Family debuted in *The New Yorker* in 1938, provided the art for publication of "The Homecoming" in *Mademoiselle*. The Elliotts diverge from the families we have considered in that they know they are weird, strange, set apart from mainstream Americans. They openly invert the imposing archetypal image of the American Family, opposing its bland, white bread narrative of stability by presenting individualities ranging from vampirism to great green wings to the ability of assimilating with and directing another person's soul.

And yet from the Joergs to the family on "vacation," stories featuring white American families trying to make do, we witness a valence of experiences that defy simplified taxonomical classification under the heading of American Family. Bradbury defies such an act, presenting in microcosmic fictions a diversity of hopes and fears—and responses to those hopes and fears—by American characters of the era. There is either a myth of the postwar American Family that gathers under its heading all of these inflections and more—meaning all families of the era, from all racial and socioeconomic circumstances, must be included—

[45] The other three appeared decades later: "On the Orient, North" and "West of October" (*The Toynbee Convector*, 1988), "From the Dust Returned" (*Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, September 1994). One of Bradbury's final novels, *From the Dust Returned* (2001), ties all seven Elliott Family stories together, a full fifty-five years after the first was written.

or, as I would prefer to frame it, myths of American families, expressing the gamut without the constriction of a unified theory. Thinking, as Moriarty puts it, philomythically, "Myths are instinct with wonder. Like nothing else perhaps in our culture, they uncompromisingly mediate the difficult strangeness of self and of world. Therefore the philomythos has as good a chance of reaching and living in the Truth as the philosophos has" (*TGLT3* IX). Bradbury's suite of short family myths rescues us from reducing the diversities within white American families to one dominating image of the nuclear family. As soon as we discover the subjectivities alive within seemingly similar, "perfectly normal" families, the static symbol of the patriarchal postwar, nineteen-fifties, pre-Johnson white American family cannot hold. This is showing true respect toward an archetype, honoring its medley of forms, actively refusing to confuse one of its common articulations for its whole.

Chapter 5

HOPE FOR WHOLENESS

BRADBURY'S HELIOCENTRIC INDIVIDUATION

5.1 THE SUN

> The most astounding fact is the knowledge that the atoms that comprise life on Earth, the atoms that make up the human body, are traceable to the crucibles that cooked light elements into heavy elements in their core, under extreme temperatures and pressures. These stars, the high mass ones among them, went unstable in their later years. They collapsed and then exploded, scattering their enriched guts across the galaxy, guts made of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and all the fundamental ingredients of life itself. These ingredients become part of gas clouds that condense, collapse, form the next generation of solar systems, stars with orbiting planets. And those orbiting planets now have the ingredients for life itself. So that when I look up at the night sky and I know that, yes, we are part of this universe, we are in this universe, but perhaps more important than both of those facts, is that the universe is in us. When I reflect on that fact, I look up—many people feel small, 'cause they're small and the universe is big—but I feel big. Because my atoms came from those stars.
>
> Neil deGrasse Tyson
> ("*TIME*'s Ten Questions")

Collier's readers in March 1952 found, in the second paragraph of the cover feature, a fear-mongering call to the stars: "What you read here is not science fiction. It is serious fact. Moreover, it is an urgent warning that the U.S. must immediately embark on a long-range development program to secure for the West 'space superiority.' If we do not, somebody else will. That somebody else very probably would be the Soviet Union" ("What Are We Waiting For?" 23). Eight more issues, the final published in April 1954, focused on the conceived actualities of space exploration, introducing it as a national project that was, above all speculation, possible. These articles, featuring rocket scientist Wernher von Braun and

conceptual paintings by Chesley Bonestell, also inspired three episodes of *Disneyland*, a weekly TV show, two airing in 1955 and one in 1957. These propagandistic articles and shows helped convince Americans, with the urgency of anticipated competition with a hostile Russia, to support what became known as the Space Race. In this same decade, one of the most popular writers of stories imagining life in space was Ray Bradbury. His space tales in the nineteen-fifties, kicking off with *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), are particularly telling when considering how Americans, by the time Kennedy became President, put their faith in the space program. An enormous psychological shift in the mainstream had to occur and Bradbury played a popularizing role in it. Americans had to accept a new myth about themselves, as being space-faring people, in order for it to actually happen. And where *Collier's* pointed to the Moon and Mars, Bradbury points readers to the sun.

Joseph Campbell, through his work as a comparative mythologist, sought to reconcile myth with the sciences. In considering the growing twentieth-century scientific narrative of our origins, he found no conflict between it and a mythic perspective. In fact he saw the scientific narrative *as* a mythic perspective:

> Outer space is within inasmuch as the laws of space are within us; outer and inner space are the same. We know, furthermore, that we have actually been born from space, since it was out of primordial space that the galaxy took form, of which our life-giving sun is a member. And this earth, of whose material we are made, is a flying satellite of that sun. We are, in fact, productions of this earth. We are, as it were, its organs. Our eyes are the eyes of this earth; our knowledge is the earth's knowledge. And the earth, as we now know, is a production of space. (*IROS* 2)

Where we stand today in terms of our understanding of the sun, if we align ourselves with the scientific viewpoint, is on a spinning planet in orbit of a star. And where many now see a star, people once saw Apollo, Helios, Lugh, Ra, Sunna, Sol Invictus, Surya, Tonatiuh, a whole pancultural pantheon of solar deities. Many people still recognize the sun as god-head to this day—even, from a certain angle, those scientists who tell us everything we see, all that is living and inert, can be traced back to the heart of a star.

The sun has long held a particular fascination for mythologists. Jacob Bryant, in *A New System* (1774-1776) deconstructed pagan religions according to sun worship, which he saw as a lesser form of worship of the Hebrew God. Friedrich Max Müller championed a study of mythology via comparative philology, popular in his day but abandoned by later theorists, by which an Aryan root language formed the basis of solar myths found in Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Zend, Celtic, and Gothic cultures. His seminal work, *Comparative Mythology* (1856), is entirely sun-centered: "Where we speak of the sun following the dawn, the ancient poets could only speak and think of the Sun loving and embracing the dawn. What is with us a sunset, was to them the night growing old, decaying or dying. Our sunrise was to them the Night giving birth to a brilliant child" (481). One will also find a vine of solar mythology growing across Sir James George Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890-1922), even though its presence is tolerated as an opportunity for refutation via Frazer's own purifactory theory.

"[T]he sun is a symbol of the source of life and the ultimate wholeness of man," Jung ascertained. "Now, the sun is an antique symbol that is still very close to us" (1936/1968, *CW 12,* ¶112). His scholarly interest in mythology's relation to psychology began with a solar connection in 1909 when treating a man suffering from schizophrenia. The patient shared a vision of the sun where it had a long tube hanging from it; wind's source was the waving back and forth of this tube. Jung later came across a similar image in an esoteric book on myth recorded by a member of the cult of Mithras, an ancient religion practiced during the time of the Roman Empire. Presuming the "Solar Phallus Man" could not have seen the book on Mithras, Jung was spurred to explain the comparable visions arising independently across time and culture, whereby he began expanding his own model of the unconscious:

> The observation [of independent invention] was not an isolated case: it was manifestly not [to be sure] a question of inherited ideas, but of an inborn disposition to produce parallel thought-formations, or rather of identical psychic structures common to all men, which I later called the archetypes of the collective unconscious. (*Symbols of Transformation* 158)

Later still, Jung was inspired when meeting Pueblos in New Mexico (1923) and Elgonyi in Kenya (1925), in large part due to their cultural relationships with the sun:

> [The Pueblo's] life is cosmologically meaningful, for he helps the father and preserver of all life in his daily rise and descent. If we set against this our own self-justifications, the meaning of our own lives as it is formulated by our reason, we cannot help but see our poverty. Out of sheer envy we are obliged to smile at the Indians' naïveté and to plume ourselves on our cleverness; for otherwise we would discover how impoverished and down at the heels we are. Knowledge does not enrich us; it removes us more and more from the mythic world in which we were once at home by right of birth. (*MDR* 281)

Jung felt these different groups of people possessed in their solar appreciations something Westerners had lost, a vitality in their own understandings of existence detrimentally absent in our own. The stress on reason in the Western world has created a societal atmosphere in which many find claims that we are the sun's children utterly absurd. And yet twentieth and now twenty-first century scientists like Carl Sagan and Neil deGrasse Tyson have worked to reframe just that, insisting that we *are* "star stuff." This idea is not brand new; Sir Arthur Eddington, an English astrophysicist, noted in 1928 that, "We are bits of stellar matter that got cold by accident, bits of a star gone wrong" (Baker 143).

In Campbell's estimation, the sun, even when thought of as merely a giant thermonuclear furnace, holds a sacred significance within the unconscious in terms of individual growth and the expansion of consciousness:

> The sun is [a] symbol of rebirth, evoking that idea of not coming back at all, of not being reborn but of passing beyond the spheres of rebirth altogether to a transcendent light. The typical image for this is the sun. The moon carries darkness within it but wherever the sun goes there is no darkness. There are only the shadows of those forces that do not open themselves to its light. (*Thou Art That* 89)

The concept of illumination, be it physical, mental, or spiritual, is rooted by our existence in relation to the sun, which is the ultimate source of light from our vantage point on Earth. Here is where Campbell accepts a metaphysical aspect to reality, or even an ultimate reality experienced only through transcendence. Echoing Jung's solar realization upon meeting the

Pueblos and Elgonyi, Campbell saw a lacking in the West's relationship to the sun, and with that dearth an opportunity to mythically reorient our understanding of ourselves and the sun in accordance with scientific discoveries:

> Whereas our eyes see the sun rise daily in the east, hang high in the heavens at noon, and go down in glory in the west, what our brains now know is nothing of the kind. With that fateful publication [of Copernicus's *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium libri VI* in 1543], the recognized idea of the earth in relation to outer space became forever separated from the daily experience of the same. An intellectual concept had refuted and displaced the nevertheless persistent sensory precept. The heliocentric universe has never been translated into a mythology. Science and religion have therewith gone apart. (*IROS* 17)

The effects of the split between science and religion are impossible to fully quantify. Woody Allen's childhood flashback in *Annie Hall* (1977), in which his character explains to a psychiatrist that his depression began after reading that the universe is expanding, wouldn't strike the funny bone like it does if we were not so uncomfortable with the futility that accompanies such knowledge. "Well, the universe is everything and if it's expanding," Alvy explains, "someday it will break apart and that will be the end of everything." As astrophysicist Tyson states, we desire feelings of connection and relevance, which one typically will not find in the latest articles on helioseismology or the magnetic topology of sunspots.

And yet sun symbols have persisted in the demythologized West, often in plain sight. In terms of American history, one was present at the signing of the Constitution. Benjamin Franklin, so often celebrated by Americans for his ingenuity and wit, pointed out its significance at a crucial moment for the fledgling government in 1787: "At the end of the [Constitutional] Convention, he said about the painting of the sun on the back of George Washington's chair (Washington had presided over the Convention) that he was happy 'to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun'" (Robertson 58). That rising sun appears 153 years later on Washington's chair back in Howard Chandler Christy's *Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States* (1940), which hangs today outside the House of

Representatives in the U.S. Capitol. There is some tint of religiosity to the painting's composition, where the historical figures represented are identifiable in a way similar to Christ's disciples in Leonardo's painting of the last supper. *Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States* is an example of iconography supporting the nation's myth of its own numinous conception.

Contemporaneous with the completion of Christy's painting and Bradbury's lifetime, one also thinks of the suns encountered by American soldiers during WWII, both the rising and ray-bursting suns appearing on Japanese flags. Those suns were, from 7 December 1941 to 15 August 1945, the symbol of an enemy nation. With regard to the end of that war that made the U.S.A. a world power, J. Robert Oppenheimer's comments about witnessing the first atomic bomb test leave a hollow ring: "If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst at once into the sky, that would be like the splendor of the mighty one" (Jungk 201). The physicist, "who liked to think that he knew some Sanskrit" (*Other People's Myths* 157), was quoting the *Bhagavad Gita*, which makes up a portion of the *Mahabharata*, a sacred Hindu text. Doniger has noted this occurrence of a Jewish scientist finding an analog to his own lab's super-weapon in a story from another tradition: "Perhaps Oppenheimer's inability to face directly his own shock and guilt, the full realization and acknowledgement of what he had helped to create, led him to distance the experience by viewing it in terms of someone else's myth of doomsday" (*Other People's Myths* 158).

There is another point worth making about his comment, hinging upon a twentieth-century scientific understanding of the sun. Oppenheimer's mythic observation is intriguing because of his privileged relation to the processes of fusion and, more so, fission. The war-changing process developed by scientists in the U.S.A. was nuclear fission, in which the nucleus of an atom is split through a chain reaction. This split creates a rush of energy, which has been exploited ever since its discovery in the development of warheads. This runs

opposite to the ongoing process at work within the sun. "Nuclear fusion is the merging together of light atomic nuclei to form heavier ones" (Baker 140), a force understood but beyond the reach of scientists to this day. It was German-American physicist Hans Bethe who explained that fusion of hydrogen into helium is what causes stars to shine, demystifying the cause of our sun's property of illumination. Returning to the line from the *Bhagavad Gita*, where "the radiance of a thousand suns" might "burst at once into the sky," one senses the atomic bomb's failure to produce something constructive, for it is inauthentic, reaching only the level of simile, being "*like* the splendor of the mighty one." Harnessed fission was the profound discovery of the nineteen forties, while fusion continued to rise in the morning and set in the evening and shine well beyond human reach day after day.

Amidst these and countless other suns halfway through the twentieth century,[46] Ray Bradbury offered up his own suns in many short stories. At a time boasting fission, his suns remind readers of the fusion above. This is not to be confused with concepts of perfection. "Health, like wholeness," Hillman writes, "is completion of individuality, and to this belongs the dark side of life as well: symptoms, suffering, tragedy, and death. *Wholeness and health therefore do not exclude these 'negative' phenomena*; they are requisite for health" (*Suicide and the Soul* 125; italics in original). Wholeness, I sense, is sometimes confused with wholesomeness, a condition caught up in subjective values. Wholesome is itself an oxymoron, for "some" suggests a portion while "whole" is entirety—this is not wholeness. The Sun may be our best example of wholeness because its light, warmth, and gravity have been essential in life's existence on Earth, while being at the same time a massive, ongoing explosion that would eradicate all life if we came too close to it. It is, all at once, creation and destruction: wholeness.

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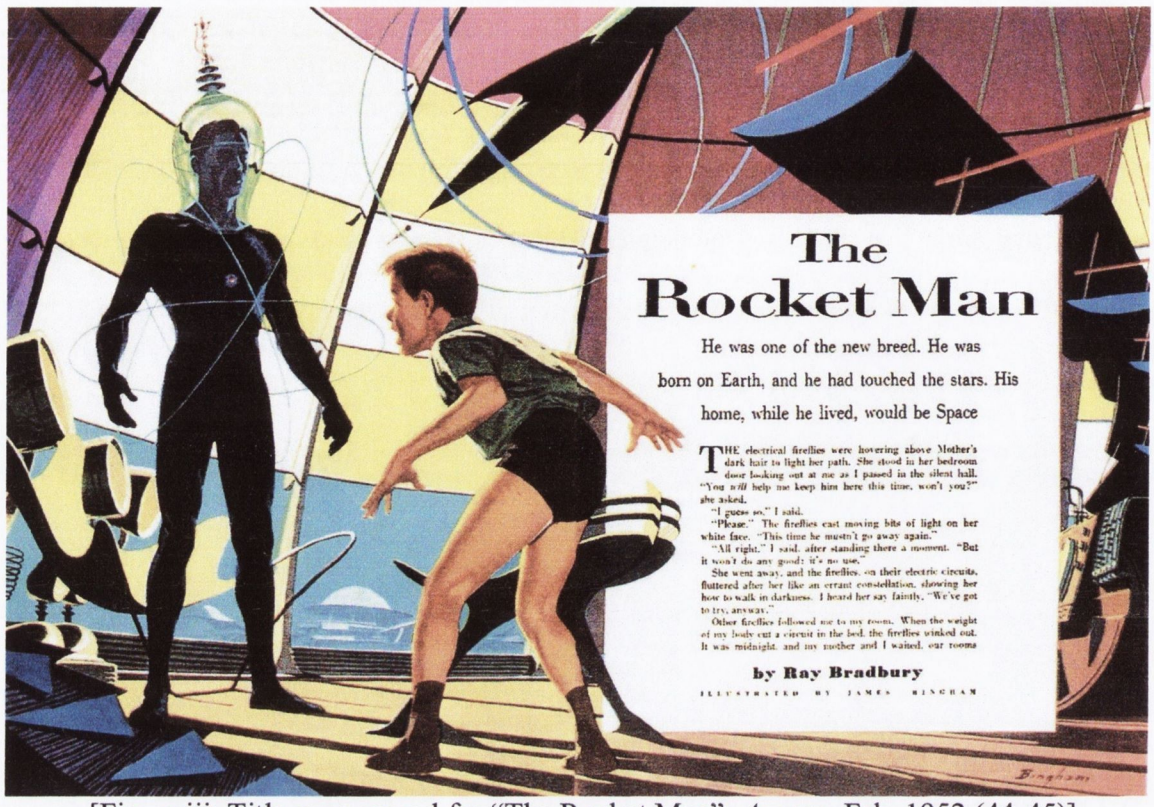
[46] Another obvious 1950s connection is SUN Records, the Memphis record label that started the careers of Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison, and Elvis Presley, who would revolutionize pop music by the end of the decade.

Do Bradbury's symbolic suns remythologize our demythologized, scientifically-defined sun so that we might behold it once again with mystery? When Campbell wrote in 1986 that "the heliocentric universe has never been translated into a mythology," had Bradbury been doing just that since the nineteen forties? By examining how he inflects the sun in different ways in different stories, what form will appear when we consider these representations as a constellation? This chapter focuses on several of his short stories, published between 1948 and 1954, that reignite the sun with a spiritual light, recalling something he told an interviewer in 1964: "With amiable good will accept yourself as fool, dumbbell, clod, murderer, dreamer, dark shadow and lover of the sun. Man is Paradox" (Aggelis 23).

5.2 Death of a Rocket Man

> I'm not the man they think I am at home
> Oh no, no, no
> I'm a Rocket Man
> Rocket Man, burnin' out his fuse up here alone
>
> "Rocket Man", Elton John
> and Bernie Taupin

The image below is the title page spread of Bradbury's short story "The Rocket Man," as it appeared in *Argosy* (Feb. 1952). Originally published a year earlier in *Maclean's* (1 March 1951), here it is presented with a lush illustration by James Bingham and an editorial hook: "He was one of the new breed. He was born on Earth, and he had touched the stars. His home, while he lived, would be Space." This publication is the one we carry forth in this study, most especially because it came out a month prior to *Collier's* inaugural cover-feature on space, titled "Man Will Conquer Space Soon: Top Scientists Tell How in 15 Startling Pages." Bingham's painting might be classified as twenty-first century Rockwelliana. The clean lines, panes of color, and stylized furniture all fit in with a 1950s vision of the future,



[Fig. xviii: Title page spread for "The Rocket Man": *Argosy*, Feb. 1952 (44-45)]

but, as in Norman Rockwell's work from the same period, focus rests on the people. The boy appears to be about ten and awestruck in the shadow of the black-clad man standing before him. The man, presumably the Rocket Man of the story's title, commands an imperious stance, his head encased in a glass helmet that casts his complexion blue and grey. Three dull electrons spin around his torso where we find, at his solar plexus, a red dot, Bingham's touch, a detail not found in the story itself but appropriate all the same because "The Rocket Man" is another of Bradbury's nuclear families that cannot stay together. This scene does not play out in the actual story, unless this is showing one of the father's moments of return, making the boy being a ten-year-old Telemachus. He is certainly not fourteen yet, the age the narrator was when his father died, but there is a child-Hamlet-meeting-ghost-Hamlet aspect to the image. The Rocket Man's uniform, described by Bradbury as "like a black nebula, stars glittering here and there, distantly, in the material" (46), comes out black like soot on the printed page. It looks as though he has been charred, as he will be by the story's sad ending,

suggesting to an *Argosy* reader picking it up that perhaps this is a spirit, and one who died in fire. No account of afterlife visitation makes its way into the story, but it is no stretch to consider this image as depicting a man who has an impending rendezvous with violent death.

In contrast, the two page spread from Canadian magazine *Maclean's* the previous year focuses on the saddest aspect of the story: a family in turmoil. The boy, on the edge of his self-rocking bed, wonders upward in dark, wrinkled pajamas at a cloud of green atomic dust wafting from a pair of cupped hands, presumably his father's. Behind him, his mother's tearful face, fingers on her cheeks, precipitates in the nebula. All sorts of molecular swirls mark the cloud, representing a part in the story when the boy puts his father's suit into a centrifuge and releases the solar system's powders, which he examines under a microscope with imaginative effect: "brilliant motes of meteor dust, comet tail and loam from far Jupiter, glistening like worlds themselves which drew me down the tube" (46). Michael Mitchell's artwork conflates the story's tragedy by showing the Rocket Man's offering hands releasing both his son's wonder at his career in space exploration and his wife's unbearable grief about it. The boy's pajamas curdle upon him, caught as he is between both parents in a marriage that cannot work.



[Fig. xix: Title page spread by Michael Mitchell for *Maclean's*, 1 Mar. 1951 (14-15)]

Narrated by Doug, "The Rocket Man" is a grown son's reflection on his family's strained dynamics when he was growing up, focusing primarily on his father's inability to provide his mother with emotional security. As noted in the previous chapter, Bradbury's middle name was Douglas,[47] but we are not so concerned with autobiographical aspects unavailable to readers at the time. Douglas comes from a Scottish surname meaning "dark river" (*BTN*), a connotation befitting a son entranced by his father's exploits in black space and carried along in his early life by currents beyond his control. We do not learn the amount of time that has passed since the events recounted but do know Doug was fourteen when the bulk of the story took place, when he was made the go-between for his mother and father, both of them unable to connect. The problem this family carries is a conflict with the father's career. As a Rocket Man, he is constantly absent, flying into space on missions that take him across the solar system. Like the clipper ship captain proverbially married to the sea, Dad's true love is outer space.

The Rocket Man, also called Dad, is the only character whose given name is never revealed. Doug lets slip his own name, and Lilly as his mother's—as in lilies, the flowers of funerals and purity (*BTN*)—but the father is only ever named by two of his roles, Dad and the Rocket Man, and the story's title tells us which of those comes foremost. His name might as well be Willy Loman; it is never made clear why his rocket falls into the sun at the end, if by accident or committing self-immolation. He is unable to reconcile his own need to be himself with his marriage, no matter what tactics Mom employs to try to keep him grounded. His own attempts to ground himself, by gardening, fail to ease the space-yearning anxiety:

> There he was with his long dark arms moving swiftly, planting, tamping, fixing, cutting, pruning, his dark face always down to the soil, his eyes always down to what he was doing, never up to the sky, never looking at me, or Mother, even, unless we knelt with him to feel the earth soak up through the overalls at our knees, to put our hands in the black dirt and not look at the

[47] See footnote on page 214, in 4.5 AMERICAN FAMILIES.

> bright, crazy sky. Then he would glance to either side, to Mother or me, and give us a gentle wink, and go on, bent down, face down, the sky staring at his back. . . . (46)

His relationship with Earth itself is no match for the pull of life beyond it, in the unknown frontiers above. This man needs a lot of space—outer space—and she cannot handle his absences. Instead of incorporating this limitation in his personality into the way he lives his life, he hurls himself back and forth between two lives, the idle one with wife and son on Earth and the adventurous one that takes him to other moons and planets.

The tension here is that of a patriarchal family in which the father's work, while providing for the material needs of wife and son, separates him from the family for long stretches. Plenty of American families have dealt with this problem and, as opportunities in a growing infrastructure grew throughout the country in the mid-twentieth century, many husbands and fathers were called to lives on the road. The Rocket Man is a lot like a long haul trucker, a career that grew with the new interstate system of highways. Doug relates how he attempts to hide his love for life out there in clumsy moments: "'It's the best thing is a lifetime of best things.' Then he caught himself. 'Oh it's really nothing at all. Routine. You wouldn't like it'" (83). His attempt to dissuade Doug mostly arises, it seems, from a desire to protect his wife; he knows that she cannot handle a husband in space and losing her son to it, too, would destroy her. His own ability to relate to his boy is undeveloped, occurring in intense bursts only after he's exhausted his own appraisals of the earthly lacks of life on a rocket: "And I knew now we would talk, as we had always talked, for three hours straight" (83). In Dad mode he listens to Doug, shows him approval with chest slaps, but his advice always returns to his own condition as a Rocket Man, overriding his attention toward his son.

> "I want you to promise me something."
> "What?"
> "Don't ever be a Rocket Man."
> [...]
> "I've thought about being a Rocket Man for a long time," I said.

> He didn't hear me. "I try to stay here. Last Saturday when I got home I started trying so damned hard to stay here." (84)

This is hardly fair to Doug, a young teenager who just wants his father to hear him. The Rocket Man is already consumed before being consumed by the sun.

When he promises the next rocket mission will be his last, it certainly is:

> His ship had fallen into the sun.
>
> And the sun was big and fiery and merciless, and it was always in the sky and you couldn't get away from it.
>
> So for a long time after my father died my mother slept through the days and wouldn't go out. We had breakfast at midnight and lunch at three in the morning, and dinner at the cold dim hour of six a.m. We went to all-night shows and went to bed at sunrise.
>
> And, for a long while, the only days we ever went out to walk were the days when it was raining and there was no sun. (84)

"Archetypally the luminous bodies are always symbols of consciousness, of the spiritual side of the human psyche" (Neumann *Great Mother* 57). The sun is the divine circle, a mandala, the entirety of conscious, unconscious, and collective unconscious—the whole potentiality of every individual. The light-giving sun we see outside is reflected by a source of illumination within. From a post-Jungian perspective, the Rocket Man's fall into the sun indicates that he is ultimately consumed by himself, by his own potential. "The greatest limitation for man is the 'self'; it is manifested in the experience: 'I am only that!'" wrote Jung, "Only consciousness of our narrow confinement in the self forms the link to the limitlessness of the unconscious" (*MDR* 357). In his struggle to be true to himself, Dad returns to star-cinders in the sun.

His death sends Mom indoors, an ending not unlike that suffered by so many of myth's great exiles. Her grief is a bitter one, refusing to forgive the sun itself for claiming her husband and the father of her son. Previously she had railed against the night sky, knowing it kept her husband away from her: "Mother wasn't afraid of the sky in the day so much, but it was the night stars that she wanted to turn off, and sometimes I could almost see her reaching for a switch in her mind, but never finding it" (46). Doug tells of buying her "some darker,

greener shades" because "Once she said the light was too strong at night" (83). He is her protector, finding himself in the position of providing care for a parent before he is mature, an inverse of the parenting relationship that some children face. She, too, is consumed—by her husband's absences—reacting to him coldly when he does return home, unable to make direct eye contact with him.

The problem, as the Rocket Man understands it, is expressed plainly to Doug:

> "I'm not there for her," said Dad.
>
> But other days she would be there and he would be there for her, and they would hold hands and walk around the block, or take rides, with Mom's hair flying like a girl's behind her, and she would cut off all the mechanical devices in the kitchen and bake him incredible cakes and pies and cookies, looking deep into his face, her smile a real smile. But at the end of such days when he was there to her, she would always cry. And Dad would stand helpless, gazing about the room as if to find the answer, but never finding it. (83)

There is no balance in this family. The boy plays both caregiver for his mother and confidant for his father, roles that many fourteen-year-olds will not find themselves prepared to fulfill. The most remarkable character here may in fact be Doug, our narrator, who relays the tragic story of how his family came apart with maturity and a notable lack of acrimony. As a boy he revered his father for his career in space, sympathized with his mother's emotional frailties, and never seems to blame any of them for what happened, not even himself, as children of suffering relationships sometimes do. He accepts that his father was enigmatic and that his mother was insecure, and certainly makes it clear that he loves both as individuals.

The Rocket Man is not the only character from this period in Bradbury's career to combust in the sun. In "A Little Journey" (*Galaxy Science Fiction*, Aug. 1951) we meet a con man preying on others' hopes for salvation, Mr. Thirkell, and an old woman named Mrs. Bellowes who follows him to Mars to find God. A hundred other little old ladies have given everything they have to his divine promise. These women are eager in the elderly phase of life to experience a direct relationship with God. Mrs. Amelia Bellowes has previously

invested her faith in Hinduism, spiritualists, astrologers, and evangelists, her openness to various traditions humanistic—and yet, in none of them has she found what she seeks. Amelia, a variant of the name Amalia, means "work" (*BTN*), fitting for a character who prioritizes her spiritual quest, who is working at it.

Thirkell, of course, is a fraud and a materialist: "I don't know anything about space. He's not out there anyway. I lied. I don't know where He is, and I couldn't find Him if I wanted to" (156). When the ladies discover the lie, they overwhelm him, making him take them in his rust bucket rocket to meet God, as guaranteed. In a variation on Bradbury's story "Kaleidoscope" (*Thrilling Wonder Stories*, Oct. 1949), in which astronauts are scattered to deaths in space after a collision, Thirkell's rickety rocket explodes and the travelers are scattered into blackness. Like the Rocket Man, the conman is destined for solar cremation:

> *There goes Mr. Thirkell*, thought Mrs. Bellowes.
> And she knew where he was going. He was going to be burned and roasted and broiled good, but very good.
> Mr. Thirkell was falling down into the Sun. (158)

And so Thirkell is blown by the actions of Mrs. Bellowes, herself a working bellows, "to be burned and roasted and broiled good, but very good." The pilgrims, on the other hand, are destined to die floating through space, spared fiery end for a suffocating whimper. Thirkell's trajectory sends him toward an overwhelming end, one he is not ready for, because he lived in denial of his self.

In totality, Bradbury's sun engulfs the self-possessed and self-denying alike. The con man is fed to the sun's bright hellfire in a stroke of poetic justice, incinerated for his sins against a hundred old women—his death brought upon himself for unscrupulous deception and manipulation. The Rocket Man, who fights his own soul to live between a grounded family life on Earth and a dangerous adventure in the stars, is a tragic figure, losing his life under circumstances left mysterious. There is no knowing how it happened, why it happened,

if it was a malfunction with the rocket or a deliberate act. He leaves his son with a discussion of the "million" ways to die in space, but hurtling into the sun is not one he voices:

> "They never find you."
> "Where do you go?"
> "A billion miles away. Traveling graves, they call them. You become a meteor or a planetoid traveling forever through space."
> I said nothing.
> "One thing," he said later, "it's quick in space. Death. It's over like that. You don't linger. Most of the time you don't even know it. You're dead and that's it." (84)

This may have come as a comfort to the Rocket Man, knowing that he would not suffer, but there is no comfort in it for Lilly or Doug, whose pain over his death will not end, will linger, will be all they know for grief's long term. For them the life-giving and life-ending sun is a constant reminder of their personal loss and the painful absences that led up to it.

5.3 Venusian Chronicles

> Venus near her! smiling downward at this earthlier earth of ours,
> Closer on the sun, perhaps a world of never fading flowers.
>
> Alfred, Lord Tennyson
> "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" (413)

In the anthology *Farewell Fantastic Venus!* (1968), Brian W. Aldiss presents fantastic and scientific writings about our solar system's second planet from the sun to show how Westerners have imagined it for centuries. The book came as a response to data gathered by *Venera 4*, a Soviet probe that became the first piece of human technology to land on another planet. Venus, it turned out, was very hot and practically devoid of water, a curious discovery given the planet's extensive cloud cover. Those clouds, so reflective of the sun's light as to make it stand out with prominence in our morning and evening skies, lent the planet what Aldiss calls elusiveness: "Venus, Earth's 'Sister planet' [...] An unsatisfactory sibling she

has proved at last. And even to the imagination there has always been something cheating about her. She has been teasing, ambiguous, hiding herself near the sun, disappointing—a close relation who has yet stayed distant, blank-faced" (11). While space fantasies about Mars abounded over the last one hundred fifty years, Venus lagged behind in the popular imagination, inspiring far fewer works.

Bearing distinction as author of *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), Bradbury also wrote several Venusian tales. Venus, not just a planet but the Roman Goddess of love, afforded Bradbury one of his first big breaks when friend and writing tutor Leigh Brackett asked him to finish a Venusian novella under contract. "He said yes, and forthwith did so, without any outline or a stitch of anything to go on except the first 10,000 words," she recalled. "The result was 'Lorelei of the Red Mist', one-half pure Brackett, one-half pure Bradbury. I have heard all sorts of theories about how I did the action bits and he did the poetry, etc. Not so. It was not even a collaboration in the ordinary sense" (xii). Published in *Planet Stories* (Summer 1946), *Lorelei of the Red Mist* follows Hugh Starke, whose consciousness has been uploaded into the body of Conan, a tribute to Robert E. Howard's famous barbarian. His struggles with Rann, a siren from Venus's sea of scarlet vapors, and his efforts to overcome her unfeeling nature provide much of the novella's conflict. Following Brackett's lead, Venus is depicted as wet, a popular portrayal among their colleagues at the time; Robert A. Heinlein, in *Logic of Empire* (1943), and Henry Kuttner, in *Fury* (1947), also wrote swampland Venuses.

Bradbury independently produced two rain-soaked Venusian stories relevant to our task of tracking the sun's course through his short fiction. Venus being one planet closer to the sun and swathed in clouds, he uses these facts to meditate mythically upon our relationship with our closest star. The first story we are concerned with is "Death-By-Rain," published in *Planet Stories* (Summer 1950), thereafter collected as "The Long Rain." In a

feature recurring throughout many of his solar stories, the protagonist is not named but archetypally identified only by rank, here as the lieutenant. Following the crash of their rocket, the lieutenant, Simmons, Pickard, and a fourth crew member journey on foot through the wet, white, fungal jungle in hopes of finding a Sun Dome, one of one-hundred-twenty-six identical outposts Congressional funding from Earth has built in the wilderness:

> They crossed the river, and in crossing they thought of the Sun Dome, somewhere ahead of them, shining in the jungle rain. A yellow house, round and bright as the sun. A house fifteen feet high by one hundred feet in diameter, in which was warmth and quiet and hot food and freedom from rain. And in the center of the Sun Dome, of course, was a sun. A small floating, free globe of yellow fire, drifting in a space at the top of the building where you could look at it from where you sat, smoking or reading a book or drinking your hot chocolate crowned with marshmallow dollops. There it would be, the yellow sun, just the size of the Earth sun and it was warm and continuous and the rain world of Venus would be forgotten as long as they stayed in that house and idled their time. (36-37)

The dome is at once a safe house, a destination, and a site for reunion with sunshine in the midst of a storming, inhospitable, otherworldly environment. It contains safety, comfort, food, and the luxury of relaxation: Earthly haven on Venus.

Venus experiences never-ending rains that bleach everything they touch. The lieutenant, once brown, has turned pale in the rain, even his hair and eyebrows going white. This is not a purifying whiteness but the sickly, fungal whiteness of decay. The rivers, streams, and the Single Sea are described as mercury, silver, and milk; the blanched flora, which grow through life cycles fast enough to be watched, rot as soon as they are picked:

> Even the jungle was an immense cartoon nightmare, for how could the jungle be green with no sun, with always rain falling and always dusk? The white, white jungle with the pale cheese-colored leaves, and the earth carved of wet Camembert, and the tree boles like immense toadstools, everything black and white. And how often could you see the soil itself? Wasn't it mostly a creek, a stream, a puddle, a pool, a lake, a river, and then, at last the sea? (37)

That description follows the paragraph about the Sun Dome quoted above, dousing the reader's chances of lingering over thoughts of the sun's vitalizing gifts. The white rains and vegetation connote "infirmity and disembodiment, a lack of red-blooded vigor or a failure of

courage. White is the pale horseman of death, the pallor of the corpse, bone stripped of flesh, shroud and wraith" (660). ARAS goes on to remind us that the solipsistic "great white whale Moby-Dick conveys the indefiniteness and impersonal vastness of the universe" (660), that which defies categorization. This connection is made with the knowledge that between 1953 and 1954 Bradbury would write the screenplay for John Huston's 1956 film *Moby Dick*. Venus's whiteness, however, is not elusive, something to be hunted down; it is overabundant to the point of suffocation.

The first discovery made by the four men is that they have unwittingly circled back to their rocket's crash site, which is already overgrown with flowering and suddenly rotting fungus. "Good Lord, we're not any closer to anywhere!" one of them complains (37). Their despair at the perpetuation of their aimlessness is soon interrupted by the appearance of a prodigious monster:

> And the monster came out of the rain.
>
> The monster was supported upon a thousand electric blue legs. It walked swiftly and terribly. It struck down a leg with a driving blow. Everywhere a leg struck a tree fell and burned. Great whiffs of ozone filled the rainy air, and smoke blew away and was broken up by the rain. The monster was a half-mile wide and a mile high and it felt of the ground like a great blind thing. Sometimes, for a moment, it had no legs at all. And then, in an instant, a thousand whips would fall out of its belly, white-blue whips, to sting the jungle. (37)

"Here she is!" one of the men cries, imbuing the monster with the feminine aspect commonly attributed to large storms (38). The electrical monster claims the unnamed crew member's life before moving on its way, charring him in its Greco-Roman temple-like undercarriage:

> The man who had leaped up was now running, like someone in a great hall of pillars. He ran and dodged between the pillars and then at last a dozen of the pillars slammed down and there was the sound a fly makes when landing upon the grill wires of an exterminator. The lieutenant remembered this from his childhood on a farm. And there was a smell of a man burned to a cinder. (38)

It is as if the storming weather has coalesced into a living creature, albeit one more atmospheric than corporeal. Its appearance is not unlike that of the Questing Beast in

Arthurian legend. Encountered by Pellinore, Palomides, and Percival, the Questing Beast often has a serpent's head, a leopard's body, a lion's tail, and the feet of a rabbit or a stag—and the call of thirty hounds barking. In Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485), the Beast appears after Arthur's incestuous affair, and is never caught by Palomides despite his making it his quest to do so. The chaotic conflagration of form and appearance in the wake of taboo eroticism, not to mention its elusive and passing nature, are qualities shared with the electrical monster of Venus, named for Rome's Goddess of Eros.

To their elation, the lieutenant, Simmons, and Pickard eventually arrive at a Sun Dome, however it stands decrepit and overrun with damp and moss. Simmons blames the Venusians, so elusive their only appearance in the story is by his word. He claims they likely came out of the sea, where they live, destroyed the dome and took the survivors into the abyss where "they have a delightful way of drowning you. It takes about eight hours to drown the way they work it. Really delightful" (39). The lack of an obvious enemy begins to gut Pickard, who shares a memory of being bullied in school. "But what do I do *now*?" he asks. "Who do I hit, who do I tell to lay off, stop bothering me, this damn rain, like the pinching, always *on* you, that's all you hear, that's all you feel!" (40). Unable to define their tormentors, Simmons and Pickard are reduced to paranoia of malfeasant beings alive in the sea and the formlessness of unperpetrated tortures upon their bodies and souls.

It is the lieutenant, presented without the identifying aspect of a name, who holds himself together through this journey. A French word, lieutenant means "place holding," the *OED*'s first definition being: "One who takes the place of another; usually, an officer civil or military who acts for a superior; a representative, substitute, vicegerent." If he is holding the place of another, who would that be? Perhaps he is so attentive to his duties and how they uphold his society's aims and values that his individual desires are superseded in the debilitating journey. A hallmark of the hero is an appropriate degree of selflessness for the

betterment of the collective, and where Simmons and Pickard worry so acutely about themselves he is able to hold himself at bay.

When they stop to rest, the lieutenant does not sleep, distressed by the vegetation suddenly growing upon him. He and Simmons decide to push on, but Pickard has given in to the harsh wetness, "with the bubbles of rain breaking out in his whitened hair and manacles of rain jewels dripping from his wrists and his neck" (41). Pickard, chained into the Venusian equivalent of the thousand-yard stare, will drown upright. This moment provides inspiration for the story's accompanying title page illustration. Uncredited, the drawing, in EC Comics style, shows Simmons leveling his pistol at Pickard, the lieutenant reaching out to stop him.



"I'll show you what to do with him," said Simmons.

DEATH-BY-RAIN

By RAY BRADBURY

Four men, crash-landed on Venus, world of eternal rain. Three men, slogging through drenching gloom. Two men, staggering senselessly on. One man, battering at the endless curtains of rain, RAIN, *RAIN!*

[Fig. xx: Illustration for "Death-By-Rain" in *Planet Stories* (35)]

The trio, in jumpsuits and oxygen tank backpacks, is washed out on the page; vertical streaks of rain disrupt the art, lashing over them and the mangrove-rooted jungle growth. The action between Simmons and the lieutenant is offset by Pickard's still hopelessness: on his knees, his head is thrown back to a skyward, open-mouthed stare, his fist clenched just above the water. As it happens, Simmons shoots him dead, a mercy killing the lieutenant reluctantly accepts. A page later, Simmons loses his hearing to the lashing rain and commits suicide. "We weren't made for this," the lieutenant says for himself, to himself, "no Earthman was or ever will be able to take it. Your nerves, your nerves" (42). This final repetition may be where another river-colonizing casualty, Conrad's Kurtz, began his own descent, ending up at, "The horror! The horror!"

"If you have someone who can help you, that's fine," says Campbell, "But, ultimately, the last deed has to be done by oneself" (*POM* 149). It is only once he is alone, after his crewmates have all died their terrible deaths, that the lieutenant finds the Sun Dome. He wastes no time when it appears as "a faint yellow smudge," "his feet crashing into mirrors and glass, his arms flailing at diamonds and precious stones" of rain (42). Unlike the derelict Sun Dome, this one is fully furnished and functional, and when he enters his worries lift:

> He was looking at the sun.
>
> It hung in the center of the room, large and yellow and warm. It made not a sound, and there was no sound in the room. The door was shut and the rain only a memory to his tingling body. The sun hung very high in the blue sky of the room, warm, hot, yellow, and very fine.
>
> He walked forward, tearing off his clothes as he went. (42)

Thus the story ends. There is no denying the vitalizing quality of this sun, even if it is an artificial light.[48] The sun in the Sun Dome is one of renewal, of body and spirit, our last

[48] Nowadays people suffering a variety of disorders and conditions, both physical and emotional, are treated with full spectrum lamps, not to mention the American Public Health Association's recent aim to raise awareness of Vitamin D deficiency, which is often the result of limited exposure to sunlight. Bradbury is often praised for prescience—see "Ray Bradbury: 10 of his most prescient predictions" (*The Washington Post* 6 June 2012. Web.) and "Uncle Ray's Dystopia" (*The New York Times* 8 June 2012. Web.)— because details in his stories set in the future became everyday realities by the end of his life. I will not go so far as to make that claim

image of the lieutenant being him stripping himself as bare as pre-Fall Adam in its light and warmth. Mythologically speaking, in entering the Sun Dome and denuding his body, he undergoes what Campbell describes as the deed of one entering a temple for worship: "The one who enters the temple compound and proceeds to the sanctuary is imitating the deed of the original hero. His aim is to rehearse the universal pattern as a means of evoking within himself the recollection of the life-centering, life-renewing form" (*Hero with a Thousand Faces* 40). The lieutenant's harrowing of Venus gives way to a religious experience in this manmade sanctuary that links him back to the naked potential of living a human life on Earth. He has passed through what Campbell calls the "sun door": "The meaning is that the grace that pours into the universe through the sun door is the same as the energy of the bolt that annihilates and is itself indestructible: the delusion-shattering light of the Imperishable is the same as the light that creates" (*Hero with a Thousand Faces* 134). Bradbury's lieutenant, in his achievement, is the Campbellian hero.

If we are to read "Death-By-Rain" as a myth of individuation, the water and vegetation in their many inundating forms are avatars for the unconscious. The lieutenant's goal in reaching the Sun Dome is to escape the storming shapelessness of forces and conditions he will never be able to control. The place of calm consciously carved out of the mess of vegetation and elemental furies is not the ego, for that exists only in the individual characters and is terribly vulnerable when exposed to gales of the unconscious. The Sun Dome, rather, is an environment properly balanced toward the pressures outside, a sanctuary within the drowning maelstrom. And so the Sun Dome exists prior to the crew's crisis—not superheroically hewn out of the unforgiving wilderness by the lieutenant alone—for from a depth psychological perspective, the potential for wholeness already exists within each of us before we actualize it. There is a sense in life that balance is not merely achieved, it is also a

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in this instance, but want to point out that wrapped within fantasy is the simple idea that we need the sun to live, which is far from a stretch of the imagination.

state to which one arrives, however briefly, often at the expense of self-sacrifice. Perhaps this story's title as first published in *Planet Stories* is more appropriate than its subsequent one: "The Long Rain"; "Death-By-Rain" not only suggests the deaths of the crew members, of Pickard and then Simmons, but also that of the rain-bleached lieutenant who is reborn whole upon walking through the solar door.

The other Venusian tale relating to the sun is "All Summer in a Day," first published in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (March 1954). It tells of a class of children, first generation Venusians, set to experience the ultra-rare meteorological event of their nine-year-old lives: the brief parting of clouds that will usher in their first memorable view of the sun. It seems this is the same Venus presented in "Death-By-Rain," with its constant rain and fast-growing, fast-rotting vegetation: in seven years "A thousand forests had been crushed under the rain and grown up a thousand times to be crushed again" (641). If we orient this story in relation to that one, though both stand alone, the human presence on Venus is at a further stage of development. There is no mention of Sun Domes and survival is not an immediate problem; the planet's storming environment has given way to an underground city colony. Families now live on Venus, the story is set in "the schoolroom of the children of the rocket men and women who had come to a raining world to set up civilization and live out their lives" (641).

One of the nine-year-old students, who are described as "so many roses, so many weeds, intermixed" (641), is unique for being born on Earth and remembering the unclouded sun. Margot is vilified for this, "hated [...] for all these reasons of big and little consequence" (643), and locked away in a closet so that she misses the event. William, her chief imprisoner, becomes an indistinct member of the class once he voices the idea of shutting her in the closet. From that point on, the boys and girls are portrayed collectively, through the sun's appearance and brief hour of illumination, until the first raindrop falls into a girl's open palm.

When the sun disappears again for seven more years of rain, they experience guilt for what they have done to Margot. The story ends with them, suffering regret, letting her out of the closet.

The name Margot is a French diminutive of Margaret, which, we recall from Vonnegut's numerous Margarets, is Ancient Greek for "pearl" (*BTN*). Like the pearl, a semi-precious mineralization which forms through the agitation of grit in an oyster's shell, Margot has had to arm her soul under an opaque barrier of clouds: "Margot stood alone. She was a very frail girl who looked as if she had been lost in the rain for years and the rain had washed out the blue from her eyes and the red from her mouth and the yellow from her hair. She was an old photograph dusted from an album, whitened away, and if she spoke at all her voice would be a ghost" (642). She is a poet, writing "*I think the sun is a flower, / That blooms for just one hour*" (642), amid an artless class of intermixed roses and weeds. This is a story in which the majority feels insecure in the presence of a true individual. She has known the sun—they have not—and the mystery of her knowledge against their own lacking raises spite and envy. Margot becomes a painted bird, suffering among children of rocket men and women who have gone to Venus with financial gain a key motivator, opting for overcast existence where the brief appearance of sunlight is astronomical. In a social group like this, the presence of one who isn't at odds with the others but who is odd for her originality and grounding poses a threat to the structure and order of the entire colonial endeavor.

A vitalized individual, even an ailing one like Margot, does not always inspire vitalization in others; sometimes he or she inspires ire from those living without vitality. The problems of living in seemingly endless rain are only compounded for this generation of children born out of sunlight. They did not choose to be born on Venus and growing up there is difficult. In this sense, they are all victims of their parents' decision to "come to a raining world to set up civilization and live out their lives" (641). It is only through experiencing the

sun firsthand that the classmates gain some appreciation for it and what Margot has been denied for so long. There is no redemption for the class but there is the dawning of guilt and shame for their action. They are not cynically reduced to an emotional agent of cruelty but are shown to gain a new awareness after they discover together the vitalizing aspects of the sun by experiencing its light and warmth.

The sun on Bradbury's Venus is as elusive as the surface of Venus from our perspective on Earth. The clouds of Venus, which exist in fact, provide a setting where sunlight rarely and briefly touches life directly. The wet, fungal landscape is another imagining of the unforgiving frontier, a wilderness where civilization is unwelcome. And yet the sun does shine on Venus, reproduced in miniature in the Sun Domes, remembered by a sun-sick expatriate in a poem, and anticipated and then embraced by a class of ignorant children. In showing the detriments to body and soul that living without the sun inflicts upon characters in these stories, Bradbury champions the effects of living as we do in its light. And while Bradbury is remembered as a fantastic chronicler of Mars, Venus coincided with the end of his life: he died 5 June 2012 during the transit of Venus, an extremely rare astronomical event in which the planet passes directly between Earth and the sun. As Mark Twain famously came in and went out with Halley's Comet, Bradbury's death—and life—stand punctuated in conjunction with Venus and the sun.

5.4 Sun of a Preacher Man

> We know also that the early Christians had some difficulty in distinguishing the ἥλιος ἀνατολῆς (the rising sun) from Christ. [… There is] St. Augustine's argument that God is not this sun but he who made the sun […] and the evidence of Eusebius, who actually witnessed 'Christian' sun-worship.
>
> C. G. Jung (1936/1968, *CW 12*, ¶112)

In "The Man" (*Thrilling Wonder Stories*, Feb. 1949), a team of rocket men arriving on an alien planet discover they have just missed the arrival of a messianic figure. The Captain is skeptical but becomes convinced of the visitor's holy nature, resolving to hunt him down across the reaches of space. Here we see the outcome of a materialistic glory hound who has glimpsed others living vital lives and strikes off to find and take that vitality for himself. His awakening is to the hunger of his own spiritual impoverishment. It is all a mistake though, because after he leaves, with a smaller crew as some have decided to stay, we find out that the messiah has not left the planet and is still there. The Captain will be following nothing through space but the projected trail of his own folly.

"In This Sign…," published in pulp digest *Imagination* (April 1951), presents the opposite scenario: Father Peregrine is an Episcopal priest sent to Mars to tend to the spiritual needs of the colonists. Instead he encounters sun-like spheres of blue light in the Martian hills. These he takes for souls, and again we are presented with a solar symbol of the wholeness of the psyche. Notes Jung: "In Neoplatonic philosophy the soul has definite affinities with the sphere. The soul substance is laid round the concentric spheres of the four elements above the fiery heaven" (1936/1968, *CW 12,* ¶109). Indeed these Martian spheres turn out to be souls, pure and transcendent of corporeal existence. Whereas in "The Man" the Captain takes off on a hunt to shake down a messianic traveler, Father Peregrine takes it upon himself, against protestations of his fellow priests, to prove the alien spheres of light are sentient and, furthermore, to save them spiritually. When they finally reveal their sentience to him, introducing themselves as the Old Ones who passed to a higher plane of consciousness many Martian ages ago, he and his colleagues are humbled into turning their ministry once again to their own people, the humans residing in First Town.

This story is better known under the title "The Fire Balloons" and today stands as part

of *The Martian Chronicles*, though it was not included in the first publication (May 1950).[49] We proceed with "In This Sign…," for it raises an otherwise missing association. *In hoc signo vinces*, Latin for "in this sign you will conquer," is ascribed to a vision experienced by Constantine I. According to Eusebius, "his own eyes beheld the trophy of the cross declared in the sky above the sun, organized out of light, and telling with its own writing: By this conquer" ("Eusebius," translation mine). Revelations cannot get much more imperial than this one, urging the first Christian Emperor of Rome to conquer the empire's enemies with the cross of Christianity. Again we have a solar symbol, yoked to this story in a complex way. Father Peregrine does not set out to conquer, unless we read his aim at spreading salvation as an imperial cause—which historically it has been in many instances; his colleagues, however, deem him foolish for tending to the alien spheres. In any case, and in a curious way, he flips Constantine I's vision, swapping out the symbol of the cross seen above the sun for a solar sign he has crafted as a sphere of fire.

Much has been made critically about *Chronicles'* allegory for the American frontier myth but "Sign…" remains largely unanalyzed in this respect. The priestly crew of the rocket *Crucifix* recalls historical clergymen who encountered American peoples. Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566), the first ordained priest in the Americas, Spain's *Protectoría de indios*, protested the abuses he witnessed perpetrated by the Spanish against the people of Hispaniola. There were also the French and Belgian Jesuits who traveled into the North American interior between 1632 and 1650 to spread Christianity, conforming to an extent with the peoples they lived with in hopes of conversion. And Jonathan Edwards the younger (1745-1801), an abolitionist and theologian, was fluent in Mahican after growing up in an

[49] *Chronicles* was only conceived as a whole after its individual stories were written, and when it was published in the U.K. as *The Silver Locusts* (1951), "The Fire Balloons" was included. The story found a wider American audience when published in *The Illustrated Man* (Feb. 1951) and was eventually instated in subsequent editions of *Chronicles* published from 1963 to the present, though in Bantam paperback reprints it remains absent (Eller and Touponce 129, 130). It is also the topic of Bradbury's last essay to be published in his lifetime, "Take Me Home" in *The New Yorker*'s 2012 Science Fiction Issue.

integrated Massachusetts community. He eventually wrote a short book on the subject, *Observations on the Mahican Language* (1788). Like these real world forbears, Father Peregrine is drawn to the indigenous population of Mars. Seeing in them the potential for realizing his desired destiny as a savior of souls, Christianity is presented as a colonizer's toolkit. And Peregrine's brand of Christianity is, as it was for the Jesuits, malleable in the forms of its symbols.

The Very Reverend Father Joseph Daniel Peregrine's name is loaded with Judeo-Christian meanings. Joseph is Hebrew for "He will add" and Daniel for "God is my judge," invoking the Biblical God's capacities for providing and judging, appropriate for a character so conscious of living in God's sight. Joseph and Daniel are also Old Testament figures revered for their skills in the interpretation of dreams. Their gifts for divination see them both promoted to significant roles in the kingdoms of Egypt and Babylon respectively. Bradbury's Joseph Daniel is himself a visionary, recognizing disembodied souls where the other priests see "blue balloons." There is also the Joseph of the New Testament, who steps in as the adoptive father of Jesus Christ after God urges him to do so in a dream, and Joseph of Arimathea, who prepares Jesus' body after death for entombment, a father's role. Bradbury's protagonist, a spiritual father by occupation, also adopts a fatherly attitude to the Old Ones, deciding to raise their souls with the Good Word of Christianity.

Peregrine's surname calls to mind the species of falcon, a raptor, a bird of prey, but also holds a diversity of meanings, originating from Latin: pairing *pereger* ("beyond the borders") and *ager* ("land") to mean "one beyond his own land" (*OED*). That meaning persists in English: "Foreign; outlandish, strange; imported from abroad," "A pilgrim; a traveller in a foreign country," "Travelling; wandering." Peregrine also casts other intriguing inflections: a peregrine was "A free resident in ancient Rome having no rights of citizenship," and in Roman Law a peregrine praetor had the duty to "administer justice between peregrines

[...] or between Roman citizens and peregrines"; the peregrine tone was "one of the tones used in Gregorian plainsong in the recitation of Psalm 114 (113 in the Vulgate), and later adapted as an Anglican chant"; and peregrine also has a use in astrology, being the property "Of a planet: situated in a part of the zodiac where it has none of its essential dignities." Hillman would wholeheartedly have us heed these bygone definitions:

> We need to recall that we do not just make words up or learn them in school or ever have them fully under control. Words, like angels, are powers which have invisible power over us. They are personal presences which have whole mythologies: genders, genealogies (etymologies concerning origins and creations), histories, and vogues; and their own guarding, blaspheming, creating, and annihilating effects. (*A Blue Fire* 28-29)

Father Peregrine does exhibit some, if not all, of these aspects of his name. He is "one beyond his own land," a foreigner and pilgrim to Mars, a human Other to the Old Ones, who are to him Other humans. Though a peregrine himself, he acts to bring justice via salvation to the phosphorescent spheres, becoming an Episcopal praetor of sorts. Being an Episcopalian, of the American branch of the Anglican Church, his tone may be considered peregrine; Psalm 114 asks why the sea, river, rocks, and hills jumped back from the Israelites in exodus, and this priest marvels at the way the blue spheres, regarded by many as mere aspects of the Martian landscape, swoop in at the humans' arrival. Astrologically, Father Peregrine and the other priests' notions, born of Earth, are themselves peregrine on Mars. One of Peregrine's chief concerns is sin, having "written a little book: THE PROBLEM OF SIN ON OTHER WORLDS" (58), to which his skeptical colleague Father Stone argues, "No Adam and Eve on Mars. No original sin. Maybe the Martians live in a state of God's grace" (64). Stone winds up being partially correct about their grace, but the priests' consuming worry about Earthly sin is, in an astrological light, situated far from Earth on Mars "where it has none of its essential dignities." Understood as a kind of bird of prey, Father Peregrine is indeed a hunter, his preferred prey being salvation-starved souls.

Father Stone and Brother Mathias are the only other characters bearing names.

Mathias echoes Matthias from the New Testament, who fills Judas's vacancy as the twelfth apostle to Christ (*Acts* 1:18-26). Matthias is peculiar in that he only becomes one of the twelve after Christ has died and risen. In "Sign," Brother Mathias, who initially regards the blue spheres to be "the body of a soulless animal" (67), is also a latecomer, in that the salvation the priests hope to deliver unto the Old Ones has already been achieved. Father Stone, a dogmatic priest who dismisses the Old Ones as "Blue balloons" (60), "Monsters" (61), and "circus balloons" (66), consistently toes church doctrine. His role in the narrative is foil to Father Peregrine, his skepticism coming up against Peregrine's growing belief in the Martian souls. His ways, like those in stone, are set; and yet he undergoes a greater transformation than Peregrine in the end, after the Old Ones have communicated their state of grace in easily understood terms. "The way I see it is there's a Truth on every planet. All parts of the Big Truth," he says, "For this Truth here is as true as Earth's Truth, and they lie side by side" (71). Stone, after all, can crumble.

During their initial encounter with the floating blue orbs, Fathers Peregrine and Stone are nearly buried in an avalanche. In a swoop of blue light they find themselves unharmed by falling rocks. Peregrine is convinced the speechless fire spheres acted to save them and goes about trying to prove they possess not only consciousness but good will, what he calls humanity. His experiment has him stand at the edge of a two hundred foot cliff and throw himself off in the hopes the spheres will catch and deliver him safely to the ground. The taking of one's own life being a sin, he rationalizes his dangerous test on the edge of the precipice, thinking, "It wouldn't be suicide, would it, if I did it out of Love…?" (65). In this act the priest tempts the blue fires, and this tempting bears relation to one of Satan's three temptations of Christ in the New Testament. In *Matthew*, it is the second temptation (*King James* 4:5-7), in Luke, the third (*King James* 4:9-12): Setting Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem and daring him to jump off, Satan uses Old Testament scripture (*Psalms*

91:11,12) that says God will send angels to the rescue "lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone"; Christ counters with "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," also from Old Testament scripture (*Deuteronomy* 6:16). Bradbury underscores the connection in describing Peregrine anticipating "himself *dashed* on [the rocks] and sent to glory" (italics mine 65). Yet no devil goads him to leap from a lethal height; he is tempted by the desire to know if the blue orbs are intelligent. Also, Peregrine tempts the spheres, not God, unless we consider his hope that God will forgive him if he is wrong a challenge. This potentially suicidal behavior is altogether peculiar for a priest, but Peregrine is consistently portrayed as a maverick to his own religious tradition.

His leap is the focus of Malcolm Smith's illustration in *Imagination.* Another instance of EC Comics-style art, the Martian landscape is presented as rocky with a dark, crosshatch sky. Father Peregrine falls feet first, his arms up and hands out, doubt in his face. Hovering just beyond his fingertips, one of the Martian spheres is a white circle with short pen strokes



"IN THIS SIGN ..."

By Ray Bradbury

The Fathers had come to Mars to cleanse it of sin. But where were the Martians? And what were these strange globes of pale blue fire? . . .

FIRE exploded over summer night lawns. You saw sparkling faces of uncles and aunts. Skyrockets fell up in the brown shining eyes of cousins on the porch, and the cold charred sticks thumped down in dry meadows far away.

The Most Reverend Father Joseph Daniel Peregrine opened his eyes. What a dream; he and his cousins with their fiery play at his grandfather's ancient Ohio home so many years ago!

He lay listening to the great hollow of the church, the other cells where other Fathers lay. Had they, too, on the eve of the flight of the rocket *Crucifix*, lain with memories of the Fourth of July? Yes. This was like those breathless Independence dawns when you waited for the first concussion and rushed out on the dewy sidewalks, your hands full of loud miracles.

So here they were, the Episcopal Fathers, in the breathing dawn before they pinwheeled off to Mars, leaving their incense through the velvet cathedral of space.

"Should we go at all?" whispered Father Peregrine. "Shouldn't we solve our own sins on Earth? Aren't we running from our lives here?"

He rose, his fleshy body, with its rich look of strawberries, milk, and steak, moving heavily.

"Or is it sloth?" he wondered. "Do I dread the journey?"

He stepped into the needle-spray shower.

"But I shall take you to Mars, body." He addressed himself. "Leav-

Copyright 1951 by Ray Bradbury

[Fig xxi: Title spread "In This Sign..." by Malcolm Smith (56-57)]

at the center and white lines around the corona, implying motion. Before reading the editorial hook on the opposite page, it appears to be the sun. As a moment chosen for illustration, it emphasizes falling—and the Fall—in the story's most harrowing event. When Peregrine leaps and is saved once again by the blue spheres of light, he resolves, like the Jesuits in North America in the 1600s, to reformulate Christianity to meet the alien souls on their own terms—or, rather, what he perceives to be their own terms. "We are giving them God in an understandable image," he explains to his colleagues:

> [W]e must build a church in the hills, live with them, to find their own special ways of sinning, the alien ways, and help them. [...W]hat is a shape? Only a cup for the blazing soul that God provides us all. [...A]ll souls, in the shape, if they have free will and are aware of their sins, will burn in hell unless given their rightful communions. I would not let a Martian sphere burn in hell either, for it is a sphere only in mine eyes. When I close my eyes it stands before me, an intelligence, a love, a soul, and I must not deny it. [...] We shall give them Christ in their own image. (67-68)

This is iconoclasm in its etymological sense: "breaking an image" (*OED*). In making himself missionary to the Martians, Peregrine determines the Christian symbols of his own faith are inadequate for speaking to the Martian soul. By his estimation, the spheroids need a church and a cross for worship, but the church will be open-air and the cross a glass sphere filled with firelight, a form he imagines they will relate to. He recognizes the cross is an archetypal image specific to his own faith and his own form as a human being as well as a Christian. He takes the cross's role as expressing the archetype of salvation, which he recognizes as universal or, at least in this case, bridging planets. Peregrine's genius, which is the genius of effective missionaries, is recognizing that different archetypal images may be used to express one archetype, and their individual efficacy in achieving the goal of recognition of that archetype depends greatly on a viewer's subjective perspective, informed by his or her culture, ethnicity, experience, et cetera.

Peregrine understands these ways in which symbols work, expounding on the

diversity of racial Christs pictured in different cultures on Earth: the Chinese worship a Christ who looks Chinese, the Virgin of Guadalupe has dark skin, and so on. Their role as priests, as he instructs, will be to believe in the spheroid Christ as much as the Martians, transcending their own symbol for another. "Sign" ends with a humbled Father Stone telling Father Peregrine that the glass globe Brother Mathias crafted for the Martian souls is "Him. It *is* Him, after all" (71). This revelation anticipates a point made by Trappist monk Thomas Merton in 1968:

> The true symbol does not merely point to something else. It contains in itself a structure which awakens our consciousness to a new awareness of the inner meaning of life and of reality itself. A true symbol takes us to the center of the circle, not to another point on the circumference. It is by symbolism that man enters affectively and consciously into contact with his own deepest self, with other men, and with God. (1)

Merton, a Catholic, involved himself in interfaith dialogue, reaching out and ingratiating himself to monks of Eastern traditions.

But Father Peregrine's work differs from Merton's; Peregrine does not place himself in a position of learning from the blue spheres, but rather aims at teaching them his own tradition. And if Peregrine possesses genius in the way of recognizing symbols, he also possesses acute ineptitude in reading his audience. Once the open air church is built and swept, the altar set with the newly-crafted glass sphere, the Martian spheres descend from the sky and inform all priests present that they are the Old Ones:

> "Once, we were men, with bodies and legs and arms such as yours. The legend has it that one of us, a good man, discovered a way to free man's soul and intellect, to free him of bodily ills and melancholies, of deaths and transfigurations, of ill humors and senilities, and so we took on the look of lightning and blue fire and have lived in the winds and skies and hills forever after that, neither prideful nor arrogant, neither rich nor poor, passionate or cold.[50] [...] We have left sin behind, Father Peregrine, and it is burned like the

[50] I have checked this sentence against later publications and corrected it because as it appears in its first publication in *Imagination*, it is jumbled, presumably a typesetting mistake. This is how it appears there: "The legend has it that one of us, | a good man, discovered a way to | free man's soul and intellect, to | cholies, of deaths and transfigura- | tions, of ill humors and senilities, | and so we took on the look of light- | free him of bodily ills and melan- | ning and blue fire and have lived | in the winds and skies and hills | forever after that, neither prideful | nor arrogant, neither rich nor poor, | passionate or cold." (70)

> leaves in the autumn wicker and it is gone like the soiled snow of an evil winter, and it is gone like the sexual flowers of a red and yellow spring, and it is gone like the panting nights of hottest summer, and our season is temperate and our clime is rich in thought." (70)

They thank him for his efforts at salvation, but "have no need for it, for each of us is a temple unto himself, and needs no place wherein to cleanse ourselves" (70).

Their revelation bears relation to one in Flannery O'Connor's short story "A Temple of the Holy Ghost" (1954). O'Connor, of the same generation as Bradbury and also concerned with issues of salvation, albeit from a Roman Catholic perspective, portrays her protagonist, archetypally named "the child," trying to reconcile what she has learned in church with a story overheard between her second cousins about an intersex member of a carnival freak show. In the girl's imagination, the "freak" addresses the tentgoers as congregants, and they reply in kind, again and again, with Amen. "God made me thisaway and I don't dispute hit," the person preaches, "Raise yourself up. A temple of the Holy Ghost. You! You are God's temple, don't you know? Don't you know? God's spirit has a dwelling in you, don't you know?" (207). O'Connor's child, imagining this before sleep, is trying to make sense of an intersex person living in a world of dueling Christianities (Catholics versus Southern Baptists) that, despite their differences, agree on a strict binary definition of man and woman. The child, who has not yet embraced the binary as exclusive, like her elders have, recognizes divinity in the "freak," seeing the intersex person's form as another vessel of God's creation.[51]

Father Peregrine sees the Old Ones' blue spheroid form the same way. Given this

[51] The last sentence of "A Temple of the Holy Ghost" also offers a solar sphere laden with symbolism: "The sun was a huge red ball like an elevated Host drenched in blood and when it sank out of sight, it left a line in the sky like a red clay road hanging over the trees" (209). There is also Mrs. Shortley's solar vision in O'Connor's "The Displaced Person": "Suddenly while she watched, the sky folded back in two pieces like the curtain to a stage and a gigantic figure stood facing her. It was the color of the sun in the early afternoon, white-gold. It was of no definite shape but there were fiery wheels with fierce dark eyes in them, spinning rapidly all around it" (301). "Who will remain whole?" she wonders. "Who will remain whole? Who?" (301). Bradbury, it seems, was not the only solar-sensitive writer of his generation. Depth psychology reads this situation of a symbol expressed by multiple people as one arising from the collective unconscious.

similarity between O'Connor's child and Father Peregrine, it is interesting that Peregrine repeatedly returns to a childhood memory when encountering the Old Ones. They call to his mind the fire balloons that he and his grandfather would lift into the night on the Fourth of July, a tradition in their celebration of the U.S. holiday of Independence Day. In "Take Me Home," Bradbury's last publication in his lifetime, he recounts this memory of the fire balloons and his grandfather as coming from his own childhood in Illinois:

> Twenty-five years later, I wrote "The Fire Balloons," a story in which a number of priests fly off to Mars looking for creatures of good will. It is my tribute to those summers when my grandfather was alive. One of the priests was like my grandpa, whom I put on Mars to see the lovely balloons again, but this time they were Martians, all fired and bright, adrift above a dead sea. (66)

The Martians even become identified as those fire balloons, earning capitals in Peregrine's final moment with them: "And then the Fire Balloons blew away and were gone, and he was like a child, on his knees, tears streaming from his eyes, crying to himself, Come back! Come back! and at any moment Grandfather might lift him and carry him upstairs to his bedroom in a long-gone Ohio[52] town...." (71). Childlike qualities are evoked in this climactic confrontation with the cool *senex* wisdom of the Old Ones, and with them the sensation of an outgrown phase of life. The effect upon Peregrine is not one of negative regression. On the contrary, it recalls Jesus blessing children in *Matthew* (*King James* 19:14), "for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Regarding their form, one of literal enlightenment, the Old Ones have attained a state of being strikingly similar to the spiritual goal of Gnosticism. There are a multitude of readings of ancient Gnostic traditions, as well as a multitude of traditions theologians have

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[52] Peregrine's childhood home switches from Ohio (58) to Illinois country (62) to Ohio again (71). This discrepancy is confused in later editions as well. In *The Stories of Ray Bradbury* (Knopf, 1980), it goes from Ohio (219) to Illinois country (225) and remains Illinois (235). In the 1997 William Morrow edition of *The Martian Chronicles*, it reverts to the first version: Ohio (120) to Illinois country (128) to Ohio (143). The later changes are intriguing, as none of the versions are consistent within themselves. The geography simply does not hold. If, for instance, Grandfather lets the fire balloons go in Ohio, they would have to cross Indiana before reaching Illinois country, as well as float against winds that typically prevail from west to east. Bradbury claims a biographical basis for this detail, which may explain why his native Illinois almost subliminally asserts itself.

classified under the umbrella of Gnosticism. Campbell viewed this multitude as a distinct quality of those traditions: "[I]n Gnosticism [...] there was a diversity because [...] individuals have differing spiritual capacities and requirements, so that [...] no one can safely pretend to have grasped Truth once and for all: least of all a committee" (*MGOC* 378). Gnostics depended upon a subjective, individual experience of and with the godhead, which they believed exists within and without the confines of matter. Gnosticism is of particular interest here because of its relation to Christianity and Jungian psychology. Historically, Gnosticism arose during the height of the Roman Empire, and many of its groups embraced Christ while teaching that salvation from the body is achieved through knowledge.

The Council of Nicaea, however, declared Gnostic texts heretical in 325 AD; their traditions suppressed, the Gnostics dwindled, their works were lost until a trove of Gnostic gospels surfaced in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945. The library contained fifty-two texts, most of them unknown to the modern world, published in translation only recently in the first decade of the twenty-first century. When discovered, one codex sold on the collector market, eventually being bought in 1951 by the Carl Gustav Jung Institute in Zürich. For this reason, the first codex of the Nag Hammadi library is known as the Jung Codex. Jung was profoundly affected, professionally and personally, by what he saw in Gnostic texts and imagery as empirical evidence of a relationship with the collective unconscious that predated his own. He hoped his findings through studying Gnosticism and medieval alchemy, another tradition centered on divine essence in matter, would lend credibility to his theories. Segal's reading of Gnosticism and Jung is helpful: "Jung deems the Gnostic quest for salvation a form of therapy: a process of discovering and exploring who one really is" (*Allure of Gnosticism* 35).

In Jungian terms, the Old Ones have not individuated but given themselves over wholly to the unconscious. Their state as bodiless souls is as imbalanced as a totally rational,

atheistic rejection of soul. Where depth psychology seeks balance in life through maintaining dialogue between consciousness and the unconscious, balance for the Old Ones and indeed Father Peregrine, who asks them, "May I come again, someday, that I may learn from you?" (71), is found in actualizing a spiritual escape from the body. Says Segal, "[Gnostics] urge the escape of the spark from both the body and the material world and the restoration of both it and the godhead to their pristine state. That state *is* one of unity, but the unity is of all divinity, not of divinity with matter" (*Allure of Gnosticism* 33, 34). Regarding that spark, we recall the Old Ones' description of taking "on the look of lightning and blue fire" (70). Even before he meets the Old Ones, Peregrine expresses disconnect between his spirit and his body, addressing his physique as a separate entity: "I shall take you to Mars, body" (57). He also embraces the floating blue spheres as disembodied souls long before anybody else, recognizing them not as animals or ghosts. In these ways, Father Peregrine is far more Gnostic than he is Episcopal, accepting divinity present in all things and beyond the body as opposed to one that must be gained through faith in the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The path of the spiritual ascetic is one most Americans of the twentieth century did not choose and would not seriously consider undertaking. Such a transformation is outside the experience of the typical secular Westerner, and even among many American Christians. Father Peregrine does not represent the average American man or even the average Episcopal priest; his own fictional colleagues regard him as an oddity, his "little book: THE PROBLEM OF SIN ON OTHER WORLDS, ignored as somehow not serious enough by his Episcopal brethren" (58). "In This Sign…" offers a challenge to Christianity, an ancient religious tradition facing the problem of relevancy in the modern era where secularism, supported by law, is an American benchmark. Peregrine is not a demythicized Westerner but a devout practitioner faced with other traditions. An attempt to understand spiritual devotion plays out in this story, addressing not priests but a general reader. And while most readers will not

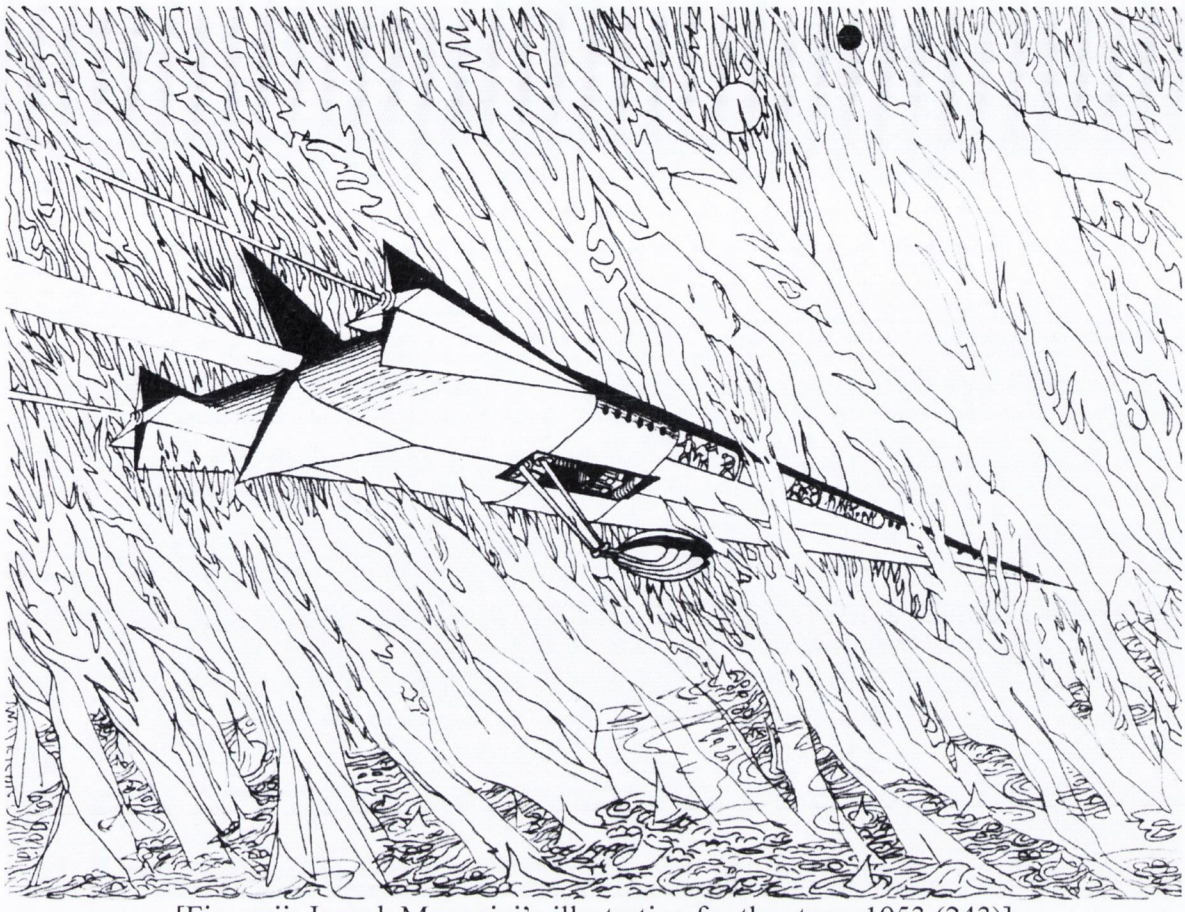
come away with a serious desire to commune with enlightened floating spheres, the wonder of such an exchange is ignited. Something remains, even for a reader who is not Christian, a desire to touch the mysterious source of life's vitality and come away with it. For just such an encounter, secularly inflected, we finally turn to one of Bradbury's most lyric short stories.

5.5 The Golden Apples of the Sun

> A bit of Astro Humor: If we ever send humans to the Sun, it's best to go at night.
>
> Neil deGrasse Tyson
> (Twitter, 24 June 2012)

Irish mystic John Moriarty begins the Overture to the first volume of his trilogy on reinstating myth, *Turtle Was Gone a Long Time* (1996-1998), by invoking Neil Armstrong's first moonwalk: "It is my belief that, yes, it was a small step for Neil and, however glamorous in appearance, a quite insignificant step for humanity" (*TGLT1* IX). He read the moon landings as mere feats of transportation that failed to advance the human spirit at a comparable magnitude. Building from Sir Francis Bacon's idea of advancement, Moriarty uses that historic journey to introduce concepts of movement in the development of consciousness: "Movement local is movement from one to another place [...] Movement essential, as its name suggests, is movement from one to another state of being" (*TGLT1* IX). His work is an attempt in the demythologized West, and Ireland in particular, to "reinstitute commonage consciousness [...] On commonage lands there are no fences. Nor, I believe, are there fences in consciousness. Differently inflected, it is the one consciousness that is manifested in rocks, animals, human beings and stars" (*TGLT1* XVII).

And here we find an analog to "The Golden Apples of the Sun," a story pairing movement local and movement essential. Rejected by magazine editors, it first appeared as



[Fig. xxii: Joseph Mugnaini's illustration for the story, 1953 (243)]

the titular story of Bradbury's third collection, *The Golden Apples of the Sun*, in 1953. Joseph Mugnaini's illustration, printed on the first page of the story, overwhelms a triangular space ship in coronal columns of fire. Stick figures can be seen peering out of windows in the side hull as a cupping clam extends from an open hatch. In the distance are two small spheres, perhaps Mercury and Venus. The imagery, with flame boiling out of the photosphere, is unmistakably hellish, setting the reader up for a tale of eternal damnation. And yet this is a story presenting the constructive opposite of everlasting suffering: Individuation.

Before approaching Bradbury's most significant sun story, there is a point to be made about specific anticipations and readings of the impact of space exploration in the twentieth century. It was 1996 when Moriarty published his conclusion about the significance of the American program named Apollo (and I would be negligent to not note the solar connection there). Recent history reminds us that to date the Americans are still the only people to visit

the moon, a journey last taken in 1972, which now makes it more than forty years since anybody stood sole-deep in lunar soil. NASA's moonfaring Saturn V rocket was abandoned for the Space Shuttle, which had a thirty-year run before being retired in 2011; not once in its one-hundred-thirty-five missions did the Shuttle approach the moon or even crest above low Earth orbit. There has been, in the wake of Apollo, a general apathy in the U.S.A. surrounding space exploration, as well as conspiracy theories insisting that the moon landing was a hoax. And yet several people predicted that the new frontier of space would awaken human beings to a new level of consciousness.

In 1948, English astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle said, "Once a photograph of the earth, taken from the outside, is available [...] a new idea as powerful as any in history will be let loose" (*Cry for Myth* 300). Buckminster Fuller had a similar prediction: "All humanity [...] is about to be born in an entirely new relationship to the universe" (*Myths to Live By* 235). The anticipated photo arrived in 1968 when Apollo 8 astronaut William Anders took a picture from lunar orbit that came to be known as *Earthrise*, enjoying prominence as a six cent postage stamp the following year. As for the transformative effects Hoyle and Fuller predicted, Martin Heidegger was affected: "I was shocked [...] We do not need atomic bombs at all [to uproot us]—the uprooting of man is already here. All our relationships have become merely technical ones. It is no longer upon an earth that man lives today" (56). Astronaut Rusty Schweickart also experienced a shift in perspective following his service in the Apollo program. As the twenty-third American to travel into space, his comments mark a change in consciousness:

> Outside on the front porch of the lunar module you watch the sun rise over the Pacific and it's an incredible sight, beautiful, beautiful! [...] You begin to realize that your identity is with that whole thing [Earth...] And from where you see it, the thing is a *whole*, and it's so beautiful. [...] I've used the word 'you,' because it's not me or the others on the lunar module. *It's life that's had that experience*. (*Cry for Myth* 299-300)

Campbell, who like millions witnessed the first lunar landing from the comfort of his home, shared a spiritual appreciation for the event:

> Who will ever in his days forget the spell of the incredible hour, July 20, 1969, when our television sets brought directly into our living rooms the image of that strange craft up there and Neil Armstrong's booted foot coming down, feeling cautiously its way—to leave on the soil of that soaring satellite of earth the first impress ever of life? [...] We carry the laws [of the universe] within us by which it is held in order. And we ourselves are no less mysterious. In searching out its wonders, we are learning simultaneously the wonder of ourselves. That moon flight as an outward journey was outward into ourselves. And I do not mean this poetically, but factually, historically. I mean that the actual fact of the making and the visual broadcasting of that trip has transformed, deepened, and extended human consciousness to a degree and in a manner that amount to the opening of a new spiritual era. (*Myths to Live By* 234-235, 239)

Campbell's comments were made in 1970, the year after Apollo 11.

Twenty years later, *Voyager 1* captured a photo of Earth from a distance of 3.7 billion miles. Astronomer Carl Sagan embraced the photo, titling a book after it, *Pale Blue Dot* (1994). In his introduction, Sagan mythologizes the smallness of Earth in the picture:

> From this distant vantage point, the Earth might not seem of any particular interest. But for us, it's different. Consider again that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there—on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam. [...] There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known. (XV-XVI)

Lamenting that a collective shift in consciousness had not yet taken hold in 1991, decades after the first photos of Earth from space became available, Rollo May made a similar appeal: "[T]he exploring of the heavens is a myth out of which we can achieve a new international ethics and understanding, a new raison d'être for humanity. Though it has not yet changed us,

we can believe that it will become a new myth out of which we may achieve a new international morality" (*Cry for Myth* 298).

These individuals shared what was for them a profound transformation of spirit in their relation to the planet, but that experience was not and has not been shared by all of humanity. Moriarty's "belief that, yes, it was a small step for Neil and, however glamorous in appearance, a quite insignificant step for humanity" accepts that space exploration has failed to inspire masses. Hoyle, Fuller, Heidegger, Campbell, Sagan, and May, none of them having taken space journeys, shared their individually mythologized understandings of the endeavor with others. They hoped that everybody on the planet could be transformed the way astronauts like Schweickart had been, and that hope was driven by a desire for globalism. Their globalism, itself a myth, would be moral, humanist, and Western—and whether one supports their hope or not, to date it has not taken hold.

That idealism, the hope for an individuating West, was alive in the American psyche during the run up to the Space Race, and can be seen in "Golden Apples," Bradbury's story of direct encounter with the sun. Here we encounter the captain of a spaceship who, in a marriage of Moriarty's movement local and movement essential, achieves commonage consciousness as a result of the journey. The plot is simple: the crew of a rocket ship, the *Copa de Oro*, travel to the surface of the sun, collect a sample from its edge, and turn around. Along the way there is the phenomenal experience of the feat, including the death of a crewmate, but there is also the inward journey of the captain's memories of a Midwestern American childhood, as well as his daydreaming speculations about the first people to wield fire. Bradbury's Prometheus undergoes a spiritual shift in accomplishing the fire theft, undertaken not alone but with a crew, and does not suffer divine punishment.

Harold Bloom, who "respects Bradbury as a benign moral fabulist while sadly noting how slender are his characterizations" (VII), takes this tale to be his finest: "To call 'The

Golden Apples of the Sun' a short story is to endanger it. You cannot read it side by side with Chekov, Flannery O'Connor, Hemingway, or Borges. It is a parable, and probably Bradbury is best thought of as a fabulist, a teller of moral tales" (2). Touponce and Eller acknowledge views like Bloom's:

> Everyone reads [Bradbury's] works with certain ideological views about his authorship, even those who think they have no theory while viewing him as a "mere entertainer." In our view, these are the most blinded readings because they set up a view of culture depending on hierarchies of meaning ("high" culture versus "low") that Bradbury's writings, considered in their entirety, seek to undermine. (*Ray Bradbury: The Life of Fiction* 39)

Bradbury himself once confronted an interviewer with this same issue: "I can read Yeats one minute and then watch *The Empire Strikes Back* and enjoy both equally. What's wrong with that? Do you want me not to do that?" (Aggelis 120). Here he iterates the same dictum put forth by filmmaker Werner Herzog: "The poet must not avert his eyes," meaning artists should consume and metabolize the products of their culture: highbrow, lowbrow, everything between. While Bloom's summation is not an analysis but an observation, and while I disagree with his statement that "Golden Apples" cannot be read alongside the writers he names, he is right to note its qualities as a parable. For the purposes of this study, we go further than Bloom by calling it a myth, for it is not a simple morality play. Bradbury reaches beyond morals to imagine an experience transformative for the individual and the collective.

Touponce offers a cogent analysis of the story as psychological reverie:

> Bradbury has given us a fable of modern consciousness which often forgets, in its urge towards progress and technology, its Promethean debt to the unconsciousness. In the long story of mankind's quest for knowledge, he has transformed Prometheus into a child dreaming close to oneiric sources. Yet it should be clear, from the temporal and historical perspectives that open up even in this highly mythopoetic text, that he is not a writer who seeks solely to dissolve consciousness in some archaic mystical fog, as some critics doubtless believe. The nature of what Bradbury was after in his fantasy will probably continue to be overlooked if the assessment of his stories remains at the level explored by the emotive-cognitive distinction. ("Existential Fabulous" 217)

By setting much of the story in the captain's imagination and memory, Bradbury reflects the concept of the outward space journey back onto and into the personal psyche of a single character. Touponce is right that the emotive-cognitive lens cannot be our sole viewfinder, although we do need it to build a complete case for Bradbury's achievements. The collective must also be considered, for this is not as much a story of a Prometheus as it is of Prometheans, an unnumbered crew working together to risk the opportunity of collecting a sample from the sun.

This is a humanist fantasy written in the early years of the United Nations, the captain and crew's national identities never defined, Bradbury reluctant to truly Americanize his characters. The spaceship itself carries a Spanish—not English—name, *Copa de Oro*, which is both Spanish for "Cup of Gold" and the common name of *Eschscholtzia californica*, the state flower of California. At the same time, works from American and European literature are referred to throughout, including Irish and English authors. Bradbury is taking the reader beyond Ameircanness to a cast of characters whose signifiers are not based along national or ethnic lines, aiming at the idea of what is universally human. This was not an unpopular view in the United States at the time. Let us not forget that the United Nations mission to create and ratify the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and 1949 was led by former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who found herself, following her husband's death in office, playing a major role in the new worldwide coalition formed in hopes of preventing a new worldwide catastrophe—being tested then in Korea. That spirit, of a responsibility to the citizens of the world, their betterment, and the myth of progress, is alive in the captain and crew. Theirs is a quest for humanity, a collective endeavor born out of shared need.

There is also the global matter of the atomic bomb and that solar-fusion/human-fission-inspired inferiority discussed at the beginning of this chapter. When the captain

remembers the inevitable question—why did they undertake this task—his answer is expressed collectively with "we" and "our":

> He knew the answer before the question.
>
> Because the atoms we work with our hands, on Earth, are pitiful; the atomic bomb is pitiful and small and our knowledge is pitiful and small, and only the sun really knows what we want to know, and only the sun has the secret. And besides, it's fun, it's a chance, it's a great thing coming here, playing tag, hitting and running. There is no reason, really, except the pride and vanity of little insect men hoping to sting the lion and escape the maw. My God, we'll say, we *did* it! And here is our cup of energy, fire, vibration, call it what you will, that may well power our cities and sail our ships and light our libraries and tan our children and bake our daily breads and simmer the knowledge of our universe for us for a thousand years until it is well done. Here, from this cup, all good men of science and religion: drink! Warm yourselves against the night of ignorance, the long snows of superstition, the cold winds of disbelief, and from the great fear of darkness in each man. So: we stretch out our hand with the beggar's cup. . . (248)

The scope was from the individuation of the captain to that of the crew and thereby the culture that sent them to the sun. We recall Schweickart's insistence on using "you", in its sense as the second person plural pronoun, when discussing work he accomplished as an astronaut. The crew's boon is not theirs alone but provides for the greater good as they understand it, which, in hyperbole of the era, stretches outward to the whole of humanity. "Golden Apples" in this way becomes a vision recorded in 1953 of the scientific and spiritual potential of the U.S.A., on the behalf of all the world and even with it, to explore beyond orbit, moon, or Mars to a seemingly impossible frontier. At the center of the solar system, by this story's reckoning, we as human beings will find our own center. Concurrent with the American public's serious consideration in the nineteen fifties of entering low Earth orbit and colonizing the moon, Bradbury's story pitches those hopes farther and further, that is in distance and possibility, in movement local and movement essential, to the very heart of the solar system—and for the entire human race. Bradbury offers this story, first and foremost, as a citizen of the world and, taking existence even further back, one of the countless children of the sun.

Two aspects that set "Golden Apples" apart from other fire theft stories are its future setting and the seizing of a yet-untapped source of energy. Every fire thief, from Grecian Prometheus to Vedic Mātariśvan to Ojibwe Nanabozho the Hare to Cherokee Grandmother Spider, lives in the past of his or her culture, so their stories, in part, explain how fire was first harnessed. Bradbury's fire thieves aboard the *Copa de Oro*, on the other hand, exist in an imagined future and seize a dreamed-of energy. I do not classify "Golden Apples" with religious apocalyptic (as in revelatory or eschatological) literature, as Bradbury was not a scribe of scripture, but we can certainly read the story in the context of the scientific narrative of the origin of the human use of fire.

"Golden Apples" has just such a narrative embedded within it. While moving the robotic hand toward the sun, the captain imagines that moment a "million years ago" when "a naked man on a lonely northern trail" seized fire from a lightning-struck tree "and gave his people summer" in their cave (247). This daydream, inspired by paleoanthropology, is the best science can provide in the way of the origin of fire tending. As opposed to a history, it is a speculation, an empirical gray place outlying factual certainty. There is no way that science can answer this question: Who was the first person to wield fire? The gap there between what is known and what is unknowable provides space in which a story can arise to satisfy, at least partly, our desire to understand how that invaluable practice began. The Prometheus of the modern scientific West, separated from us by time and species, is nameless, often and presumably a male cave dweller. Says Campbell:

> One of the earliest signs of a separation of human from animal consciousness may be seen in man's domestication of fire [...] When this domestication occurred, we do not know; but we do know that as early as 400,000 B.C. fires were being kindled and fostered in the caves of Peking Man. What for? That is something else that we do not know [...] We have from all over the world innumerable myths of the capturing of fire; and in these it is usual to represent the adventure as undertaken not because anyone knew what the practical uses of fire would be, but because it was fascinating [...I]t is usual in these myths to represent the separation of mankind from the beasts as having followed upon that fundamental adventure [...] The fascination of fire [...] may be

> taken as the earliest sign in the records of our species of that openness to fascination and willingness to adventure for it at great risk which has been ever the essential mark of the uniquely human—as opposed to common animal—faculties of our species. (*Myths to Live By* 240-241)

That line, the one that we imagine separates us from the animal kingdom, is, like all scientific concepts, open to revision.

Campbell, almost in harmony with Bradbury's captain, muses upon the force of fascination that we believe inspired our predecessor all those eons ago: "Let us once more recall: when that protohuman troglodyte Sinathropus, in his dismal cave, responded to the fascination of fire, it was to the apparition of a power that was already present and operative in his own body: heat, temperature, oxidation; as also in the volcanic earth, in Jupiter, and in the sun" (*Myths to Live By* 246). Sinanthropus, we pause to note, is no longer recognized as a genus by the scientific establishment; the Peking Man cranial remains are now classified as belonging to Homo erectus. Science, we remember, is itself a fluid field where new data alter understanding. "Golden Apples" provides speculation in time's opposite direction, into the unknown future, of how people will one day wield fusion. The science is not present—no astrophysicist will approve of the method presented, using a robotic hand and cup, for capturing a piece of the sun—but a narrative is provided that satisfies through imagination what human achievement is unable to accomplish to date. Both events, the very first use of fire, which happened, and the potential development of solar fusion, which many scientists hope will someday happen, are unknowable to us as specific events. Our only opportunity of experiencing those events exists in our imaginations, which, unable to provide a factual narrative, can nevertheless satisfy, expand, even spur the desire to achieve the seemingly impossible.

Bradbury often makes references to texts in his work, but intertextual references begin stacking in "Golden Apples" from the title. "The Song of Wandering Aengus" by W. B. Yeats provides that title, the final line of the third and final stanza of the poem:

Though I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun. (47)

Yeats portrays Aengus, a figure from Irish mythology, as having glimpsed a "glimmering girl / With apple blossom in her hair" who knows his name, disappears, and inspires an obsessive determination to find her again. From a Jungian perspective, the poem illustrates the concept of the *anima*, a feminine psychic image that manifests in dream and myth as go-between between a man and the unconscious. They are conceived of as "guides of the soul and they can become necessary links with creative possibilities and instruments of individuation" (*CDJA* 23). For Dante, this quality was projected upon Beatrice; for Poe, upon Virginia Clemm. Fiction abounds with anima figures, from Hermine in Hesse's *Steppenwolf* to Clarisse McClellan in Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*.

In "The Song of Wandering Aengus" it is the girl transformed from a silver trout, caught with a berry for bait. "Golden Apples" presents no recognizable anima figure, but does relate to the poem beyond the appropriation of its final line. Yeats's narrator, Aengus, mentions fire twice, first "a fire in my head" that drew him into a hazel wood to cut and fashion a fishing wand, and then, intending to cook the fish, he "went to blow the fire aflame" (47). There are two fires, the second being physical fire, the kind our ancestors domesticated, and the first being a mental conflagration, what Campbell called a power "present and operative" in our bodies (*Myths to Live By* 246). The two are linked: the fire he plans to cook the trout starts in his mind before he even has the tools to catch his meal. In a similar way, the sun's energy informed and shaped the life within the *Copa de Oro* long before it docks alongside the photosphere. The desire to touch the sun is inborn, it exists somewhere within us today, as it did yesterday, as it did eons ago, and here we still stand unable to tend the

energy it provides. For Aengus the golden apples of the sun are the fruit he anticipates harvesting from his hoped-for relationship with the "glimmering girl / With apple blossom in her hair" (47); for the captain and crew of the rocket, the golden apples of the sun are "the knowledge of our universe for us for a thousand years until it is well done."

Prometheus and *Icarus* are given as alternative names for the rocket, invoking figures from Greek myth, the former already discussed and the latter the sky-flying youth whose defiance of the wax limits of his father's technology causes the sun's heat to melt his wings' binding and plummet him deathward into the sea. In a call and response conversation between captain and crew, which Touponce likens to "the form of questions and answers reminiscent of a small town classroom" (209), quotes and titles are paired with their respective authors. "Fear no more the heat of the sun," a line from *Cymbeline* (IV.i.327), is rightly attributed to Shakespeare. *Cup of Gold*, a historical novel about the pirate Henry Morgan by John Steinbeck (1929), and *The Crock of Gold*, James Stephens's Irish fantasy novel (1912), are also named by an unidentified crewmember. This crew has a firm grounding in literature; this is not a group of engineers educated solely in STEM.

There is also a link between Yeats's poem and Stephens's novel, in that the Irish god Aengus appears in *The Crock of Gold* as Angus Óg. To briefly recount the tale, a teenage girl named Caitilin is tempted away from her family by Pan, a nature god imported by Stephens from Greco-Roman tradition into an Irish setting. In order to woo her back, an old man called the Philosopher seeks out Angus Óg, who has been forgotten by many and not seen in over a hundred years. His request is honored and Angus Óg woos Caitilin away from Pan. Stephens ends the loveless wandering set down in Yeats's poem by pairing Angus Óg, at long last, with an Irish maiden. Fulfillment is granted to the Irish god.

Spun amid that plotline, Caitilin's father has stolen a crock of gold from a group of Leprecauns and buried it under a thorn bush. According to the rules they live by,

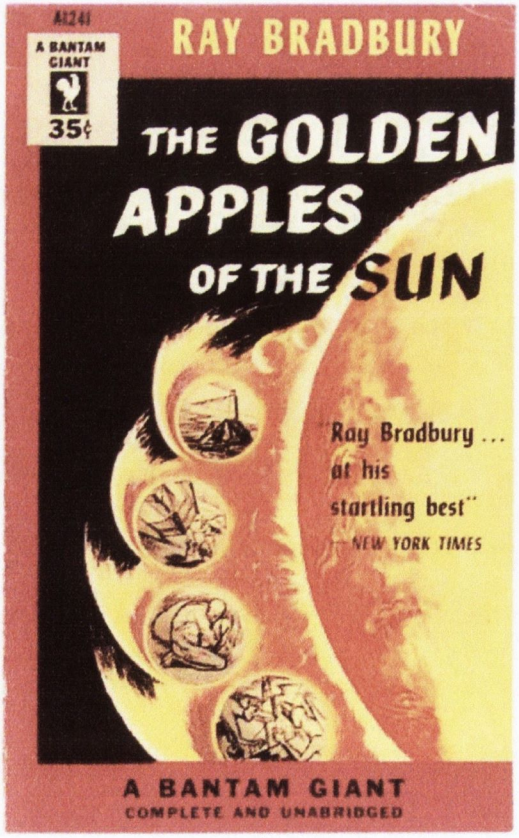
Leprechauns are required to protect thorn bushes at all costs, which prevents them from digging up their own crock. As they explain it: "In the night time we go about the country into people's houses and we clip little pieces off [people's] money, and so, bit by bit, we get a crock of gold together, because, do you see, a Leprecaun has to have a crock of gold so that if he's captured by men folk he may be able to ransom himself" (52). After many comic episodes, the Philosopher's children unearth "a beautiful little earthen crock filled to the brim with shining, yellow dust" (189). Unable to carry it, they leave it with the Leprecauns, who rejoice at its return and lift their punishment from the Philosopher. Read depth psychologically, the Leprecauns are the biological processes and impulses of the unconscious. The comic motif of all characters being unable to make use of the gold due to their individual limitations underlines the intangible nature of psychic contents. They stand incapable of incorporating its vitality in a transformative sense. This is essential to the novel's comedy, and its mention in "Golden Apples" suggests that the crew's mission could very well fail.

What Bradbury achieves by listing many different golden cups is not unlike Gertrude Stein's "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose." He piles cups upon cups to the degree that cups become numinous. By not using the word grail, loaded as it is with Christianity, Bradbury recreates the grail for a demythicized reader. The motorized cup is a vessel; so is the rocket ship; so is the crew's collective psyche; so is the captain's individual psyche. But in "Golden Apples" the grail has already been seized, crafted, attained. What remains is the filling of that grail, in this case with solar fusion. The risk is being engulfed and immolated by the sun, which is the tragic fate of Bradbury's "Rocket Man" and the depersonalizing transformation of the Old Ones in "Sign"; the goal is to survive incorporation of the sun's essence. This is a delicate balancing act, shown in the way the insides of the rocket are frozen cold to counter the sun's heat.

There is also, lurking in the text, oblique reference to William Blake's poem "The Mental Traveller" (1803). Consider the final line of the third stanza:

> And if the babe is born a boy
> He's given to a woman old,
> Who nails him down upon a rock,
> Catches his shrieks in cups of gold.

Here, echoing Steinbeck's *Cup of Gold*, Stephens's *Crock of Gold*, the *Copa de Oro*, and the rocket's remote controlled Cup, are more cups of gold. Furthermore, Bradbury uses "shrieking" twice and "shrieked" once in this story of little more than two thousand words. Given the captain's daydreaming and remembering and nightmaring, he is presented as a futuristic mental traveler. Again, his movement is not just local, it is also essential. There is also a Blakean essence to Joseph Mugnaini's original unused cover for the collection titled *The Golden Apples of the Sun*. Mugnaini's spheres of light, spinning off the sun like pinwheel flares, contain pictorial and figural representations reminiscent of Blake's etchings.



[Fig. xxiii: Mugnaini's unused cover for *The Golden Apples of the Sun* (Weist 59)]

"The Mental Traveller" offers little context, be it to time or culture. For this reason, Martin K. Nurmi remarks "many critics, when they come to the poem, either avoid it, admit defeat, or seize upon some aspect of it as a 'key' to its meaning. I do not think the poem can be unlocked by any single key" (109). Its obtuseness inspires or perhaps even demands initial readings producing wonder. Yeats praised Blake for this visionary understanding of the dynamism of symbols: "In vision the meaning chooses its own symbol by a kind of affinity" (Blake 307). The poet's work has long been regarded as mythic, and Nurmi acknowledges a debt to the fire-thieving Titan: "The nailing of the babe down to the rock, of course, reminds one of Prometheus" (111). We recall that his agonizing punishment for gifting human beings with fire sees him bound to a rock where nightly, forevermore, an eagle descends and gorges on beakfuls of his liver. Blake's boy is nailed upon the rock by the old woman, the imagery turning toward crucifixion in the next stanza, and the poem proceeds into a cycle of transformations for both boy and woman.

Why, with naming other literary works and authors, would Bradbury mask reference to Blake? "The Mental Traveller" describes an entire cycle, whereas "Golden Apples" is close to vignette in structure. The captain and crew are presented just prior to, during, and just after their encounter with the sun. The effect their feat will have on society does not play out. Where Blake builds an ouroboric vision of humanity's grand struggles with itself and its environment, Bradbury presents a single ordeal steeped in optimism that appeals to a positive hope for things to come. There is no telling how the crew of the *Copa de Oro* will be received upon their return to Earth but they look forward to sharing their boon and do not anticipate the agony of crucifixion for their gift. And yet a sense of technological déjà vu arises between the captain's imagined ancestral fire thief and his own accomplishment. Where the use of fire defined humanity's first separation from other animals, the harnessing of solar fusion is set up as being just as profound for life on—or in this case from—Earth.

Nurmi acknowledges the surface pessimism of Blake's vision: "The cycles described in 'The Mental Traveller' might seem to be a despairing dull round admitting of no progress. The cycles as operating in history do, however, as [Northrop] Frye makes clear, progress toward a great apocalypse" (116). Apocalypse is used today as a term for world-ending cataclysm but the ancient Greek word ἀποκάλυψις, from which it derives, means uncovering or revealing. One revelation Blake may offer is the cycle. But Frye also observes in the poem a celestial influence: "The cyclical relation between [the male and female figures] runs through four cardinal points: a son-mother phase, a husband-wife phase, a father-daughter phase, and a fourth phase of what Blake calls spectre and emanation [...] The controlling symbolism of the poem, as the four phases suggest, is lunar" (*Anatomy of Criticism* 322). If the poem's cycle is inexplicitly styled in lunar fashion, Bradbury's story is explicitly solar. Merely hinting at "The Mental Traveller," he makes no mention of the fruit coupled to Yeats's golden apples, "the silver apples of the moon." In this way of thinking, dominated by the search for the center of everything we are, what is moonlight but secondhand sunlight?

Cardinal points demarcate both inner and outer space in "Golden Apples." The story opens with a polar direction:

> "South," said the captain.
>
> "But," said his crew, "there simply *aren't* any directions out here in space."
>
> "When you travel on down toward the sun," replied the captain, "and everything gets yellow and warm and lazy, then you're going in one direction only." He shut his eyes and thought about the smoldering, warm, faraway land, his breath moving gently in his mouth. "South." He nodded slowly to himself. "South." (243)

The crew thinks of empty space in terms of movement local, unappreciative of metaphor. They regard the environment, or lack of environment, through which they travel literally, while the captain alone adopts a mythopoetic perspective on their trajectory. He is set apart as an individual, not only by rank but mental faculty. He knows they are not heading south in a global manner, understanding this is a psychological south. Being the first to undertake a trip

to the sun itself, a journey into unknown parameters, he is rescued by metaphor, which transforms the task into relatable terms. Once the deed is done, the cup filled with solar energy and safely stored in the hull, the story ends with another pole:

> "There's only one direction in space from here on out," he said at last.
>
> They waited. They waited as the ship moved swiftly into cold darkness away from the light.
>
> "North," murmured the captain. "North."
>
> And they all smiled, as if a wind had come up suddenly in the middle of a hot afternoon. (250)

Having integrated the southern sun, north is revealed—and once north is verified, east and west appear. For now, having come to a center of life, the captain calibrates the compass of his soul. We may not individually be the center of the universe, but when it comes to the manner in which we live, within the boundaries of time and body, we are each our own center. The ability to orient the cardinal directions of our inner selves has the effect of placing each of us with confidence within the field of existence. The finer the sensitivity of that compass, the more complete, fulfilling, and whole life becomes. In Jung's opinion, this balance is the ongoing goal of individuation.

Campbell viewed the centering revelation to be the prime mythic understanding:

> The center of the world is the *axis mundi,* the central point, the pole around which all revolves. The central point of the world is the point where stillness and movement are together. Movement is time, but stillness is eternity. [...] There is a definition of God which has been repeated by many philosophers. God is an intelligible sphere—a sphere known to the mind, not to the senses—whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. [...] And each of us is a manifestation of that mystery. [...] What you have here is what might be translated into raw individualism, you see, if you didn't realize that the center was also right there facing you in the other person. This is the mythological way of being an individual. You are the central mountain, and the central mountain is everywhere. (*POM* 89)

If the *Copa de Oro* is an ark where individual psyche undergoes individuation, the crew represents different interior processes, conscious and unconscious, with the captain standing in for ego. Bretton, the first mate, is the only character named. He is also the only character to die, freezing when the ammoniated winter conditions countering the sun's heat break through

his protective suit. Individuation is not a safe or easy process, and as consciousness expands certain aspects of the self will die to allow for new growth. He is not killed by the sun; rather he is killed by their own over-compensation in preparing for their encounter with the sun. Bretton has several definitions, the *OED* pointing to its obsolete uses as a word for Britons of Britain and Brittany, for dealing out or distributing, and, tantalizingly, for the Breton *apple*.

Though Bretton's death is accidental, and his loss as second in command is distressing, it is significant in the end that the *Copa de Oro* will return home not with their Breton apple but with golden apples. Not everybody makes it to the point of knowing who they are. Those who do will find themselves changed, transformed, growing into new states of consciousness. All around us are the victims of life, the people who have suffered traumas they will never bounce back from, people impaired by the effects of drug use or abuses and torments from other people. "Golden Apples" reminds readers that life is permanently connected to the sun above. We have Promethean potential within; most will not actualize it and others will suffer defeat in the process. Those who do discover their own center, and then the center of each person, place, or thing they encounter, passing into the Thou-I perspective via movement essential, have encountered eternity—and once the eternal has been experienced there is no going home. For Bradbury's crew aboard the *Copa de Oro*, the captain leads them not home but north.

5.6 Wholeness Myths

> Burning burning burning burning
> O Lord Thou pluckest me out
> O Lord Thou pluckest
>
> burning
>
> T. S. Eliot
> *The Waste Land* (308-311)

> The sun burned every day. It burned Time. The world rushed in a circle and turned on its axis and time was busy burning the years and the people anyway, without any help from him. So if he burnt things with the firemen, and the sun burnt Time, that meant that everything burned!
>
> One of them had to stop burning. The sun wouldn't, certainly.
>
> Ray Bradbury
> *Fahrenheit 451* (151)

In Bradbury's "Pillar of Fire" (1948), William Lantry, who died in 1933, wakes undead from his grave in 2349 to a society where the dead have been outlawed. As the last corpse in the world, he undertakes a mad mission to reintroduce death to society by attending to a killing spree and the destruction of the Incinerators that stubble the landscape. Essentially crematoriums, the altars inside these Incinerators are adorned with the phrase: "WE THAT WERE BORN OF THE SUN RETURN TO THE SUN" (42). Zombie Lantry's campaign to reinstate darkness in a naïve culture is met without resistance or understanding, which serves to play on the ideas of paradise that many readers might expect to accompany utopia. This future society's understanding of the sun, which has a far more prominent symbolic role in their culture than it did in twentieth-century America, has left them blind to their own shadows stretching behind them. Bradbury imagines a relationship to the sun that overcompensates the dearth in his own time and culture. The answer to appreciating the sun, in other words, is not sun worship; it is, rather, the act of encounter and integration.

Neither a clergyman nor a scientist, Bradbury engages both of these modern tribes in his solar tales. The Rocket Man and conman Thirkell, leading lives terribly off balance, are cast into the sun itself, burned for their inability to lead sincere lives. The early conquistadors of Venus, which orbits both closer and somehow further from the sun thanks to its clouds, suffer death and near-death, yearning for sunlight, before their first descendants suffer melancholy and ennui, yearning even more for sunlight. A maverick priest encounters Martians afloat like small blue suns and sees in their Otherness the same animating force

inside him, but before he can save their souls he is humbled to learn they have already attained enlightenment. But it is the mission of the *Copa de Oro* that provides Bradbury's most significant encounter with the sun, for technology and the human spirit are there tempered in the sun's photosphere. The solar theft points far beyond low Earth orbit and the moon, both being destinations Americans had only recently begun to consider as places to physically venture, to the center of our solar system and, thereby, ourselves.

Campbell's assertion that "the heliocentric universe has never been translated into a mythology" stands questioned by the diversity of solar emblems shining through the stories we have examined (*IROS* 17). Bradbury was a writer of fiction concerned with the source of life, free from issues of fact and faith that are essential parts of science and religion. While rite and ritual may not accompany his stories, unless one counts purchase and reading as holy acts, they nevertheless offer opportunities for awakening individual wonder, which is a significant part of any established mythology. If myths seek to express existence with unreal imagery so that something about reality may be rendered, Bradbury was a mythmaker in his own time, in his own place. In his suns we see "the source of life and wholeness of man" that Jung and Campbell traced through world mythological systems and the modern psyche.

It is curious that Ray Bradbury's name at birth was Ray Douglas Bradbury. Douglas was for Douglas Fairbanks, his mother's favorite actor, and Ray stood on its own, never being the full Raymond. Raymond has a Germanic origin, "composed of the elements *ragin* 'advice' and *mund* 'protector'" (*BTN*). "Advice" seems appropriate enough for a writer like Bradbury, who concerned himself with humanity and bemoaned the directions in which he saw civilization heading. The name also calls to mind Raymundus, the medieval alchemist whose recipe for preparing the *lapis*, the "treasure hard to attain," Jung quotes in "The Symbolism of the Mandala": "Take of the body that is most simple and round, and do not take of the triangle or quadrangle but of the round, for the round is nearer to simplicity than

the triangle. Hence it is to be noted that a simple body has no corners, for it is the first and last among the planets, like the sun among the stars" (1936/1968, *CW 12,* ¶220).

But there is that other meaning of Ray, that is, as a sunbeam, a radiating line of light, radiance. The *OED* lists *ray* deriving from the Latin *radius:* "ray of light, spoke, radius of a circle, pointed rod, spur of a bird, spine of a stingray, radius bone of the forearm, in post-classical Latin also arm of a cross." As manifestations of radiations from a center, be it a physical, psychological, mystical center, or all of the above, it is a romantic but nevertheless linguistic point to end this study of solar myths with the observation that Ray Bradbury was aptly named for the tales he told.

CONCLUSION

> It's only recently that I've come to understand that writers are *not* marginal to our society, that they, in fact, do *all* our thinking for us, that we are writing myths and our myths are believed, and that old myths are believed until someone writes a new one.
>
> Kurt Vonnegut, June 1974
> ("Kurt Vonnegut on Breakfast of Champions")

Eliot Rosewater, in Vonnegut's novel *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (1965), crashes a convention of science-fiction writers held at a motel in Milford, Pennsylvania. He heaps them with praise because, in his estimation, though they "couldn't write for sour apples, [...] they were poets just the same, since they were more sensitive to important changes than anybody who was writing well" (*NS* 202). A couple of years ago I attended Phoenix Convention IX, an annual gathering (sadly defunct) of science fiction and fantasy authors held in Dublin's Irish Writers' Centre. One of my former writing tutors from Lancaster University, George Green, was presenting, so this was both a chance to catch up and hear writers discuss the craft. The panel I most anticipated gathered four writers, two men and two women, to talk about myth in contemporary society.

The panel leader opened promisingly with a comparison of the most recent Irish diaspora, recession-inspired and flinging young adults to Canada and Australia, to the myth of Oisín, the Irish hero who travels to Tir na nÓg and returns home to find centuries have passed, everything changed for the worse, and a crippling death when, stepping foot on home turf, he suddenly ages three hundred years. He spoke of how the old myth carried significance for Irish people struggling in 2012 with the division of families over a distance of oceans and continents. From there the panel dissolved into iterations of myth being "cool" and "great craic" before a heated debate broke out among two attendees in the audience. One of them, who had been quietly knitting the entire time, made significant progress on her scarf

as she defended the historical presence of dragons in Irish mythology. "There *are* dragons in Irish mythology," she hissed over clicking needles, "and if you knew *anything* about it, you'd know *that*." The other woman maintained that those dragons were all Welsh.

When the hour lifted I was disappointed, but disappointment was mine alone. Everybody else seemed to have enjoyed it plenty. The mistake, some reflection revealed, had been my own: I assumed going in that writers expressing blatantly mythological motifs in their work must have theories about it. Myth, I had to remind myself, arises whether we think about it or not. Being a fiction writer, I knew better. When I write, do I intellectually interrogate the process? Not really, or at least I aim not to. A dictum from Hillman is taped over my desk: "Seize the image before the content" (*Healing Fiction* 92). The action of written literary expression, first and foremost, calls for participation—with the imagination, with language, with the visual symbols of language, with the page, with an absent and hoped-for reader. My fourth novel was obsessively plotted, took three years to write, and read like obligation, a creative disaster far worse than the first three miscarriages. For the fifth I bargained with imagination: I promised not to work out the plot beforehand if it fed me a story worth writing. Six months later I had a first draft of a book that was finally good *enough*. In my pact with the unconscious, I learned to trust the dreaming part of my life in the creation and writing of stories. Other writers have entirely different relationships to the process. I just know that a story from Campbell's life that Bill Moyers shares in opening *The Power of Myth* makes sense to me as a writer:

> In Japan for an international conference on religion, Campbell overheard another American delegate, a social philosopher from New York, say to a Shinto priest, "We've been now to a good many ceremonies and have seen quite a few of your shrines. But I don't get your ideology. I don't get your theology." The Japanese paused as though in deep thought and then slowly shook his head. "I think we don't have ideology," he said. "We don't have theology. We dance." (*POM* XIX)

Vonnegut and Bradbury danced. In writing the short stories we have examined, they were trying to earn a living wage while providing narratives relevant to the ups and downs of middle class American life. Their art sold in the mainstream to Americans who could afford subscriptions to weekly publications or a monthly pulp digest picked up from the drugstore on allowance money. Their projects in the forties and fifties were not high art meditations financed by benefactors and printed in limited edition monographs. On this point, Rosewater iterates a low vs. high defense: "The hell with the talented sparrowfarts who write delicately of one small piece of one mere lifetime, when the issues are galaxies, eons, and trillions of souls yet to be born" (*NS* 202). Bradbury's family grew with four daughters, Vonnegut's to six children after adopting three of his sister's boys when she died. The drive to write and publish short stories arose from the imperative of providing for a family. The nature of producing short stories, each being a fifty yard dash compared to the marathon nature of writing a novel, paired with a diverse market, ranging from genre pulps to women's magazines to adult publications, allowed Vonnegut and Bradbury to switch gears as they pleased. Perhaps more than any other American writers of their generation, they sold short stories expressing all of the mainstream motifs of the day, never settling with any one genre.

Our role in the present study has been to consider the mythic nature of Bradbury and Vonnegut's early commercial work. By rounding up and unpacking stories by each author in turn, we have witnessed individual idiosyncrasies borne out of the experience of expressing stories arising from and with collective tensions of the day. Vonnegut provided war stories that challenged American attitudes of victory and victoriousness after WWII and wrote several others that expressed how fragmentary and incohesive white American identity could be for its citizens, be they upper, lower, or middle class. Bradbury took aim at the American family, penning tales of nuclear units struggling for molecular cohesion, but also appealed to the human hope for more, for attainment, for expansion of consciousness in his stories of

wholeness. And here we see that their projects were not so vastly different, for fragmentation suggests wholeness, and wholeness is susceptible to fragmentation. Individuation is present in stories by both writers and neither is consistently pessimistic or optimistic about its realization. Both acknowledge life as the struggle of being alive while suggesting a way of becoming that transcends mere mechanics. Think of Professor Barnhouse's humane use of dynamopsychism and Harrison Bergeron's pronouncement—"Now watch me become what I can become" (9)—before Diana Moon Glampers guns him down. And what about Bradbury's Edwin, outgrowing and escaping his mansion "world", and the Rocket Man who, unable to ground himself in home life on earth, is eaten by our marvelous sun? Sometimes life "works out." Sometimes it doesn't.

Campbell rejects the ever-elusive meaning of life, arguing instead for the living of life:

> I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive. [...] There's no meaning. What's the meaning of the universe? What's the meaning of a flea? It's just there. That's it. And your own meaning is that you're there. We're so engaged in doing things to achieve purposes of outer value that we forget that the inner value, the rapture that is associated with being alive, is what it's all about. (*POM* 5-6)

"Myths," he maintains, "are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life" (*POM* 6). Tracking these clues through the stories we have read closely has not been an endeavor at reduction but expansion. As Walker urges, Jungian literary criticism "must enrich the understanding of a text and increase the fund of perceptions associated with our reading" (148). Potentialities "we might not have seen from any other perspective" ask to be brought forth, in awareness, in our efforts to appreciate their revelations (Walker 148). Successful short stories are not typically "about" something, being, as Susan Lohafer notes, "strangely indescribable" (*NSST* 301). They are paradoxically explicit-and-suggestive experiences followed from the page, as irreducible as songs. One person's summarizing 'about' will never

sit fully aligned with another person's—and neither will ever present the totality of what the story provides.

So too is it with the Jungian approach to archetypes. The aim in depth psychology is not one of reduction, of easy explanation, of a set path of psychological phylogeny. Rather, it seeks to expand awareness of those aspects of life we are living without seeing, drawing attention to unconscious elements that influence us more than we know. Each archetype carries a diversity of meanings, associations, understandings, effects. In exploring these diversities, we gain an appreciation for the dynamism inherent in an archetype. We understand it is irreducible to any one idea. Mother is inflected in all mothers and representations of mothers, Independence is only ever understood independently, and the Hero has faces beyond number. Archetypes are the themes of being alive and the narratives they breathe into, differing culture to culture, shift in significance for the individual over the course of his or her life—or even a day in the life. An archetypal perspective on myth both honors and struggles with the commonality of life's ineffable complexity. "Our psyche is set up in accord with the structure of the universe," wrote Jung, "and what happens in the macrocosm likewise happens in the infinitesimal and most subjective reaches of the psyche" (*MDR* 368).

Human beings have not always been writers but we can be certain that storytelling arose in the prehistoric past. Hillman, speaking from his experience as a psychoanalyst, advocates the foundational aspect of oral literature: "I have found that the person with a sense of story built in from childhood is in better shape than one who has not had stories, who has not heard them, read them, acted them, or made them up" (*Healing Fiction* 46). As he puts it, we found ourselves in story, supporting Jung's insistence that in helping a patient, "The crucial thing is the story" (*MDR* 145). Campbell answered Jung's call—"What is your myth—the myth in which you live?" (*MDR* 195)—by offering up *Myths to Live By* (1972)

and a career defending the relevancy of mythologies old and new. This relates to the written short story in that the art form activates what Lohafer calls "storyness". As short story criticism branched into short story theories in the final decades of the twentieth century, critics made arguments for foundational and numinous qualities unique to the form. Lohafer, in league with cognitive psychologists, claims that "Storying is a way of processing experience in the interests of human well-being. The sense of storyness [...] is a cognitive integer—and that accounts for the primacy of the short story as a narrative form" (*NSST* 310). May insists the form arose historically as it did—and has persisted—because it fulfills a basic need for enfranchising life, which the Enlightenment disenfranchised with positivism and models of an inert existence deprived of soul: "Because short fiction is so bound up with the experience of the sacred and mythic perception, it is no accident that the short story as we know it today got its most important impetus as an art form from the Romantic effort in the early years of the nineteenth century to regain through art what had been lost in religion" (*NSST* 139). Moriarty, who "yearned for a philomythic *Mabinogion*, a suite of myths, traditional or modern, that would mediate the highest truths to us," might have fashioned one from short stories as much as he did from scriptures, Upanishads, and American Indian tales. "Like nothing else perhaps in our culture," he says, "[myths] uncompromisingly mediate the difficult strangeness of self and of world" (*TGLT3* IX). The same is being said of short stories.

Few scholars have regarded Vonnegut and Bradbury's short stories with critical attention. With the work presented here, a contribution to the field of literary studies is submitted in the hope that others recognize these stories' value beyond entertainment. Vonnegut may have derided his as work "sold in order to finance the writing of the novels" (*Welcome to the Monkey House* XIV), but presented with historical contextualization and a theoretical approach, they stand up to scrutiny and reveal many other stories lurking in their characters and connotations. Here I argue that there is pleasure, too, for the scholar, who need

not place him or herself at odds with readers. Zimmer, in "The Dilettante Among Symbols," urges us to "take delight in symbols" of storytelling, "evoke fresh speech from them," and "be always ready to begin anew" (*King & the Corpse* 2, 4, 6). That attitude dovetails with the playfulness encountered repeatedly in the short stories Vonnegut and Bradbury wrote, as well as their essays on writing. Says Bradbury:

> You can never tell when you might want to know the finer points of being a pedestrian, keeping bees, carving headstones, or rolling hoops. Here is where you play the dilettante, and where it pays to do so. You are, in effect, dropping stones down a well. Every time you hear an echo from your Subconscious, you know yourself a little better. A small echo may start an idea. A big echo may result in a story. (*Zen* 40)

Vonnegut also attributed some appeal of the short story to play: "the story has boundaries like a playing field. The story can't go simply anywhere. This, I feel, invites readers to come off the sidelines, to get into the game with the author. [...] Where, outside the Groves of Academe, does anybody like a story where so much information is withheld or arcane that there is no way for readers to play along?" (*BSB* 11). And so this is how they danced, with one hand extended out to readers with invitation.

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