

## CONTRIBUTOR BIO

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**REMEMBERING THE BOMB: SCIENCE FICTION AND THE  
MEDIATION OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY FROM THE 1950s TO  
THE LATE 1970s**

*By Sean Martinez*

The atomic bomb was not just a weapon but a cultural phenomenon that literally changed every aspect of society. Major authors such as Paul Boyer and Allan M. Winkler argue that everything from family dynamics to geopolitics to the definition of public safety was dramatically altered by the advent of the atomic bomb.<sup>1</sup> Philosopher Jaques Derrida stated that the atomic bomb and nuclear warfare as a whole have no precedent and therefore cannot be compared to any past event.<sup>2</sup> Thoughts and ideas of death, destruction, holocaust, mutation, fire, and countless others were incorporated into every single aspect of society from commercial products to music to movies.<sup>3</sup> Although the imagery has never changed, a testament to the cultural and intellectual weight of the

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985); Allan M. Winkler, *Life Under a Cloud: American Anxiety About the Atom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Jaques Derrida and trans. Catherine Porter and Philip Lewis, "No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)," *Diacritics* 14 no. 2 (Summer 1984): 20-31.

<sup>3</sup> Boyer, 10-13.

bomb, the way the imagery is felt and dealt with changed dramatically from the 1950s to the 1970s. Nuclear weaponry imagery in Science Fiction was originally defined by the initial fears about the atomic bomb but these same attitudes surrounding the bomb gave way to survivalism as humanity learned to cope with the idea of nuclear annihilation.

In order to argue this thesis, a theory of memory has been constructed to explain how the essay shall be argued. An actor or event creates a reality which is then mediated by a physical or nonphysical agent to produce a distinct collective memory.<sup>4</sup> For this essay, the theory shall be called Reality-Mediation and will be used throughout this essay to show how nuclear imagery stayed constant while the attitude changed from the 1950s to the late 1970s.

An example of this Reality-Mediation can be seen when Little Boy and Fat Man were both dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Afterwards, CBS released a newscast on August 7th, 1945 detailing the account of the bombing of Hiroshima but did not explain how the atomic bomb was detonated or how many casualties occurred were expected.<sup>5</sup> The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki occurred in the reality, or the space of existence outside our minds. The mediator then edits and modifies the reality by providing, excluding, or by commenting on the event. In this case, CBS is one of many mediators that shaped the public's collective memory of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki through their reporting of the bombings.

It must be noted that physical objects and nonphysical objects can both be mediators. Mediators can be physical if they are living or are real objects that provide commentary on the event such as media groups or textbooks. Additionally, mediators can be nonphysical in the sense that they can be modes of thought, intellectual frameworks, or other reasons imagined by the individual. The essence of the mediator is the mediation itself or the ability to provide additional information that is inherently disjointed from the event. Emotion,

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<sup>4</sup>To define "collective memory" is a complex task in the terms of cultural theory, cultural history, historiography, and epistemology. For this essay, "collective memory" shall be regarded as the image and attitude that is commonly and widely held by the public. For a more exhaustive definition and more thorough display of methodology, see Wulf Kansteiner's *Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies*, Pierre Nora's *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, Frances A. Yates's *The Art of Memory*, Mary Carruthers's *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, and George Lipsitz's *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*.

<sup>5</sup>Boyer, 4.

imagery, sensation, and other things that are not part of the event are the ingredients mediators add to the reality. Therefore, the reality should be without the ethereal whereas the collective memory should have the ethereal.

A critique that is expected from readers is that the definition of a mediator is too broad and sweeping to provide an in-depth analysis. I argue that this wide definition is inherent because the concept of collective memory is inherently tied to popular culture. It can be argued that popular culture matches the general trends that occur politically, socially, economically, and in other layers. Since memories can be varied, complex, multifaceted, and nuanced, there needs to be a broad definition of mediation to account for these very complicated memories.

For this essay, Science Fiction has been chosen as a single mediator. I shall not address other mediators because to deconstruct a single memory, place that memory in a historical context, identify if any prior memories are similar to it, test if those prior memories influence the memory I seek to deconstruct, find all relevant mediators, and understand how each mediator contributed to the final memory is a task worthy of a dissertation.

Science Fiction is a mediator but not the only mediator in the process of crafting nuclear imagery and shaping nuclear attitudes. If Science Fiction is a mediator, and collective memory and images are both multifaceted and complex, and if there are multiple mediators influencing a single memory, then Science Fiction should follow the general trend or pattern that these multiple mediators are acting in to produce a coherent memory. Science Fiction is like an indirect indicator, in that its role in shaping the collective memory is implicit on its own but becomes explicit in conjunction with other mediators. If there is change, Science Fiction will mirror the change that is occurring as a whole. If there is no change, then Science Fiction should show no change in the description and definition of nuclear memory. So to test this theory, we must start at the beginning of a collective nuclear memory; we must start at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

On August 6th, an atomic bomb decimated the city of Hiroshima and two days later, another atomic bomb destroyed the city of Nagasaki. Initial reports were grim. *The New York Times* reported that Hiroshima, "...a city of 300,000 had virtually disappeared," and that, "...the death toll [was] expected to reach

100,000.”<sup>6</sup> *The Los Angeles Times* wrote that the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima had the force of two thousand B-29 bombers and that the explosion could be felt up to ten miles away.<sup>7</sup> Immediately from the start, the atomic bomb had a power to destroy life and this inherent quality became imbedded within the public’s mind.

Due to the bomb’s unprecedented power, the only way for the public to grapple and understand the bomb was through Science Fiction, a genre built around imagination and theoretical experimentation. Adam Roberts, professor of English at the University of London, wrote, “This notion of science as ‘imaginative creation’ is of the greatest interest to the critic and historian of SF[Science Fiction], since SF is itself a more thoroughgoing mode of imaginative creation allied to Science.”<sup>8</sup> Due to serious real world limitations and fears that gravity would no longer exist, all the water in the world would evaporate, and other wild imaginative fears expressed by the public; Science Fiction proved to be an excellent means for atomic ideas.<sup>9</sup>

The imagination took the information available from news reports and magazine photographs and transformed it into a shadow that engulfed humanity. This fear can be seen in the science fiction literature in the early 1950s to the late 1950s. To science fiction writers in this approximate ten year period, atomic warfare equated to the absolute destruction of life, humanity, and the Earth as a whole. They saw the atomic bomb was a one way street with no turning around and no stopping.

An example of this can be seen in Arthur C. Clarke’s 1951 short story “If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth.”<sup>10</sup> A young boy named Marvin looks at the Earth from the moon colony that he now lives in and thinks of the beauty that Earth was told to contain. He wondered why his people could not return to Earth, but was suddenly reminded of the reason: “...an evil phosphorescence...the

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<sup>6</sup> Leslie Nakashima, “Hiroshima Gone, Newsmen Finds,” *New York Times*, August 31, 1945.

<sup>7</sup> “Fliers Report On Atomic Bomb: 60 Per Cent of City Wiped Out,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 1945.

<sup>8</sup> Adam Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 8.

<sup>9</sup> Bikini Atoll, “Newsweek: July 1, 1946,” <http://www.bikiniatoll.com/Newsweek1946.html> (accessed November 7, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Arthur C. Clarke ed. Patrick Neilsen Hayden, *The Collected Stories of Arthur C. Clarke* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2000), 403-406.

radioactive aftermath of Armageddon.”<sup>11</sup> Earth is destroyed, humanity exiled, and the fallout will not disappear the immediate future. In this scenario, humanity has no control over reclaiming their world, which is ironic when compared to the control they had in destroying it.

In addition, Ray Bradbury’s 1950 short story “There Will Come Soft Rains” draws upon the same nuclear imagery and plays upon the same fears.<sup>12</sup> In 2026, a fully automated house goes about its daily routine. But as Bradbury slowly revealed, the inhabitants are not only gone but the only proof that people lived in the home are “The Five spots of paint—the man, the woman, the children, the ball—remained.”<sup>13</sup>

This short story as a whole can also be analyzed in the context of the Reality-Mediation process. Bradbury’s image of nuclear death used the images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that were easily available. Life Magazine’s photographs depicted Hiroshima and Nagasaki as ruins and graveyards.<sup>14</sup> To an average viewer, it would seem as if the entire city was flattened and just charred pieces of rubble and concrete. Overnight, not a single soul lived in the cities. In this case, Bradbury took the raw information, modified it and added his own interpretations to construct a memory in the reader. He wrote, “The house was an altar with ten thousand attendants, big, small, servicing, attending, in choirs. But the gods had gone away, and the ritual of the religion continued senselessly, uselessly.”<sup>15</sup>

The gods of the altar were destroyed, brushed away from time by an object so evil it could only exist as mythology. Bradbury knew that mankind could not possibly fathom the horrors or the destruction of the atomic bomb so he framed the bomb as a mythological weapon, a real world sword of Shiva. He implied that this bomb is, by far, the most unholy object in existence. It smothers cities, vaporizes life, and leaves behind a mysterious and invisible disease on the Earth. Here he took the knowledge of the bomb and the pictures of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, synthesized them, added his own commentary, and wrapped a certain emotion into the image to construct a memory.

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<sup>11</sup> Clarke, 405.

<sup>12</sup> Ray Bradbury, *The Stories of Ray Bradbury* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 96-102.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>14</sup> Life Magazine, “Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Photos From the Ruins,” <http://life.time.com/history/hiroshima-and-nagasaki-photos-from-the-ruins/> (accessed November 8, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Bradbury, 98.

Another example can be drawn from the iconic 1951 Science Fiction film *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.<sup>16</sup> In the movie, an alien named Klaatu comes to speak to humanity but faces numerous obstacles such as politicians, military officers, and suspicious civilians. At the end, Klaatu says that the development of the atomic bomb has created a great concern amongst other extraterrestrial civilizations. He warns that this sort of violence is not tolerated by the powerful robot police force that keeps watch over the numerous civilizations and leaves Earth with a cryptic message, “The decision rests with you.”

At its face, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is a warning message to the viewers that they suddenly have control over a weapon that has the potential to destroy not only the world but also disrupt the peace in the universe. This seems to suggest that the technology and power that humanity now has should be kept under control to prevent a disaster both at home and abroad, but Klaatu never explains why the atomic bomb has the capability to disrupt the peace in the universe. This enables the imagination to run free easily conjuring up images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; civilization suddenly being wiped off the face of the Earth, calling upon the fear that the atomic bomb could set off an irreversible and catastrophic chain reaction throughout the universe or something even more catastrophic and violent. Regardless, the absence of explanation in the movie enabled the audience to imagine the horrors of the atomic bomb rather than be shown what is to be feared. Science Fiction, with its inclusion of imagery, and the imagination, which is infinite in its will and ability, can be combined to create anything, and more importantly, any memory.

So why does this trope of the atomic bomb, a weapon able to unleash unimaginable damage, recur throughout this wide body of science fiction during this time period? The reason is simple: this was the strongest image in the public’s mind at the time. Although Americans supported dropping the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the support immediately turned into fear and paranoia as soon as the public realized what sort of weapon they have in their arsenal. For example, a Gallup Poll reported that eighty-five percent of the public approved of the atomic bomb being used and sixty-nine percent believed that the development of the atomic bomb was a good thing in 1945.<sup>17</sup> But

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<sup>16</sup> *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, Directed by Robert Wise (1951; Los Angeles: 20th Century Fox, 2003), DVD.

<sup>17</sup> Boyer, 183-184

when the potential of the nuclear bomb dawned on the public, their attitudes shifted as a result.

This shift in attitude can be attributed to the Soviet Union testing their own atomic weapons, specifically RDS-1. On September 3, 1949, the Air Force detected a large amount of radioactivity in the atmosphere that was traced to an atomic bomb detonation in the Soviet Union.<sup>18</sup> On September 23, 1949, President Truman announced publicly that the Soviet Union successfully tested a nuclear weapon.<sup>19</sup> As a result, the nuclear fears were amplified because the security blanket of America's monopoly over nuclear weapons had disappeared and that, perhaps in the near future, the world would be in a standoff between two world powers.<sup>20</sup> Even at this time, fears of a world completely destroyed and radically changed by nuclear weapons were starting to arise. After the Bikini Atoll tests, scientists reported that the islands' food supply was contaminated by an "atomic bomb hangover" and that scientists did not know when the natives could return to the islands or even if the natives could return at all.<sup>21</sup>

These Science Fiction works took Hiroshima, Nagasaki, the Bikini Atoll tests, and RDS-1 and mediated them to produce the memory of death and the attitude of fear. Knowledge of death and destruction was taken by Science Fiction and exacerbated. The nature of nuclear weaponry at this time was met with great hope but also great fear. Some hoped that the atomic bomb could be harnessed to create a new world with atomic powered cars, a warmer climate, and other utopian visions.<sup>22</sup> But sitting behind the hope was a great fear that would show itself in Science Fiction and memory, the fear that the world would be fundamentally and irreversibly changed, that war-hawks would rather destroy the Earth than let the enemy live in peace, and that mankind would never be

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<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Condit, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chief of Staff and National Policy, Volume II, 1947-1949* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1996), 279-280.

<sup>19</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Assessing the Soviet Threat: The Early Cold War Years, Chronology," <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/assessing-the-soviet-threat-the-early-cold-war-years/chron.html> (accessed November 9, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Anthony Leviero, "President Does Not Say Soviet Union Has an Atomic Bomb," *New York Times*, September 24, 1949.

<sup>21</sup> "Bikini Atoll Food Still Radioactive," *New York Times*, September 25, 1949.

<sup>22</sup> Boyer, 109-121.

able to exit the shadow of the nuclear weapon and return to the light of peace.

Immediately after this first phase from the early 1950s to the late 1950s, Science Fiction underwent a transitory period that reflected the emergence of a new attitude from the early 1960s to the mid-1960s. Science Fiction began to experience the sudden realization that the bomb, in all of its terror and power, was a very real object and not something of fantasy. Society was learning to come to terms with the bomb and Science Fiction parallels this real world development. A prime example of this would be Leo Szilard's 1961 short story "The Voice of the Dolphins." Szilard first portrayed a scientific organization called the Vienna Institute discovering a dolphin language and that dolphins are capable of intelligent thought. Although the dolphins do not have hands or fingers to conduct experiments, the scientists performed the experiments on their behalf. These dolphins created numerous scientific discoveries such as the development of a food stuff based on algae which solves numerous food crises across the world.<sup>23</sup>

It is important to note that Szilard was a nuclear scientist. He worked for the Manhattan Project and he would become one of the key players in fighting against nuclear armament.<sup>24</sup> This detail will be very important as it shows Reality-Mediation at work. Szilard's knowledge and opinions are being mediated by the work of Science Fiction to produce a very specific and articulate memory. Although "The Voice of the Dolphins" is not a very prominent or well-known work of Science Fiction, it still shows the power of Reality-Mediation.

"The Voice of the Dolphins" is specifically in the first transitory phase of Science Fiction because of how Szilard addresses nuclear warfare. For example, Szilard wrote,

When a scientist says something, his colleagues must ask themselves only whether it is true. When a politician says something, his colleagues must first of all ask, "Why does he say it?"; later on they may or may not get around to asking whether it happens to be true...Scientists rarely think that they are in full possession of

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<sup>23</sup> Leo Szilard, *The Voice of the Dolphins* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), 19-71

<sup>24</sup> R. R. Wilson, "Hiroshima: The Scientists's Social and Political Reaction," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 140 no. 3 (September 1996): 350-357; Joan W. Moore and Burton M. Moore, "The Role of the Scientific Elite in the Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," *Social Problems* 6 no. 1 (Summer 1958): 78-85.

the truth, and a scientist's aim is a discussion with his colleagues is not to persuade but to clarify.<sup>25</sup>

Szilard's writing shows his distrust of politicians to manage the nuclear arsenal but also his own belief that scientists, like himself, should be responsible over the nuclear arsenal. This view was not uncommon during his time as many of the critiques focused on the dangers of putting war-hawk politicians in charge of the nuclear arms and the need for an international body to mediate disputes and prevent a potential nuclear war.<sup>26</sup>

Szilard's story is an act of mediation. His story takes the events and desires for cooperation between the government and scientists and produces a memory that is positive to the readers. Readers take this new memory and balance the fears of the new nuclear era with the assurance that there are skilled individuals who can protect the nation's interests and the nation's people. He wrote this story to show both the government and the public, that mankind can live in existence with the nuclear bomb even if humanity would be better off without the nuclear sword dangling over their heads.

The result of the first transition would be the second phase of Science Fiction: the late 1960s to the late 1970s. This would be a period easily known as the Cold War, which featured the culmination of deepening geopolitical divides, decolonization, globalization, and aggressive nuclear armament. The defining characteristic of nuclear weaponry in Science Fiction is how the narratives comment on the dramatic change that the world would undergo if nuclear weaponry was used and the assurance that mankind shall survive, compared to first phase science fiction which viewed the nuclear weapon with uncertainty and defaulted to mankind's imagination.

In the 1960 novel *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, Walter M. Miller created a world that has endured a nuclear war approximately six hundred years ago and is now slowly starting to rebuild itself. After the nuclear war, called the Deluge by the inhabitants of this new world, mankind rebelled against those who it considered responsible. They exacted their revenge on "...rulers, scientists, leaders, technicians, teachers, and whatever persons the leaders of the maddened

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<sup>25</sup> Szilard, 24.

<sup>26</sup> "Ban on Nuclear Arms Urged," *New York Times*, January 17, 1959; Lindsay Parrotts, "Small U.N. Panel On Arms Proposed: Canada Urges Non-Nuclear Nations Seek a Program Big Powers Can Back," *The New York Times*, November 11, 1960.

mobs said deserved death for having helped make the Earth what it become.”<sup>27</sup> The result would be a Dark Age where knowledge was lost and only preserved by various priests and monks.

What is immediately noticeable is how the *Canticle for Leibowitz* explores the notion of cyclical history. This cyclical narrative implies two things: the inevitability of nuclear war and the endurance of humanity. In consideration to the inevitability of nuclear war, the *Canticle of Leibowitz* goes to Biblical proportions to narrate the outbreak of nuclear war.

Miller does not explicitly explain the direct effects of nuclear warfare upon the environment but he does allude to the after-effects. He paints a world that is deserted, empty, and harsh but never specifically explains what happens or why nuclear warfare changes this world. He uses Biblical parables to narrate the chronology but this technique has two distinct effects. On one hand, this type of historical narration undermines the reality of the situation by speaking of the nuclear attack in parables and metaphors, words or phrases that can be manipulated by the reader’s imagination, rather than precise and non-negotiable language that cannot be manipulated by the imagination. This creates the problem of multiple interpretations and inconsistent images from person to person.

On the other hand, this type of historical narration adds a sense of grandeur and magnitude that can only be captured through a Biblical style. Miller captures this style perfectly as he narrates Lucifer seducing a prince into using a nuclear weapon, the bomb being as hot as Hell, and God smelling the burnt carcasses of mankind. This sort of destruction is completely unimaginable, not because mankind is ignorant of the dangers but because mankind simply lacks the imagination to think of such violence outside the context of Biblical accounts and myths. It is impossible to imagine so many people vaporized and burned by nuclear explosions but it is possible to imagine the smell of rotting bodies, burned and charred, rising up to heaven and upsetting God.

It is an excellent representation of Science Fiction acting as a mediator between the reality and the memory. Miller’s *A Canticle for Leibowitz* takes the unimaginable destruction and approaches it through the means of Biblical narration in order to provide the audience a means of accepting a future that is both bleak and terrifying. This form of mediation, although a bit unrealistic, is

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<sup>27</sup> Walter M. Miller Jr., *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (New York: Bantam Books, 1959), 63-64.

the most palatable form of mediation because it takes the past and reorganizes it to match present events.

In another iconic Science Fiction film made in 1968, *Planet of the Apes*, three men voyage across the cosmos and awaken after a two thousand year hibernation.<sup>28</sup> When they crash land on another planet, they are kidnapped by a race of advanced apes who have developed some form of organized society. They can ride horses, they have a code of laws based on religion, and they have some kind of guns. This advanced ape society is starkly contrasted with the underdeveloped human population who cannot speak, carry diseases, and live in packs rather than cities or villages. As one ape says, “They stink.”

In a twist ending, the main protagonist falls to his knees at the sight of a sunken Statue of Liberty as he realizes that the planet of apes is a post-apocalyptic Earth. Although previous films, short stories, and novels have portrayed the same destruction, *Planet of the Apes* takes it a step further by suggesting that the simplest aspect of humanity, that man is greater than animal, is fundamentally altered when nuclear warfare is unleashed. Although this is not explicitly stated, given the year that men leave Earth (approximately 1972) and the year the movie was produced, nuclear warfare was seen as a legitimate cause for the destruction of the Earth. In addition, Dr. Zaius, the chief antagonist of the film comments, “The forbidden zone [the main desert outside the ape’s village] was once a paradise. Your breed [humans] made a desert of it, ages ago.” This hints at nuclear warfare since the nuclear bomb has been traditionally portrayed in Science Fiction as a device that can transform life into a desert.

This revelation shows the physical and social power of nuclear warfare in the filmmakers’ eyes. Not only is society destroyed but the most basic order of things is challenged. Apes ride horses and men are treated as animals. The implications are absurd but, as Derrida would point out, without a historical precedent there is no way to guarantee that the future portrayed in *Planet of the Apes* cannot happen.<sup>29</sup>

The movie completely redefines the nature of Reality-Mediation because, unlike prior Science Fiction works explored in this essay, it stretches the imagination to incredible and unrealistic lengths. The notion that nuclear warfare can result in the creation of a hyper advanced society of apes and the same nuclear

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<sup>28</sup> *Planet of the Apes*. Directed by Franklin J. Schaffner (1968; APJAC Productions, 2006), DVD

<sup>29</sup> Derrida, 20-31.

warfare can result in the devolution of mankind is absurd. But, coming back to Derrida, there is no precedent to nuclear warfare and no history to define what should and should not happen.<sup>30</sup> In *Canticle for Leibowitz*, the imagination was used to create a cyclical history that will inherently result in the escape out of a Dark Age, a Renaissance of learning, and the creation of another nuclear war between two ideologically different opponents. This style of imaginative creation resulted in the creation of a world very much like our own, a world from the past. On the other hand, in *Planet of the Apes*, there is no deficiency of imagination as the filmmakers effectively created a world that is so foreign, so unusual, and so eccentric that we cannot help but immediately reject the world and cannot imagine a process that would result in such a world existing.

*Planet of the Apes* is a cornerstone in the Reality-Mediation theory because it shows the process down to the letter; an event occurred which was altered and edited by some force, and the result is the creation of a memory loaded with images and emotions. The creation of the atomic bomb and the future of nuclear warfare was commented on by *Planet of the Apes* which resulted in the memory of a world drastically altered to the point of madness and impossibility.

Another Science Fiction film produced in 1976, *A Boy and his Dog*, details the story of a survivor who lives in the desert with his mutated dog after a nuclear war.<sup>31</sup> This film follows in the footsteps of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* by describing a world ruined by nuclear warfare. Blood, the mutated dog, narrates a brief history of how World War Three pitted the Eastern and Western Blocs against each other but ended in 1983 with the Vatican Armistice and World War Four, which took place in some unknown year, lasted about five days which was, "Just long enough for the final missiles to leave their silos on both sides." The result of WW4 was the destruction of life and the creation of a post-apocalyptic world.

The movie presents a post-apocalypse world where people are illiterate, food is scarce, sex is animalistic, and violence is common. In this world, men are alone and fight for themselves. The film shows that a world forged by war leaves behind a people desperate to survive.

This movie takes the memories of what the nuclear bomb can and will do to the Earth and then mediates it to the audience. In this fictional world, very

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> *A Boy and his Dog*. Directed by L.Q. Jones (1975; LQ/JAF, 2003), DVD.

real concerns about how mankind will survive after the nuclear bomb have been personified by the movie. These fears were then mediated and given a face by the movie *A Boy and his Dog*. But throughout the movie, the fears were eased by the reminder that a community has been able to survive despite the bombs and the destruction. The movie is able to comment on the post-apocalyptic nightmare and give the audience a sense of peace and hope even though the movie does not explain how Vic, Blood, and the rest of mankind were able to survive in these new conditions.

Science Fiction from the mid 1960s to the late 1970s represented the emergence of survivalism in spite of the bomb, a tradition that started in the *Canticle for Leibowitz*, and the danger that the nuclear weapon poses to not only society but also the world as a whole. The trope of survivalism exists because of the rise of numerous developments in nuclear survival strategies known as civic defense. These civic defense programs were sponsored by the government to protect the civilian population from nuclear annihilation. JoAnne Brown, professor of history at Johns Hopkins University, writes that these civic defense programs emerged first out of WW2 as "...scrap drives, blackout drills, refugee relief activities, and conservation of scarce resources."<sup>32</sup> When the Cold War began, civic defense curriculum in schools had a rich and strong tradition already instituted; thus enabling civic defense education to focus on the nuclear bomb.<sup>33</sup> Subjects from home economics to safety education were molded and structured to fit the core tenants of civic defense: surviving in the face of the bomb.

The popular interest in the fallout shelter also contributed to the new emerging attitude of survivalism. Sarah A. Lichtman defines the fallout shelter as, "...an ideologically charged national do-it-yourself project that permeated America's post-war consciousness." The fallout shelter was not only designed to protect individuals from a nuclear explosion, but also to help people wait for the fallout radiation caused from an explosion to subside.<sup>34</sup>

Civic defense and the fallout shelter represent the standardization of survivalism in the face of nuclear war. These real world developments created a

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<sup>32</sup> JoAnne Brown, "A Is for Atom, B Is for Bomb: Civil Defense in American Public Education, 1948-1963," *The Journal of American History*, 75 no. 1 (June 1988): 68-90.

<sup>33</sup> Sarah A. Lichtman, "Do-It-Yourself Security: Safety, Gender, and the Home Fallout Shelter in Cold War America," *Journal of Design History*, 19 no. 1 (Spring 2006): 39-55.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-51.

culture and an idea of surviving in spite of nuclear war. Science Fiction then took these real world developments and mediated upon them by commenting on them, providing stories, and creating a fantasy world after the nuclear explosion. Although this fantasy was grim, desolate, and unforgiving; it was a world that life could fight to live. Science Fiction during this time sought to give hope that there is a life after the bomb and perhaps a life that similar to the one we live now.

From the early 1950s to the late 1970s, Science Fiction depicted the nuclear weapon image consistently and never deviated from the stock of images that it was loaded with from the end of World War Two; but Science Fiction depicted nuclear weapon attitudes differently as it created a very distinct memory from event to event. Throughout the essay, Science Fiction has always portrayed the nuclear bomb as a weapon with the potential to wipe life off of the face of the Earth. From the early 1950s to the late 1970s, this collective societal memory has been consistent and has been constantly employed to ask questions beyond the bomb and imagine the world after the bomb has dropped. Even though the attitudes have shifted from absolute death to a conditional death, that is a death that can occur but is not ensured for all people, the image of destruction is constant. Therefore, this essay has properly shown that the image of death and destruction has been consistent despite the changes in the nuclear attitudes. But on a different note, this essay toys with the concept of the history of memory but does not effectively tackle certain methodological questions. Questions of what constitutes a memory and how do we reject the ideas brought to us and form contrary ideas are not addressed here. Nonetheless, this essay sought to show the interaction of Science Fiction works as a mediator of reality. Science Fiction at time invoked fear in its readers and viewers, forcing them to view a world not necessarily worth living in, but Science Fiction also inspired people to fight in the face of death and to hope for a future without the nuclear sword dangling over their heads. The relationship between the real world and the memory is complicated, it is my personal hope that this essay has shed some light on the subject and will be of use to other scholars in the future.

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