A RHETORIC OF RUINS

Exploring Landscapes of Abandoned Modernity

ANDREW F. WOOD

Copyright 2021. Lexington Books. All rights reserved. May not be reproduced in any form without permission from the publisher, except fair uses permitted under U.S. or applicable copyright law.

EBSCO Publishing : eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via
AN: 3018511 ; Andrew F. Wood.; A Rhetoric of Ruins : Exploring Landscapes of Abandoned Modernity
Account: ns335141

A Rhetoric of Ruins

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

LEXINGTON STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY RHETORIC

Series Editor: Gary C. Woodward, The College of New Jersey

This series provides thought-provoking and accessible analyses of the uses of language and media from the middle of the twentieth century to the present. In particular, this series examines how modern discourse is constructed and communicated in our distracted times, focusing on specific settings such as health communication, crisis communication, changing norms of interpersonal exchange, political communication beyond the presidency, etiquettes of communication in the digital age, celebrity as a rhetorical form, changing norms in "reality" and narrative television, and altered patterns of address in computer-mediated discussion. These books will provide depth and clarity about discourse more familiar than understood.

Recent Titles in This Series

A Rhetoric of Ruins: Exploring Landscapes of Abandoned Modernity
By Andrew F. Wood
The Corruption of Ethos in Fortress America: Billionaires, Bodycams, and Bureaucrats
By Christopher Carter
Rhetoric and Governance under Trump: Proclamations from the Bullshit Pulpit
By Bernd Kaussler, Lars J. Kristiansen, and Jeffrey Delbert
Rhetorics Haunting the National Mall: Displaced and Ephemeral Public Memories
Edited by Roger C. Aden
Rethinking Communication in Social Business: How Re-Modeling Communication Keeps Companies Social and Entrepreneurial
By Craig E. Mattson
World War I, Mass Death, and the Birth of the Modern US Soldier: A Rhetorical History
By David W. Seitz
US Public Memory, Rhetoric, and the National Mall
Edited by Roger C. Aden

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

A Rhetoric of Ruins

Exploring Landscapes of Abandoned Modernity

Andrew F. Wood

LEXINGTON BOOKS
Lanham • Boulder • New York • London

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Published by Lexington Books
An imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowman.com

6 Tinworth Street, London SE11 5AL, United Kingdom

Copyright © 2021 The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
Chapter 4 originally published as "Haunting Ruins in a Western Ghost Town: Authentic Violence and Recursive Gaze at Bodie, California" in *Western Journal of Communication* by Taylor & Francis, 2020.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Wood, Andrew F., author.
Title: A rhetoric of ruins : exploring landscapes of abandoned modernity / Andrew F. Wood
Other titles: Exploring landscapes of abandoned modernity | Lexington studies in contemporary rhetoric.
Description: Lanham, Maryland : Lexington Books, [2021] | Series: Lexington studies in contemporary rhetoric | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Summary: "A Rhetoric of Ruins combines conceptual and theoretical frameworks to explore ghost towns, disaster sites, and environmental badlands as remnants of modernity. Methods of analysis include Jeremiadic, hauntological, psychogeographic, and heterotopian ways of reading U.S. and international sites"— Provided by publisher.
Identifiers: LCCN 2021033516 (print) | LCCN 2021033517 (ebook) | ISBN 9781793611512 (cloth) | ISBN 9781793611529 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Ruins, Modern. | Collective memory and city planning. | Waste lands. | Chernobyl Nuclear Accident, Chornobyl′, Ukraine, 1986. | Shrinking cities—Michigan—Detroit.
Classification: LCC BH301.R85 W66 2021 (print) | LCC BH301.R85 (ebook) | DDC 111/.85—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2021033516
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2021033517

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Contents

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction ix

1 Yesterday's Tomorrows 1

2 Post-Human Futures 25

3 American Carnage 51

4 Bodie's Ghostly Gaze 69

5 Detroit's Guilty Pleasures 91

6 Centralia's Graffiti Highway 111

7 Chernobyl's Exclusion Zone 127

8 The Doorway to Hell 157

Bibliography 171

Index 185

About the Author 193

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Acknowledgments

This book would not exist without the questions, challenges, and insights offered by students who completed my 2018 and 2019 *Ruins: Rhetoric and Performance* graduate seminars. Indeed, while I built that class to introduce students to ruins literature, I let them select a topic for *me* to research from a curated list. The goal of that exercise was twofold: to provide an opportunity for my students to see a professor struggling with the same material they chose to tackle, but also to focus my personal efforts to write this book. There is, after all, little more that can inspire a professor to complete a manuscript than a public commitment made to one's students.

Thus in 2018 I handed out a sheet with checkboxes and a set of three options: Mojave Desert Jackrabbit Shacks, Bodie Ghost Town, and Nike Missile Site SF-51. I remember wishing that they'd opt for the Mojave option, where I planned to produce a series of photographs based on long-exposure "light painting" techniques. But my students voted for the ghost town, which meant that I would come to understand the lament of a little girl who supposedly wrote in the 1880s, "Good-bye God, I'm going to Bodie." In 2019 the options were Detroit, Centralia, and New York's 9/11 Memorial & Museum. The vote that year was split between the first two options. So I wrote a draft chapter on Centralia for my students and followed up shortly thereafter with my work on Detroit.

I therefore wish to share my gratitude with the following students: Tori Bowser, Yesenia Carrillo, Marisela Castro, Stephanie Chaira, Patty Daley, Jemerson Diaz, Truc Do, Dina El-Tomy, Brendan Greenway, Joseph Guarnero, Jing Guo, Sara Johnson, Ravi Kaur, Daniel Kunkel, Edwin Lee, Ines Marjanovic, Alba Mayorga, Anthony Meixueiro, Kimberly Piet, David Ramos, Nate Ruiz, Claudia Tercero, Robert Thomas, Lucas Wang, and Kim Yee.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

A number of institutions also played an essential role in the completion of this project. In particular, I thank San José State University for providing sabbatical support, and my home department for providing travel funds. I also appreciate Taylor & Francis and Western States Communication Association for their permission to reprint (with some revisions) my article "Haunting Ruins in a Western Ghost Town: Authentic Violence and Recursive Gaze at Bodie, California" as chapter 4 in this book. That essay, by the way, would never have reached fruition if not for Robin Rowland's editorial advice, along with recommendations from two anonymous reviewers. Those first readers demonstrated the sort of critical and collegial engagement that I hope to emulate. Let me also express my appreciation to Lexington Books Senior Acquisitions Editor Nicolette Amstutz for her initial encouragement and indefatigable patience, to Sierra Apaliski for her guidance and expertise, to the production editor Taylor Breeding, who helped bring this manuscript into printable shape, and to an anonymous external reviewer who offered thoughtful feedback for this project.

I am also grateful for the many friends and colleagues who helped me in ways large and small: Tabitha Hart for sharpening my understanding of monuments and memorials, Joan Faber McAlister for producing such useful insight into hauntology, Randy Richardson for recommending that I read *Isaiah 1:30* when striving to understand Franklin Roosevelt's reference to withered leaves, Cynthia Rostankowski for inspiring me to think more deeply about ruin aesthetics, Anne Marie Todd for her gift of *Voices from Chernobyl*, Paul Turk for helping me better understand the Greek Key, and Bonnie Jefferis, Brett Lucas, Alena Ruggerio, Matthew Spangler, and Sarah Vital for helping me track down the location of the city portrayed in the Morning in America spot.

Ultimately, though, this book emerges from years of conversations, road trips, and international journeys shared with my family. While I am responsible for any errors that remain in this book, *A Rhetoric of Ruins* could not reach your hands without the love and support of Jenny and Vienna Wood. To them, I dedicate my best efforts and fondest appreciation.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Introduction

A Rhetoric of Ruins: Exploring Landscapes of Abandoned Modernity

Years ago I received an unexpected invitation to visit Flushing Meadows Corona Park in Queens, New York, and deliver a presentation about the 1939–1940 New York World's Fair. Having long been fascinated by optimistic visions of tomorrow, I was delighted to talk about the exposition. The initial theme of the NYWF was Building the World of Tomorrow with the Tools of Today, which seemed appropriate given that the site was carved from land described by F. Scott Fitzgerald as The Valley of Ashes:

> . . . a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. (p. 23)

The Fair was designed to provide a curative of sorts to the ailments of America on the tail end of the Great Depression, an age of crisis when many folks lost their faith in political leadership, either to manage the economy or prepare for impending war overseas. Offering hope, and hoping to make a few bucks, urban planners and corporate boosters joined together in the late 1930s to build a world's fair that would highlight innovations in media technology, transportation solutions, and urban design: a promise that planners, experts, authorities, and their machines could build a pathway out of the depths of the Great Depression.[1]

When I received my invitation to opine upon the Fair, I had recently completed my doctoral training and had begun an idiosyncratic investigation into world's fairs, from London's 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, to Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition, to more recent festivals of commerce, culture, and confidence. I'd even

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure I.1. 1939–1940 New York World's Fair postcard. Author's Collection

gathered a few artifacts from the fair—penny postcards, four-color booklets, tarnished spoons, even a blue-and-white button that announced, "I have seen the future." I was excited to receive this chance to speak about a topic that I loved, but I was nervous too. The event organizers informed me that I would be placed on a platform under the looming Unisphere, which had been built for the subsequent 1964–1965 New York World's Fair. They added that I'd be given an hour to deliver my oration, but that the platform could not accommodate any additional audio-visual support. I would rely on my words alone to justify my inclusion among far more worthy speakers. That prospect produced no small amount of panic. But I set about my task, writing and practicing an address and memorizing all sorts of details that I figured would impress the audience with my diligence: the number of attendees, the variety of zones, the range of state and international pavilions. Like any recent graduate student, I was hoping to impress and terrified of failure.

I remember flying cross-country from California to New York, focused entirely on my talk. On the plane, I barely acknowledged the flight attendants; on the shuttle, I barely noticed the Unisphere lit by lights; at the hotel, I barely heard the clerk's greeting. Lost in the bubble of my own thoughts, dreaming of tomorrow when I would present my talk, I flowed from airport to the van to the hotel to the elevator to my room. Closing the door behind me, I began to pace the floor. Despite months of preparation, I couldn't seem to land the presentation. I'd get lost in the organization, struggle with pesky details, or forget an important quote. Only at about four in the morning could I manage to get through the whole thing. I heard the tiniest tapping sound against the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

windows when I drifted off to sleep. The next morning I awoke, threw open the curtains and saw pouring rain. I got dressed, hailed a cab, and made my way to the park. There, I found a bedraggled group of organizers packing up their equipment. The event was canceled; there was no backup plan. Yes, the organizers assured me, I'd get reimbursed for my travel—and I was welcome to take home a free t-shirt.

A few years later I returned to the park, this time with my family, on a glorious summer day. We strolled the boulevards of what persisted from two attempts, in 1939 and then in 1964, to build the World of Tomorrow upon the Valley of Ashes. Virtually all of the Fair's grand enclosures and gaudy statues were long gone. The Trylon and Perisphere from 1939 had been dismantled. Those towering icons, which had been reproduced on countless trinkets and souvenirs, were razed (some say) to build American armaments for the Second World War. At least the Unisphere that had replaced them sparkled under blue skies. The 1939 New York City Building stayed too, transformed into the Queens Museum that now houses a remarkable panorama of the five boroughs. Remnants from the 1964 New York State Pavilion, with its torn rags from the Tent of Tomorrow (of *course* it was the "Tent of Tomorrow"), flapped in the breeze. Couples laid out picnic blankets and children made lazy circles on their roller skates. And I decided to deliver my speech.

Walking with my family, I offered an impromptu account of the exhibits and pavilions that once climbed toward the future. Weaving together anecdotes and details, I sought to resurrect the optimism of those splendid fairs, to reveal what flickered in the half-light of memory. I pointed out the spot where the Westinghouse Time Capsules had been buried, committed to the earth until the year 6939, and I told them about the ruins of the talk I'd hoped to deliver on these grounds. I admitted, though, that the presentation I had intended to deliver would have been a disaster. So soon after my grad school years, I simply didn't know enough about the fair and its meanings to deliver a competent oration. Struggling to stutter my assemblage of facts and figures, under the shadow of the Unisphere, I would have failed. I was not yet ready to speak either about the World of Tomorrow pronounced by these places, or about the ruins they left. My only hope is that the intervening years have bought me closer to that goal. So let us begin.

This is a book about modern ruins.

More precisely, this is a book about the ruins of modernity.

More precisely still, this is a book about the ways in which ruins work rhetorically, helping us trace the edges of the modern project, to navigate its distant and diverse precincts, and to propose alternatives to its ceaseless flow. Immediately, though, I am compelled to offer a reminder that we should

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

avoid the typical trap of seeing all discourse through any one conceptual lens. So easy is this trap, though. How else do we hope to make sense of the world but through the patterns we borrow and then later claim to create? The rhetorical critic may therefore be forgiven for forgetting the ruins upon which they stand, the mounds that were once the shoulders of giants. Accordingly we will not see everything from a single standpoint. At the same time we may find some utility in offering at least a partial, temporary framework that draws at least a few otherwise disparate texts, some apparently quite distinct from one another, into the strange conviviality of unexpected conversation. In short, the argument here is not to presume that all discourse is built upon ruin, only that some of the most meaningful and significant communication depends upon it.

The smooth, unstriated continuum of modernity, after all, awaits the puncture of ruins. In the detritus of abandoned places, discarded products, and fetishized peoples, we chart the borders and barriers of a culture marked by rationality, efficiency, confidence, and progress. We wander these ruins via apocalyptic imagery. We snap photos of a weed-choked factory, its windows covered with dust and the scrawl of spray-can magniloquence. We tour a nuclear accident site, joining visitors who swarm over chunks of irradiated debris whose invisible particles ping detectors into the red. We stare over the shattered urban tableaus of modern cities erupting in nuclear conflagration, their sublime warning sold as ten-cent pulp comics that reshape Cold War terrors into education: "Only A Strong America Can Prevent Atomic War." The ruin is revelation, a rhetoric of things to come. Yet sometimes the ruin is harder to discern, shimmering in the near distance, almost impossible to spot from the automotive frame, a message that yields itself only to what Greg Dickinson (1997) terms the pedestrian gaze (p. 12), the pathway through a urban constellation of texts that breaks into fragments unified not through revelation but rather through nostalgia. Slowing down despite the modernist plunge toward the future, we see the ghost signs that mark the exploding panoply of yesterdays.

By "ghost sign," I refer to the vestiges of advertising that one typically finds on the wall of an old building, like one of those virtually forgotten yellow, orange, and black civil defense fallout shelter logos that once haunted U.S. cities and towns. Ghost signs remind us of William Gibson's (1988) semiotic ghosts—faded pieces of wallpaper, creased postcards, tattered comics, half-remembered lyrics, cinematic excerpts that insert themselves into the psychogeographies of our urban wanderings. Traveling through downtowns of large cities, or perhaps traipsing the crumbling main streets of small towns, one must look with care to spot a ghost sign. Its fading pigments are so easily lost in the gloom. Local boosters might refurbish an old sign,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

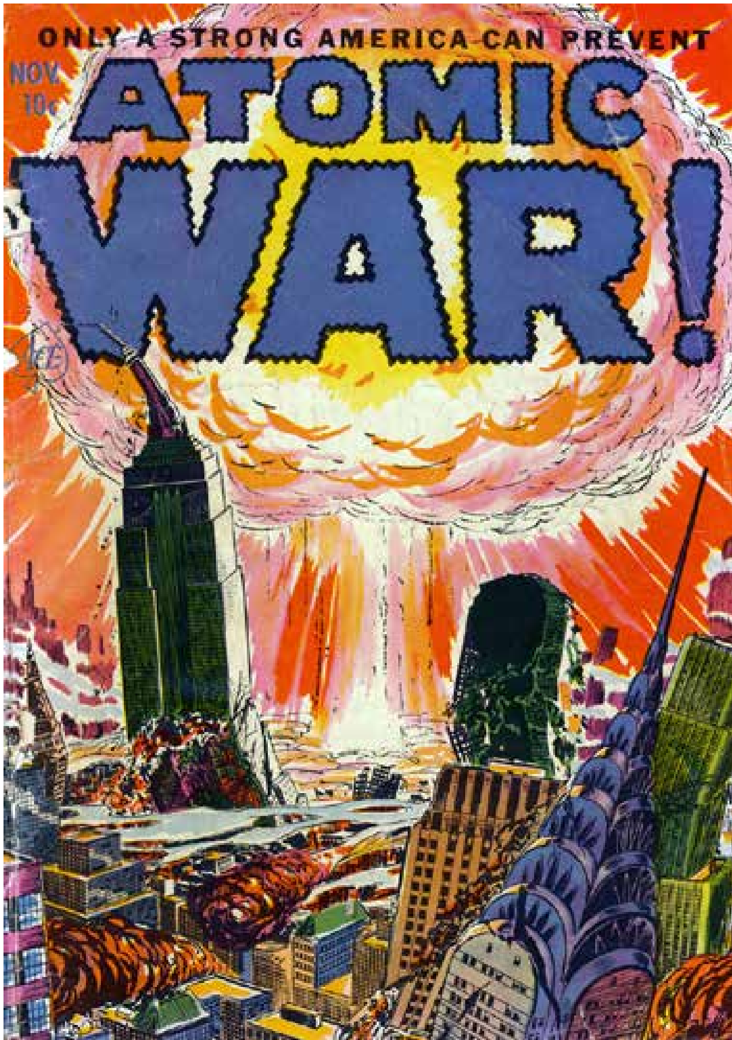

Figure I.2. ***Only a Strong America.*** **Author's Collection**

perhaps slopping gallons of fresh red paint to reveal a decades-old Coca-Cola sign that shouts anew one of its forsaken slogans—certainly not "The Great National Temperance Beverage," but maybe "The Pause That Refreshes," or maybe something more modern like "It's the Real Thing." Searching for "the real thing," for authenticity within the throng of surface-level illusions, one gazes at the garish hues and cheesy optimism and relishes the pleasingly anachronistic nature of the sign. Up close, one may read the cracks in the façade, the chipped masonry, the cobwebbed surfaces. One may even

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

read what Caitlin DeSilvey (2006) terms the "ecofact" (often denigrated as "waste") of unkempt vegetation, of decaying insects as being both repulsive, particularly given the sights and smells of decay, and yet somehow attractive. Nature's power to summon its inexorable degeneration reminds us that the surfaces of human things crumble, that our foundations drift on the void, that our expressions of value contain the seeds of their own demise.

The void cracks through the façades of our cities, with their free-floating signifiers, their signs creaking in the wind amid the ruin at the heart of the modern project. It is the steam that whispers through the grate. It is the crunch of dead leaves under our boots. It is the sullen, strangely pleasing reminder that all this will pass away, and soon too. The ancients prepared the path. Plato (2009) recalls in the *Phaedo* that Socrates reminded his interlocutors that philosophy is not merely the love of wisdom but also the preparation for death, literally the "cultivation of dying" (67e). The deadly sip of hemlock, its musty fetor and accompanying grip of fear, must be met by quietude, for we ought not hold too tightly to things of the world. The philosopher reminds us that we escape our grip upon illusion when we face ruin squarely. The modern world, which offers no respite from mortality, rehearses that ancient truth. In this way the modern project is not merely built upon ruins; ruins are the tools by which modernity measures its progress. This is what Joseph Schumpeter (1994) terms the "perennial gale of creative destruction" (p. 87). The modern project, itself a decaying construct of discovery, revolution, enlightenment, and horror, planted seeds of optimism deep within us.

When I speak of that project, I refer to a new, buoyant world that arched backward to Greek and Roman philosophies—the iconoclasm of Socrates, the skepticism of Pyrrho, the atomism of Lucretius, but most certainly not the stoicism of Aurelius—to clothe their rejection of providence and to claim instead the radical possibility that human beings, harkening back to Protagoras, may be the measure of all things. This is another way of saying that modernity is not measured by years on the calendar. It is not, I hasten to add, limited to a narrow range of European progenitors. The modern project is a framework for human agency that has expanded and contracted throughout history, a vision of human agency freed from the Great Chain of Being that, for all its optimism, resides between the horns of a dilemma. To understand the modern conundrum, we might recall David Harvey's (1992) dichotomized world of rupture, fragmentation, and ahistoricity: an ephemeral expression of doubt; and an opposing expression of desacralization, objectivity, and universality. "To be modern," according to Marshall Berman, "is to find ourselves in an environment that promises adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

we are" (quoted in Harvey, 1992, p. 10). To be modern, in other words, is to occupy two worlds: the mountain and the tower.[2]

The mountain arises from the mist; it exists before language and culture. It is the vertiginous summit of natural order that calls for human beings to soar. Thus Caspar David Friedrich's (1818) *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* depicts the solitary climber who nearly summits the peaks of the natural world and dreams outward toward an unknown future. It is a Romantic image that presages those dizzying heights to be reached, even as it positions the watcher as still subtly framed by higher, more distant peaks. *Wanderer* contains the ambiguity and inchoate buoyancy of early modernity. There is hope, yes, but also humility. The other vantage point is the tower, such as the guardian post painted by David Ludwig Bloch called *Roll Call in the Dachau Concentration Camp, End of November 1938*, a human-built structure that communicates a God's-eye view made possible by the assembly of an entirely human mode of hierarchy. Nature (human and otherwise) is abandoned, forgotten. What remains is the apparatus of will. This mode of modernity is the vision of perfect, seamless, endless control, Orwell's boot stamping on a human face forever. Dachau is merely one example. Yet there is something thoroughly awful about one's first visit. How does one painting convey the awful sublimity of a place like this, a machine built to corral, torture, and ultimately kill human beings? The camp now features a museum and a bookstore, and there are religious memorials. There are artifacts and sculptures. There are rebuilt barracks toured by quiet groups of visitors. There is a scale model. There is a movie. But the perfect modern scrutiny in all its dystopian exactness appears in the moment when we identify with the watchers, when we become them. Bloch, who endured his imprisonment there before his release, knew the geography of that view only all too well. Beyond bromides about the Thousand Year Reich, Dachau is where the human future went to die.

What brand of tomorrow could endure that horror? In reply, we find brief respite in the struggle for civil rights, defined less by religious stricture and more by a universal faith in the value of human beings in their own right. We recall the upheavals of 1968, when, according to Greil Marcus (2009), "it had seemed as if the game had begun. If you looked you could see it happen: every gesture was extended, every street redrawn, every building demolished and rebuilt, every word part of a new language" (p. 407). We peer further forward to the revolutions of 1989, particularly that cold night in Berlin when delirious throngs of young people, and some not-so-young folks as well, swung pickaxes at the Wall, when armed guards on the eastern side could only wave at the masses that careened past heretofore insurmountable barriers. Oh, such ravishing rubble!

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

The promise of a new world, the wreckage of totalitarianism: these are the mountain and the tower that stood against each other during those days. We remember thinking, of only for a moment, that maybe Francis Fukuyama, then a thirty-six-year-old Soviet policy wonk, was right when he wrote that the end of history was at hand. A year later, Jesus Jones would summarize some sense of that era's explosive delight: "Right here, right now / there is no other place I want to be / Right here, right now / watching the world wake up from history." It takes just a blink into the rapturous rays of that sunlight to remember also the tanks of Tiananmen Square, the airborne assault of 9/11, the sick trickle of plague that swept the globe in 2020. How quickly our age of confidence seemed to vanish. How quickly would a new and unexpected future crash against the ramparts of military hegemony and neoliberal expansion, slicing across a blue sky, setting aflame the pyres of pandemic, asserting itself with terrifying ferocity. Force, scarcely understood, impossible to contain, summons anew all the doubts we had buried in Fitzgerald's "dark fields of the republic." The future becomes a present we did not seek nor anticipate, and we wander its wreckage in search of that lost yesterday.

In fact, for all the twentieth century's utopian imagery, faith in the world of tomorrow was always something of a pose. The deeper wellspring of those modern times dredged up a miasma of anxieties. One response to the dangers of the world beyond human control is an insular rhetoric, which elsewhere I have identified as a primary component of omnitopia, a structural and perceptual enclave whose apparently distinct locales convey inhabitants to a singular place (Wood, 2009). Such insularity stems first from fear, terror at the prospect of external threats and wild desires stemming from interior depths not so easily managed by rationality. At the same time, this enclavic sensibility enables us to imagine the power of human ingenuity to reshape and navigate the external and internal world.

The ruins of modernity, then, draw our eyes backward to bold visions of the coming age that either failed to materialize or, somehow worse, arrived as promised. In the former case, we stifle our frustrations about the missing fantastical future with its phantom jetpacks and never-built moon colonies, the promise of fusion power that will arrive in the next twenty years (and always will), and we ramble instead the meandering rivulets of change, those tiny tendrils of tomorrow that stretch their ways across the dusty present. We study the expanding networks of urban grids and industrial plants grinding their ways over the organic world, and we slowly accept that perhaps "the Future had come to America first, but had finally passed it by" (Gibson, 1988, p. 9). So we dream impossible vistas of the world to come elsewhere from the here and now, once but no longer in Tokyo's electropop boulevards, maybe the vista of Pudong that blazes across Shanghai's Huangpu River, perhaps at

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

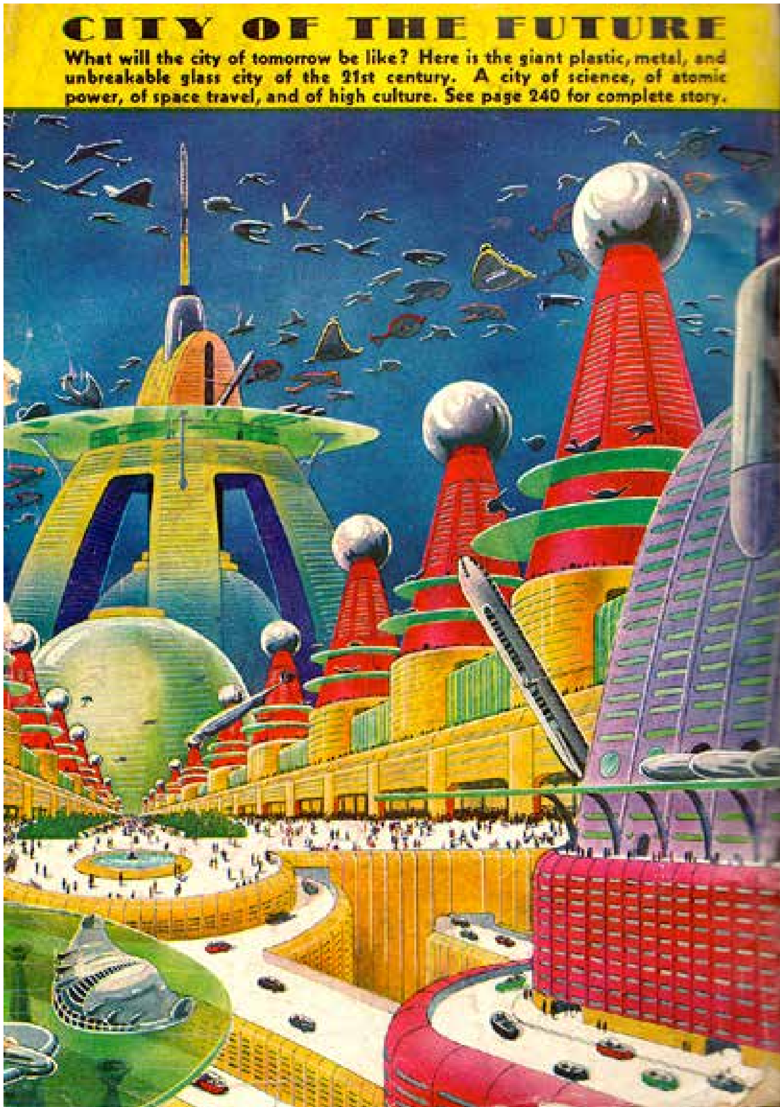

Figure I.3. City of the Future, *Amazing Stories* (April, 1942). Author's Collection

some world's fair glowing atop the deserts of Dubai. And all the while, with increasing ironic detachment, we haunt the retropolis of abandoned futures.

Those futures, those pasts, those traces constitute the topic of this book, a contribution to an interdisciplinary conversation about the role of modern ruins in public life. My choice of *modern* ruins focuses attention away from

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

ancient structures like those found in Angkor, Ephesus, or Bhangarh. To be sure, those archaic destinations rightly motivate pilgrimage for their aesthetic qualities, historic connections, religious associations, cultural values, and capacity to arouse a kind of personal veneration that cannot be conveyed by words. Indeed, modern tourism was partially borne from the fantasy of the Grand Tour and its itinerary of hermitages, temples, and amphitheaters—conveyed by the sketches, engravings, and paintings of Giovanni Paolo Pannini and Charles-Louis Clérisseau. Still, with this book I narrow my attention to a more modest constellation of emplacements built, and subsequently discarded, in industrial and postindustrial eras.

These modern ruins may conjure feelings of melancholy, connotations of failure. Their moldy floors, waterlogged walls, shattered windows, and sagging roofs do not make for traditional tourist snapshots. Moreover, in contrast with the Grand Tour and its attendant expectations of wealth and privilege, one generally doesn't associate a sense of thrill or enlightenment with the darkened corridors, crunching glass, and no-trespassing signs of a deserted roadside motel or toxic dump site. Even so, modern ruins possess a potential to inspire awe, an awareness of the tenuous nature of modern confidence, and what some Japanese writers describe as *mono no aware*, a reverence for the passing of things. In these sites, one may encounter sublime traces and fragments of the contemporary age.

While modern ruins may be defined in many ways, I approach this topic using the terminology of Michael R. Greenberg, Frank J. Popper, and Bernadette M. West (1990) who articulate a domain of TOADS: temporary, obsolete, abandoned, and derelict spaces (see also Paiva & Manaugh, 2008, p. 9). These sites include economic ghost towns, industrial accident sites, wartime vestiges, and similarly fraught environments. Reading these spaces rhetorically, I recognize a tendency to romanticize them in a manner that Greenberg and colleagues do not. They describe TOADS as an epidemic of abandonment: "Once the linchpin of the community, the huge buildings lie in ruin, and the surroundings are filled with mounds of waste. Other examples might be dilapidated old warehouses or abandoned housing projects" (p. 436). These places seethe with danger, human and otherwise. They are not opportunities for reflection but instead index a certain mode of failure. Nonetheless, I am drawn to them.

I seek them out for reasons that cannot be fully articulated in a scholarly monograph. Patrick Santoro (2015) understands this limitation. The author's framing essay for a one-person performance, *At the Mercy of Ruin (Mercy)*, demonstrates an autoethnographic approach to associate the physical ruins of Coney Island, New York; Centralia, Pennsylvania; Old Shawneetown, Illinois; and Pompeii, Italy, with periods of personal loss, most notably the death

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

of his partner. Of this correlation between site and solitude, Santoro writes: "In ruin's company, I feel the presence of my own haunted past" (p. 236). Of particular relevance is Santoro's invocation of Andreas Schönle's (2006) notion of a "rhetoric of rupture" (p. 653), the revelation of slippage between what is, what ought to be, and what once was. These inquiries inspire this examination into the vestiges of place, the detritus of progress, are ultimately about the empty spaces we carry within us, the voids that cannot be filled, no matter what we consume.

Researching modern ruins, I have borrowed, however imperfectly from Walter Benjamin (2004)'s call to blast the "continuity of history. . . [to explode] the homogeneity of the epoch, interspersing it with ruins—that is, with the present" (p. 474 [N9a,6]). And I am not alone in doing so. An interdisciplinary coterie of multimedia artists, academic scholars, revitalization advocates, anti-gentrification activists, and so-called "dark tourists" (Foley & Lennon, 1996) are scouring the world's built environment to expose, excavate, and understand places whose perceived and genuine dangers and unexpected pleasures unsettle our perceptions about post-Enlightenment-era progress narratives. In common to our efforts are three questions of motivation, utility, and meaning:

1. Why are a large and expanding number of tourists and travelers motivated to visit places denoted by their associations with decay and death?
2. How may these places be used for social, cultural, and artistic purposes?
3. What meanings about the excesses and limitations of contemporary life may be drawn from modern ruins?

The scholarship striving to address those queries has been productive and provocative, though with opportunities for augmentation. Initially I am drawn to the works of J. B. Jackson (1980) whose *Necessity for Ruins* first called me to consider the intersections of history, sociology, tourism, and communication studies. More recently, Tim Edensor's (2005) *Industrial Ruins* provides an essential way to unpack how ruins challenge the orderly optimism of the modern project, focusing particular attention on industrial ruins in the United Kingdom. Dylan Trigg's (2006) *The Aesthetics of Decay* advances a sophisticated and insightful examination of the ways in which Martin Heidegger, Henri Bergson, Friedrich Nietzsche and related philosophers can inform the analysis of modern relics. Phaedra Pezzullo's (2007) *Toxic Tourism* calls readers to assess and critique the ethical dimensions of tourism beyond the detached gaze of the privileged observer. Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle's (2010) *Ruins of Modernity* demonstrates the broad appeal of ruins scholarship in its global assortment of contributing authors. And Brian Dillon's (2011)

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Ruins curates an outstanding collection of essays and excerpts, including notes from Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida, and Paul Virilio. Entering these conversations in the domains of cultural geography, landscape studies, public memory, rhetoric, urban studies, and tourism, I have organized this book into two parts.

Chapter Summary

Part I concentrates on popular culture and political depictions of ruin. Chapter 1 inspects how twentieth century Worlds of Tomorrow deployed images of destruction to critique the hidden authoritarianism of seemingly perfect enclosures. This motif, epitomized by various domed cities of plastic, glass, and steel that expanded the vocabularies of twentieth-century filmmakers and city designers, indicates a nascent yearning to burst the bubbles of urban and corporate boosterism. The chapter begins by unpacking fascistic imagery in William Gibson's (1988) "The Gernsback Continuum" before shifting attention to three even more substantial artifacts: the symbolism of artists in Alexander Korda's (1936) *Things to Come*, mortality in Michael Anderson's (1976) *Logan's Run*, and circularity in Terry Gilliam's (1995) *Twelve Monkeys*. Through this cinematic analysis, we begin to chart the ways in which ruins reveal the impossibility of modern progress narratives.

Chapter 2 examines the satisfactions available when one assumes a posthuman positionality, diverting our attention away from fancifully filmic dystopias to apparently more practical visions of the world once civilization is overcome both by natural forces and human processes. Responding to Joshua Gunn and David Beard's thoughtful articulation of an apocalyptic sublime, this chapter proposes a tripartite process in which ruins are created, curated, and confounded. Along with brief encounters with Sidney Lumet's (1964) *Fail Safe* and episodes of *The Twilight Zone* and the original *Star Trek* series, this analysis concentrates on two primary texts: Robert Smithson's "Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" and the post-Anthropocene documentary *Aftermath: Population Zero*, reading these artifacts as technologies that drag dangerous futures into the malleable present, affording an oddly gratifying perspective from which to view ourselves as ghosts in the modern machine.

Chapter 3 turns away from pop culture depictions of apocalyptic imagery by concentrating our attention on the uses of decay in American political oratory. Drawing from Sacvan Bercovitch's inquiries into the origins, exemplars, and applications of Jeremiadic rhetoric, the chapter unpacks the uses of ruin in three distinct yet related texts. Studying Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1933 inaugural address, we move beyond typical nothing-but-fear-itself clichés

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

to recall a president's elicitation of doom and despair as a both a necessary counterpoint and as a call to arms. Reviewing Jimmy Carter's 1979 "Energy and National Goals" address, an oration frequently (and not entirely fairly) dismissed as a failure, we contemplate what is arguably the most directly Jeremiadic presidential address delivered in the twentieth century. Finally in Donald Trump's 2017 inaugural address, we read a president's dismal description of "American Carnage" as justification for a new, and as yet not entirely rejected, mode of American authoritarianism that produces a disquieting continuum that unifies leftist and rightest impulses.

Part II begins with a visit to several U.S. ruins before shifting focus to two post-Soviet sites. Chapter 4 focuses upon touristic practice at Bodie, California, asking how this place enacts rhetoric of authenticity by inviting personal brushes with the mortality of the town's missing inhabitants. This inquiry complicates Bodie's brand of authenticity by identifying how efforts to rouse the ghosts of the past destabilize the ontological security of its present viewers. Aided by Jacques Derrida's *hauntological* framework, chapter 4 ultimately argues that tourists transform the town's ontological instability into a performance of recursive gaze whose pleasures enable a perceptual management of overlapping temporalities, particularly as they imagine themselves among the ghosts of Bodie.

Chapter 5 shifts attention away from practices of looking as ironic reflection and toward a more critical engagement with the practice of academic tourism, calling to question the privileges that accrue when depicting a site as an abandoned ruin. One can hardly envision a more appropriate U.S. locale for such analysis than Detroit, Michigan: a repository for post-industrial imagery whose undertones of class- and race-based exclusion are seldom excavated by breezy journalistic accounts. Adapting a psychogeographic framework, this chapter surveys the debate over "ruin porn," a pejorative response to the crowds of photographers who stalk Rust Belt relics with insufficient consideration for the populations trying to transform their communities into livable, sustainable, and meaningful spaces.

Chapter 6 probes the causes and impacts of a coal seam fire that has burned under the Pennsylvania town of Centralia since 1962. The chapter then examines accounts of urban explorers attracted to Centralia's cinematic ruins despite the legal dangers of "no trespassing" signs and the material threats of noxious fumes and sinkhole collapse. Chapter 6 concentrates mainly upon a close reading of graffiti laid upon the highway that leads into the town, noting the potential for a practice of heterochronic "layering" that represents a non-coercive way to conceptualize a material, consequential rhetoric. This application of heterochrony, by the way, offers a preview of a much more substantial heterotopian mode of analysis to follow.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

With Chapter 7, we turn our attention to post-Soviet sites of ruin, beginning with a description of factors contributing to the 1986 meltdown and explosion that blew the roof off of Reactor 4 at the Vladimir Ilyich Lenin Power Plant in 1986. Thereafter the chapter introduces an innovative augmentation to Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia, an "other space" that works to reveal the limitations and excesses of everyday social reality. Seeking to understand why tourists visit the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, a place known for its indisputable physical dangers, the chapter adapts Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter's articulation of heterotopia's anthropological, temporal, and imaginary axes to propose a heretofore untheorized clinical dimension bounded by antipodes of purification and contamination. The study that follows applies this clinical dimension to analyze the motivations and experiences of visitors who are determined to collect snapshots and souvenirs from the site of the world's worst nuclear accident.

Chapter 8 concludes our studies in a lonely and largely unknown ruin in Central Asia's Karakum Desert. Envisioned after a recent visit to Turkmenistan's Darvaza Gas Crater, which has burned continually since a 1971 industrial accident (earning its "doorway to hell" moniker), the final pages provide a summary of three key themes that animate this book: the rationale for touristic appreciations of ruins, the uses (and abuses) of these sites, and the ancient power of ruins to destabilize the modern promise of order.

A Rhetoric of Ruins arises from that glimmering future designed by the planners and managers of 1939.[3] It is a product of hope, epitomized by Ira Gershwin's lyrics for a bouncy, marshal tune written for the New York World's Fair: "Sound the brass, roll the drums / To the world of tomorrow we come! / See the sun through the gray / It's the dawn of a new day!" Two generations later, Aimee Mann would add: ". . . how beautiful it was, 'tomorrow' / We'll never have a day of sorrow / We got through the '30s, but our belts were tight / We conceived of a future with no hope in sight." We live in that future now, for better and for worse. And we look back and wonder at the ruins of those yesterdays. We wander too among those decrepit places, an enthymematic tale of empty spaces. This book is not merely a travelogue, though. The purpose of these pages is to investigate and interrogate the ways in which ruins communicate meanings about modern plans and about our personal struggles to produce order. This book is a critique of progress narratives written by someone unabashedly enamored by them. It is also the culmination of a failed lecture on a green park built upon ash. Ultimately, though, *A Rhetoric of Ruins* is a reminder that we erect edifices with our speech, towers to our ambitions that demonstrate their powers only when they tremble, shatter, and finally fall.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

NOTES

1. This introduction is adapted from a video lecture I developed for students of my Rhetoric and Public Life course.

2. See Dominic Hibberd for an earlier use of this imagery when analyzing the poetry of Harold Monro.

3. I would be remiss if I failed to note Christopher Carter's (2015) chapter, "The Rhetoric of Ruins," that precedes my use of a similar phrase.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

1

Yesterday's Tomorrows

Take a drive down Santa Clara Avenue in downtown San Jose, California, traveling east from the city's Silicon Valley campuses and low-rise office buildings, and you may pass through a thin membrane dividing one vision of the future from an even more wildly populated range of tomorrows. Turn down the music and keep your eyes peeled. The scrum of cars, bikes, and pedestrians will demand your immediate attention; drive too fast and you'll miss it. But if you acclimate yourself to the signs and tropes of midcentury architecture, with its swooping curves, its shooting angles, its floating mass, you'll spot what was once a 600-seat movie venue, the Mexico Theatre.

The site was originally called the Mayfair, named after an adjacent neighborhood. The theater adopted other incarnations in subsequent years, and was once even a personal project of Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak. Today, despite promises of transformation into some sort of community arts site, maybe a restaurant, the theater waits in silent slumber next to the roar of San Jose traffic.[1] Below its wedge marquee, the entrance is boarded up, the windows painted over, a flat horizontal wall to the road. In delirious contrast, though, a cylindrical tower climbs away from the street. The spire ascends first from a 90-degree curve of glass block, mounted by a vertical array of signage meant to glow behind backlit plastic. Further upward, steadily thinner tubes shoot pulsating bursts of ribbed color, edged with neon, piercing the heavens.

A *streamline moderne* rocket!

Slide off to the side of the road to admire incongruous raygun gothic spire. Pull out your camera (remembering that the best one is the device you carry). Search for the best angle, something that arranges the mass convivially between light and shadow, order and tension, and snap some images.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 1.1. Mexico Theatre (San Jose, CA). Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Squint your eyes just a bit. If you are inclined toward this vision, you might find yourself conjuring a broader collection of cultural artifacts—children's comics, television shows, movies serials, and similar bits and pieces of fading ephemera—that coalesce into a constellation of ruins, not so much of place but rather of time. The Mexico Theatre exhumes one of yesterday's forgotten tomorrows, an abandoned confection of dizzying optimism that serves a rhetorical purpose. Ruins of hypermodernity, such as Populuxe motels, Googie diners, and Dingbat apartments, provide both a celebration and a critique of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century visions of public life whose consequences manage to seep still into the world that we call real. Wandering these ruins, both in architecture and pop culture, we survey a vision of control and confidence whose dark consequences serve ironically to illuminate something of our present laments.

While the bulk of this book studies the rhetorical power of physical ruins, I've chosen to begin this analysis with four popular culture texts to call forth the future that shimmers in the broken neon of the Mexico Theatre: William Gibson's (1988) "The Gernsback Continuum," Alexander Korda's (1936) *Things to Come*, Michael Anderson's (1976) *Logan's Run*, and Terry Gilliam's (1995) *Twelve Monkeys*. I've chosen these texts because of their demonstrated impact upon popular conceptions, both of modernity and of the ruins surrounding the ramparts of regulation. A common theme to these texts is the rhetorical deployment of ruin as a critique against enclavic mechanisms of discipline and control. In Gibson's short story, we enter such an enclosure, a "continuum" whose totalitarian origins mandate an ironic escape via the decay of social order. The rhetorical shape of this continuum, a "collective yearning of an era" (p. 9), guides the cinematic readings that follow. In Korda's production of H. G. Wells's screenplay, we enter a "Great White World" whose ruling engineers seek to counter the appeals of artists and sensualists. In Michael Anderson's cinematic adaptation of William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson's *Logan's Run*, we enter a City of Domes whose computerized control over natural processes confronts the necessity of mortality. And in Terry Gilliam's *Twelve Monkeys*, a loose adaptation of Chris Marker's 1962 short film *La Jetée*, we enter a carceral city whose scientists seek to impose linear change upon overlapping circular temporalities. In this constellation of readings, we observe the ways in which ruin works to puncture modernist rhetorics of progress.

The Gernsback Continuum

We begin with William Gibson's (1988) short story "The Gernsback Continuum."[2] Drawing its name from Hugo Gernsback, the inventor,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

publisher, and editor who popularized the concept of science fiction,[3] Gibson's story describes the anxieties of a New York-based photographer hired to capture images of forgotten '30s and '40s California architecture for a book project: *The Airstream Futuropolis: The Tomorrow That Never Was*, an ideal subject for a coffee table books selected to advertise the culture and fashion of their purchasers. Bemused, though not entirely committed to the project, the photographer takes the job. Driving the dusty West Coast boulevards, tracking the stations of his employer's "convoluted socioarchitectural cross" (p. 5), which include at least one stop in San Jose, California (and surely, absolutely, the Mexico Theatre), our protagonist begins to perceive how individual sites—derelict gas stations, greasy diners, used-car lots, rusting bottling plants—invoke the half-forgotten spirits of a future that glowed beyond the horizons of his childhood. The photographer also begins to recognize that each solitary structure groaning under the weight of its years beckons him to see a unified continuum.

The designers of this Futuropolis drew from the blueprints and formulae of builders and scientists; but mostly they are hucksters, offering a façade of tomorrow that glitters only on the surface of its objects. In their individual projects they manifest a common style. Gibson's protagonist summons such similarity to these buildings as to envision them crafted by the same person, driving up and down the California highways, enacting raygun towers that resembled something from *Flash Gordon* comic strips:

> Lots of them featured superfluous central towers ringed with those strange radiator flanges that were a signature motif of the style and which made them look as though they might generate potent bursts of raw technological enthusiasm if you could only find the switch that turned them on. (p. 4)

This alternative America, this unrealized Tomorrow, came first on the wings of conviction, faith that mechanical efficiency and central planning would improve the lives of a nation nearly broken by economic depression. Behind this technocratic promise, however, hides a virulent strain of authoritarianism. It is not by accident that the protagonist gradually spies a familiar similarity between the wildly confident design of the West Coast roadside and the "sinister totalitarian dignity" of Albert Speer's monumental architecture (p. 4). Adopting this view, we acknowledge the rhetorical nature of the built environment, its potential to form a constellation of texts, values, and prescribed behaviors with practical implications. We do not merely occupy places; we are occupied by them.

From this perspective, the photographer, not by inclination but more by accident, begins to penetrate "a fine membrane, a membrane of probability" (p. 5), which allows him to glimpse overhead one of those lumbering flying

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

wing airliners dreamed up by Norman Bel Geddes—not as a flight of fancy but instead as something real:

> Ever so gently, I went over the Edge—And looked up to see a twelve-engined thing like a bloated boomerang, all wing, thrumming its way east with an elephantine grace, so low that I could count the rivets in its dull silver skin, and hear—maybe—the echo of jazz. (p. 5)

Concerned for his sanity, Gibson's narrator contacts Mervyn Kihn, a friend who makes his living interviewing and writing about individuals and groups who've slipped the barrier separating the reality of our collective public life and the madness of alternative universes. His friend explains that psychosis might merely be a symptom that follows our brush with semiotic ghosts that his friend defines as "bits of deep cultural imagery that have split off and taken on a life of their own" (p. 7). These phantoms, Kihn explains, are remainders of the continuum that may not be recognizable to denizens of the present but nonetheless contain and convey the glorious vision of yesterday's tomorrows.

We are drawn to these visions in the same manner that we might be attracted to the expansive continuum of tomorrow's techno-future: to those faded postcards from the 1939 New York World's Fair, to those postwar magazine ads selling liquor to "The Men Who Plan Beyond Tomorrow," to those '60s- and '70s-era depictions of the Bell Aerosystems rocket pack that flew just long enough to stoke our imaginations, and to those '90s-era AT&T "You Will" commercials that fairly burst with pre-millennial buoyancy. The photographer is drawn to this Continuum, first as a tourist and then, potentially, as a resident. In a state, he passes into the future dreamed by Depression-era streamline modern architects, city planners, and pulp fiction novelists. There he witnesses an alternative 1980s in which the bold visions of tomorrow, with those gleaming spotless cities, came true. In this continuum, the virtues and promise of technology were never perverted by war and disillusionment. The technocracy of plastic and stainless steel never collapsed into the stark totalitarianism of Hitler's Germany. Safe within the confines of the Gernsback Continuum, the denizens of Tomorrow are "smug, happy, and utterly content with themselves and their world" (p. 9). For a time, the photographer is drawn to this alternative vision of public life, but he fears it too. He senses that it rests upon a dangerous foundation whose apparent optimism hides a kind of police state. Are all people in this utopia white, wealthy, and happy? What kind of mechanism has so neatly eliminated any trace of difference from this world?

The photographer tries to will himself out of this continuum by driving to Los Angeles, but he finds that LA showers him with fragments of this

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

half-forgotten world. Some cities and places and artifacts, it seems, possess the power to intersect with alternative continuums of public life. And Los Angeles is especially connected to that futurist vein. At the end of Gibson's story, the protagonist takes an opposite tack by returning to New York, deciding to drench himself in the ruined artifacts of his real life, violent pornography (something called *Nazi Love Motel*, naturally), newspaper accounts of crime, the detritus of a broken society. Despite the horrors of the present abandoned by those who Kihn terms those "Art Deco futuroids" (p. 10), the photographer concludes that his real world is preferable than a supposedly perfect society that that can deprive him of his humanity.

William Gibson's Gernsback Continuum forecasts a central theme of this book: the ways in which the utopic interior of public life produces an exterior ruin of contrast. Initially that ruin serves as a counterpart to the world of progress and an attendant rhetoric of control. The ruin is proof of progress that projects us away from the presumed dangers of nature, both wild and human. Yet the ruin also points toward the inevitable collapse of modernity, the wreckage of all of those hopes for the world of tomorrow. Driving the dusty highways, peering through cracked glass, scouring scraps of faded newsprint, we come to identify with Gibson's protagonist who measures the ordered absurdity of the utopic against the raw dystopia of the ruin. Yes, he considers the possibility of utopic judgment: "[A]s I moved among these secret ruins, I found myself wondering what the inhabitants of that lost future would think of the world I lived in" (p. 5). Simultaneously, though, he finds meaning in all those broken dreams and abandoned niceties that prick the bubble of fascistic confidence. In his anxiety to submerge himself "in hard evidence of the human near-dystopia we live in" (p. 11), the photographer reflects a need that we share, to reveal through ruin the realities of things to come.

Things to Come

From this initial investigation let us begin to read cinematic futures that work, albeit in varied ways, to challenge the power of progress narratives. We begin with Alexander Korda's 1936 *Things to Come*, which portrays its own sphere of rationality as a redoubt against provincialist and nationalist disorder, an especially poignant appeal given the imminent catastrophe of war when the film was released. Drawing from H. G. Wells's vision of regimented society, *Things to Come* depicts the rise of a benevolent dictatorship of engineers and mechanics who impose a new civilization upon the ruins of a world wrecked by conflict and plague.[4] Contagion is a material rhetoric of excess that must be brought under control, topics that—not to make too fine a point of the matter—are drearily familiar to contemporary readers. The manifestations of this

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Depression-era future, particularly in the case of lumbering victims of poison gas, make for visually arresting entertainment. The contaminations they carry offer an admittedly guilty pleasure, one that often overcomes the pedantry of would-be social reforms. True, *Things to Come* did poorly at the box office. Yet the film earned critical plaudits and subsequently helped cement a visual vocabulary borrowing from Le Corbusier and Norman Bel Geddes into the public consciousness (Chayt, 2015, p. 126).

The film is arranged according to three major parts, each set in the same generic metropolis called Everytown. It is "not drama in a conventional sense, but rather an allegorical tableau" that begins on Christmas Eve in 1940 (Lind, 1994, p. 110). Though newspaper headlines announce the threat of imminent war, most people devote their energies to seasonal cheer and holiday songs. As if to remind filmgoers of their own complicity in this willful ignorance, scenes of broadsheets and placards warning of war clouds are intercut with neon-lit facades of cinemas and theaters, including an advertisement for "The Sleeping Beauty." One man, aviator John Cabal, apprehends the gravity of the situation and warns his friends to prepare for the worst. They ignore his entreaties, until the bombs begin to fall. A crescendo of gunfire, explosions, and terrified screams signal the awful reality that war has begun to ravage Everytown. A little boy is crushed by falling masonry, the cinema collapses into a heap; the old order begins to die.

The second part of the film begins in 1966 when a new Wandering Sickness besets the shattered precincts of Everytown. An artificial plague that induces a zombie-like stupor among its victims, the Sickness threatens the final collapse of civilization. Responding to this peril, a petty warlord orders snipers to shoot the shambling victims of the Sickness. The result is horrific, but it is also successful. The Sickness is overcome and the town begins to recover. By 1970, workers have filled many of the bomb craters left from the war; some markets have even begun to appear. Emboldened, the warlord announces an offensive against a nearby community: the Hill People. Now called the Boss (and sometimes the Chief), the warlord commands his master mechanic to gather whatever remnants of old tools and materials can be found to launch an attack from the air.[5] The mechanic replies that the old technology is forever lost.

Both the Boss and his mechanic are then startled to hear the buzz of a new aircraft circling overhead. The pilot? John Cabal, survivor of the war. The aviator's face is creased with age, but his gate and demeanor are sharp. Walking among the ragged people of Everytown with an elegant black uniform and polished shield, Cabal is proof that a radically new civilization has taken root somewhere else in the world. Seeing the arrival of a potential ally in his fight against the Hill People, or at worst a rival for power, the Boss sends

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

his henchmen to collect the visitor. But Cabal ignores the order and searches instead for old friends who endured the war years. In the laboratory of one such survivor, he meets the mechanic and announces his intention: to rouse the people of Everytown to join the new civilization, an organization called in various turns Wings Over the World or World Communications:

> Cabal: We who are all that are left of the old engineers and mechanics have pledged ourselves to salvage the world. We have the airways—or what's left of them. We have the seas. And we have ideas in common: the brotherhood of efficiency, the freemasonry of science. We're the last trustees of civilization when everything else has failed.
>
> Mechanic: I've been waiting for this. I'm yours to command.
>
> Cabal: Not mine. Not mine. No more bosses. Civilization's to command.

Cabal finally elects to visit the Boss and offer an opportunity for the brigand to join Wings Over the World. The Boss replies that he prefers to maintain his own fleet of aircraft and to continue as leader of an autonomous fiefdom. Cabal replies that his emerging civilization has no room for such independence: "Our new order has an objection to private airplanes." Later he reinforces the authoritarian nature of World Communications: "We don't approve of independent sovereign states." Despite his obvious weakness, the Boss refuses Cabal's command, choosing the old ways over the new. Soon enough, Wings Over the World arrives in the sorts of aircraft designed by Norman Bel Geddes, vast flying wings that make short work of the Boss's pathetic air force. Floating among the clouds, looking out over the horizon and studying the terrain below, the airmen drop bombs filled with the Gas of Peace upon the townspeople. The weapons subdue the renegades without harming them. Only the Boss dies in the aerial assault, leaving Cabal to announce the rise of his new order and the imminent rebirth of Everytown: proof of humankind's victory of material and human nature:

> Do you realize the immense task we shall undertake, when we set ourselves to an active and aggressive peace, when we direct our energies to tear out the wealth of this planet and exploit all these giant possibilities of science that have been squandered hitherto upon war and senseless competition? We shall excavate the eternal hills. We shall make such use of the treasures of sky and sea and earth as men have never dreamt of hitherto. I would that I could see our children's children in this world we shall win for them. But in them and through them, we shall live again.

This declaration initiates the third part of *Things to Come*, which begins with a montage of machines and men drilling, carving, and refashioning the soil:

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

a sequence depicting the construction of an underground city, safe from the vicissitudes of the natural world that marks the transformation of life under the governance of World Communications. At this point, 2036, new civilization has ascended, albeit by burrowing itself beneath the Earth's surface. Everytown is now almost entirely underground, lit and warmed by artificial power, freed from war and fear, and radiating with optimism (Gold, 2001, p. 339).[6] The supremacy of the airmen, those Wings Over the World in their shiny black uniforms, has given way to freely accepted discipline. Armies have been abolished; police have been demobilized. Common sense prevails. Yet the seeds of doubt endure among artists and other rabble-rousers who chaff against the engineers' perpetual appeal for progress, particularly for their work to produce a Space Gun designed to catapult human beings beyond the safe confines of the Earth. A sculptor named Theotocopulos leads this group of nonconformists who reject the regime of new order, rousing a debate between advocates for tradition against the engineers of progress:[7]

> Is it a better world than it used to be? I rebel against this progress. What has this progress, this World Civilization, done for us? Machines and marvels. They built this great city of theirs, yes. They prolonged life, yes. They've conquered nature, they say, and made a great white world. Is it any jollier than the world used to be in the good old days? When life was hot and short and merry and the devil took the hindmost?

The narrative shifts briefly to one of those airy, futuristic rooms rising above the interior surface of the city, where "visual variety" has given way to "unvarying whiteness and harmony of design" (Telotte, 1998, p. 81). In this tableau, an old man shares a lesson about the evolution of Everytown with a little girl. The wizened instructor explains that their home was once stuck outdoors, in the so-called Age of Windows, before extolling the value of artificial lighting and conditioned air. The little girl is impressed, admiring how "they keep on inventing new things nowadays, don't they, and making things lovelier and lovelier," before wondering at the old man's good fortune of knowing the great John Cabal, the man who delivered Everytown from the miseries of the old. The old man agrees that he was indeed fortunate to have known Cabal. Even better, he adds, the liberator's great-grandson is the current leader of Everytown.[8]

Though *Things to Come* suffers no shortage of bombast and grandiloquence, the film nonetheless offers a useful contrast in the orations of Cabal the engineer and Theotocopulos the artist, a dichotomy that reveals a nostalgia for disordered nature. Certainly H. G. Wells leaves little doubt concerning his preference. Artists, warlords, and others stuck in their reveries for ancient

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

superstitions are to be abandoned to the ash heap of history. Their passions and their conflicts serve as a reminder of the recklessness in believing that the previous Great War was indeed a War to End All Wars. Wells surely intended his viewers to identify with Cabal, the humane but stern ruler of the future. Either as aviator or authoritarian, the film's hero possesses both the conviction to foresee a better world and the determination to bring it about.

At the same time, Cabal is frankly difficult to admire. His supreme vision is a mechanical drive to extend the reach of humankind toward the stars, an ambition embodied in the Space Gun expedition. The mission offers an affirmation of human will, the rise of a truly modern civilization from the vestiges of war and folly. Yet the expedition is fraught with a grave and frightful possibility that its voyagers may be hurt or killed. Adding at least a small degree of dramatic tension to the film, Cabal's daughter Catherine insists that she be allowed to co-pilot the first mission. Cabal grasps the dangers of losing her, but that risk ranks far lower than the promise of a successful mission. And if he is to send someone in the cold depths of space, if he truly believes that no one person is more important than the ceaseless advancement of civilization, why should he not dare to send his daughter on this grand adventure?

The standard version of *Things to Come* offers no sense of internal conflict between Cabal's roles of father and leader. But Wells did foresee at least some struggle. In his screenplay for the film, the author includes an argument between Cabal and his former wife, Rowena, about the human cost of the journey.[9] Wells depicts Rowena as a love-starved sensualist who has grown tired of Cabal's relentless pursuit of technological achievement. Like a large swath of Everytown's population, Rowena desires a simpler, less ambitious life. She seeks release from Cabal's lofty aspirations. She also desires gratifications forbidden in this republic of frigid engineers. Granted an audience with her ex-husband, whom she has not seen in years, Rowena expresses her horror at the sight of a father so apparently callous to the possible sacrifice of their daughter:

> You are a monster. You and your kind are monsters. Your science and your new orders have taken away your souls and put machines and theories in the place of them. It is well I left you when I did.

Throughout *Things to Come*, Cabal's rhetoric of linear progress confronts an alternative narrative, the cyclical pattern of Nature with its eternal returns of conflict, despair, and tyranny. It would appear that Wells intends that his audience will identify with the engineers and their paths toward human perfectibility. Yet both screenplay and film admit at least some ambivalence concerning that goal.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Theotocopulos's refutation of technocracy is the natural counterpoint to Cabal's plainly authoritarian vision. Initially the character affirms not only his duty but also his "right" to speak out against the Space Gun because of his rank as a master craftsman, adding that the very tools employed by the engineers can be used against them: "Radio is everywhere," he asserts. "This modern world is full of voices." Theotocopulos appears on a mammoth flat screen monitor that descends over the throngs of Everytown citizens to call them to violence against the Gun. And while the rapidity of the population's transformation from pleasantly thronging mass to pipe-welding mob could be viewed as a critique of democracy itself, the ease of their transition validates at least a small portion of endemic crisis. No matter how carefully crafted and well-regulated the underground caverns of this new civilization, Everytown citizens cannot descend deeply enough to escape humanity's propensity for self-destruction.

The ruins of *Things to Come* appear as rousing scenes of violence, first of cities, then of tyrants, finally of nature itself. The bell-shaped aesthetic of underground urbanity offers respite from struggle and yet does so through a more refined assault on the problem of human nature: its tendency to glorify self-interest over the collective good:

> Wells' solution to this problem is curious—the film rejects Mussolini's (and Hitler's) brand of fascism as a new form of government and society—yet replaces one brand of fascism with another. It is true that the film stresses internationalism rather than nationalism, yet the Air Dictatorship; the overwhelming role and dominance of the scientist as leader; the organic, structured, and authoritarian society of the future; the subordination of the individual to a higher purpose; the new disciplined morality—all these imply definite aspects of European fascism of the late 1930's. (Travers, 1976, p. 35)

One discerns a certain awareness in Wells's vision, and in Korda's production, that the cycle of human misery will not be resolved through the slow turning gyre of history but through shattering technologies, epitomized not only by the perfectly labeled Space Gun, and by the willingness of its occupants to sacrifice themselves to the cold depths of space, not for their own glory but for the glory of civilization. In this way, the ruin of *Things to Come* is reminiscent of another brand of violence in the form of those Italian Futurists who launched their "insolent challenge to the stars":

> Let the good incendiaries with charred fingers come! Here they are! Heap up the fire to the shelves of the libraries! Divert the canals to flood the cellars of the museums! Let the glorious canvases swim ashore! Take the picks and hammers!

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

In this way, *Things to Come* confronts rationality in two ways, first through the artist who would command the throngs to tear down the symbols of technocracy but also by those tools whose apparently logical application presages the fundamental ruination of human nature.

Logan's Run

Thirty years later, this sensibility, the circular renewal of stability and violence, would fix itself more firmly into the public consciousness with Michael Anderson's 1976 *Logan's Run*. The film borrows heavily from predecessors like *Metropolis* and *Things to Come* and would contribute to the visual vocabularies of subsequent future cities, most notably in the monumental landscapes of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*.[10] *Logan's Run* portrays a human civilization that has enclosed itself within a city of domes following the eruption of a catastrophic convergence of "war, overpopulation, and pollution."[11] One might question the entertainment value of such a film. Even so, the film's post-apocalyptic vision was a reasonable fit for audiences who had survived an era marked by the Vietnam, assassinations, and Watergate.[12]

Logan's Run depicts a 1970s-version of future urbanity: pyramidal towers whose swooping facades arch jauntily upward, buildings connected by tubed monorail passageways, and throngs of young people costumed in brightly colored robes and tunics whose flashes of skin indicated a world of sexual freedom.[13] In a manner foretold by Walter Benjamin's amblings through the corridors of Paris and Berlin, citizens of this twenty-third-century city spend their days in vast interiors—most notably in a phantasmagoric enclosure called "Arcade"—that resemble shopping malls and hotel atriums, an effect enhanced by two of the film's major shooting locations: Dallas Market Center and Houston's Hyatt Regency Hotel. This gleaming interior, this enclavic sensibility transforms the world, with its varying threats of untoward elements into a glassy, gaudy interior of passageways: an endless array of domesticated commerce. Such *flânerie*, once only the province of high-hatted dandies, signify middle-class American postwar fantasy of domesticated nature.

The film also recalls more fanciful enclaves, such as James B. Settles's tongue-in-cheek depiction of a rolling ball enclosed in transparent plastic, traversing a windy roadway that carves across an arcadian landscape whose arched tunnels allow the flow of glistening water, in the February 1946 issue of *Amazing Stories*. In the distance, a city glows silver under gray clouds. In the foreground, the viewer marvels at the technological management of natural forces. Promising that you can "trade your trouble for a bubble," Settles conjures a world made more habitable and pleasant by scientific

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 1.2. Trade Your Trouble for a Bubble. Author's Collection

advancement, which leaves more free time for relaxation. Part of the pleasure of this bubble is its simplicity:

> There are no huge motors, no complicated apparatus, just the simplest of gadgets, and a complex and very interesting interior [that] is the last word in pleasure palaces. Games, terraces, ramps, restful lounging places, dance floors,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> swimming pools and just plain sightseeing would make this huge ball a pleasant place to while away a day. (Settles, 1946, n.p.)

Such is the City of *Logan's Run*. Not a rolling bubble but still an intoxicating fantasy of infantilized citizens.

Powered by hydroelectric energy, the City boasts a range of sophisticated technologies that allow inhabitants to satisfy all manner of fleshy fantasies. Joining the Circuit, for example, participants advertise themselves in the search for sexual dalliances without the sort of heterocentrism typical of the 1970s—and are even able to transport each other into their partners' living rooms. Visiting New You, citizens may place themselves into a device composed of laser scalpels that allows them to enjoy the benefits of painless full body reconstruction.[14] Entering the Love Shop, hedonists imbibe gas-delivered drugs that fuel decadent orgies whose wild depictions are limited only by the film's PG rating. Safely entombed in their domes, citizens of this technologically advanced world enjoy lives of leisure, aided by technologies that allow the maintenance of youth, vitality, and sexual abandon. A computer complex, a feminized vocalization of domesticity and menace, works tirelessly to sustain life and guard against threats from beyond the City's seals. As the film's tagline reminds us, though, "there's just one catch."

The computer ensures that City births are strictly controlled so that the population is kept in a perpetual state of balance, "one for one," which means that a child may be born only when a citizen dies.[15] To ensure the stability of the urban population, all citizens are allowed to enjoy their share of urban liberties and privileges until the age of thirty. Each inhabitant marks their time in the City with the aid of a implanted Lifeclock whose crystal changes colors to signify the progression of age from clear to yellow, to green, to red, to black.[16] At that final turn, an occasion termed Lastday, Citizens whose time has passed are beckoned to enter Carrousel,[17] upon which they dress in death robes and ascend via an energy field either to an explosive death or, supposedly, toward a sort of reincarnation called Renewal. Inhabitants are trained to believe that their lives may extend beyond thirty if they successfully renew, presumably a process that calls for their skill in the fiery ritual. But many residents carry a gnawing doubt that the ritual is a sham, that no one escapes the death penalty of the domes.

Logan's Run tells the story of a City enforcer called Logan 5 who initially revels in his role as a Sandman, a police officer charged with chasing and terminating Runners: citizens who distrust the ritual of Carrousel, choosing to flee the City in search of a mythical redoubt called Sanctuary. Logan begins to question the values of his world after he meets Jessica 6, a young woman who places herself on the Circuit to sooth her pains at the loss of a friend on Carrousel. Logan's response to Jessica's grief, focusing on his demand for

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

sexual liaison, delineates a Sandman's lack of empathy for those who doubt the City's rhetoric of rebirth.

Logan: Yes, well I'm—I'm sure he was renewed.

Jessica: He was killed, like the others.

Logan: "Killed?" Why do you, why do you use that word?

Jessica: Isn't that what you do? Kill?

Logan: I've never "killed" anyone in my life. Sandmen terminate Runners.

Jessica quickly flees, leaving Logan to wonder at her heretical misgivings. But a seed of doubt has taken root and quickly grow, particularly when the City's central computer gives Logan a new mission: he is to infiltrate the Runner community, use their knowledge the exit the City, and destroy Sanctuary.[18] Jessica and her friends surmise that Logan is an assassin, but eventually confirm the authenticity of his crisis of faith. Logan and Jessica escape the City and face the hazards of the world beyond the domes, dangers that include the dogged pursuit of Francis 7, a Sandman angered by Logan's traitorous choice to run.

Logan and Jessica endure the challenges of life beyond the City, learning that Sanctuary is just as much a myth as Renewal. They also discover that the world has begun to replenish itself, and that life beyond the seals is nothing like what they've been told. This lesson is epitomized by their journey to the ruins of the pre-catastrophe Washington D.C. where they gaze upon the Lincoln Memorial, overwhelmed at the sight: "I've never seen a face like that before," Jessica exclaims. "That must be," Logan proposes, "the look of being old." Soon, they encounter the "Old Man," the first living elderly person the protagonists have seen. With his stories of biological mothers and fathers, and with his expectation of a natural death after a long life, in the literal cracks and crevasses of his face, which amaze Logan and Jessica, the Old Man is a living memorial of forgotten values.

The film concludes with the trio's return to the City and an appeal for its inhabitants to escape the bounds of its domed dystopia. While I am hardly the first person to make this connection, I am compelled to note that this return recalls the allegorical cave described by Plato in his *Republic*. An oft-told story, the cave represents an enclave of illusion, an enclosure whose projected shadows obscure the true light of the sun outside.[19] As Plato's version of Socrates suggests, the blazing light beyond the cave is truth, and truth can be painful. When a prison of the cave escapes and sees that his life has been a lie, he returns to rescue his friends—only to find that other cave dwellers reject his efforts. They prefer lives of illusion. *Logan's Run* reveals this theme first

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

when Logan and Jessica express astonishment at the sight of sunlight after escaping the seals of their city. All of their lives they have been taught that the world beyond their dome is a ruin. They therefore cannot believe their eyes because, in fact, they've never really used them. Then, of course, when they return to the city they are mocked for their message, literally that, "Carrousel is a lie! There is no renewal! Nobody's going to be renewed! Believe me! Please listen!"

The final ruin of *Logan's Run* is the destruction of the city seals. This cascade of collapsing order begins with Logan confronts the City's central computer with information about the outside world that confounds its programming. The result is a rather predicable chain reaction of confusion that concludes with garbled techno-jargon and exploding buildings. At last the citizens of the domes wander beyond the seals, meeting the Old Man who had waited outside and sharing in Logan's and Jessica's amazement at the site of true mortality. This is the meaning of ruin in *Logan's Run*, the association of age and decline with truth. In this world, efforts to maintain an artificial balance are destined for failure. The cyclical promise of "one for one" must make way for the open trajectory of the unknown future.

Twelve Monkeys

Terry Gilliam's 1995 *Twelve Monkeys* confounds this cinematic narrative with an arrangement of circular temporality whose revelations I will attempt not to spoil in this telling. It is enough to know that the film begins and ends with an airport shooting, itself a shock to modern sensibilities given the expectation of security built into this sanitized environment. Even prior to the horrors of 9/11, though, the film demonstrates a late-twentieth-century distrust in the affirmations of authorities and their institutions, both before and after a catastrophe—in this case a plague, which strikes in December 1996 and results in the deaths of five billion people in 1997.

Following the airport introduction, which offers an intentionally ambiguous portrayal of key characters, the film shifts to 2035: an era in which the ragged remnants of a biological plague live underground.[20] This uninviting setting might initially serve merely as an opportunity to showcase Terry Gilliam's penchant for dark and weirdly claustrophobic interiors: piles of wheezing, outdated technology; skewed angles and odd vantage points composed to produce feelings of unease, of dread; and performances of panoptic bureaucracy run amuck. Calling forth memories of Gilliam's 1985 masterpiece *Brazil*, itself a critique of the imprisoning power of modern interiority, *Twelve Monkeys* offers a stark contrast to the milky white cities of *Things to Come* and *Logan's Run*, along with more complex arcologies envisioned

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

by R. Buckminster Fuller and Paolo Soleri. To illustrate the horrors of the underground city, the film's protagonist, James Cole, exclaims, "We live underground! The world belongs to the dogs and cats. We live like worms." While tending to prefer the burlesque over illuminating critique, Gilliam nonetheless reveals the counterpoint to utopian visions of well-organized cities built apart from natural forces, urbanities powered by human structures and subject to human flaws. The underground world of *Twelve Monkeys* evokes an enclavic rhetoric of enclosure, an ecology of fear (to adapt Mike Davis's language) illustrated by the laws of the city termed the Permanent Emergency Code.

While we may imagine that this underground city provides housing for a larger range of survivors, we only observe three classes of inhabitants: scientists who govern, guards who protect the scientists and manage other inhabitants, and prisoners who have been warehoused for their antisocial behavior. Members of that third class (again, in a manner reminiscent of Plato's *Republic*) contribute essential labor even as they are restricted from consequential deliberations of public life. Their most important labor arises when prisoners are plucked from their pitiful dormitories to make dangerous excursions to the surface of the planet. Euphemistically termed "volunteers," prisoner-explorers investigate the urban ruins of the post-plague planet, hoping to capture living creatures that contain the original virus. Scientists of this era hope that these samples will enable them to engineer an antidote to the plague, allowing them to retake the surface.

Thus we find Cole sealing himself within a hulking biohazard suit. A recorded message recites the natural and human dangers that await:

> These are the instructions for the first-time probe. Listen carefully. They must be followed exactly. All openings of your garment must be sealed completely. If the integrity of the suit is compromised in any way, if the fabric is torn or a zipper not closed, readmittance will be denied.

Not given much choice in the matter, Cole ascends the dark and damp interiors of the underground city, flipping through plastic-sheathed pages of a map to find his way, before emerging to wander the snow-covered streets of Philadelphia. Naturally he concentrates his search within the dank residues of a department store, festive holiday music still playing in the background. Sporting goods covered with cobwebs, aloha shirts collecting dust: the incongruous ephemera of society before the fall. Reminiscent of those Benjaminian arcades and department stores of the nineteenth century, and the suburban shopping malls that emerged in the twentieth century, the fallen city indexes those interiors evoked by some modern planners: bold, paradoxical interiors, protections from the plagues of disorder, both natural and manufactured.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

The Grand Court of Philadelphia's Wanamaker's Department Store therefore serves a dual role in the film, illustrating the plenty of life prior to the plague and the detritus of wasteful, irrelevant extravagance afterward.[21] Cole pierces the darkness of this place with a lone light, a detective searching for evidence of the crime. Returning outside, the explorer spots a ragged scrap of newsprint nearly hidden by snow, a stenciled red monkey and words scrolled in black: "WE DID IT." The message is projected from the past toward the future. The question is whether anything can be done.

The scientists of 2035 control a device that can send human beings back in time. But the process is fraught with peril, with travelers subject to temporal misfires, being sent well before their target dates or returning from their journeys muddled by psychological stresses of time travel: all the more reason, the scientists conclude, for prisoners rather than free citizens to be used for the first trips. Praised for his mental strength and dependable memory, Cole is therefore ordered to visit the world of 1996. There he will gather evidence about the Army of the Twelve Monkeys, the radical animal rights group that supposedly unleashed the virus. It is to this point that the narrative makes its most compelling turn, confirming that while time travel allows for the transmission of people and objects, the process does not enable the change of events. Five billion people die from the virus between 1996 and 1997, and they will always die from the virus, regardless of any efforts at intervention. The scientists' only hope is that learn enough about the bug to fashion a vaccine to inoculate the survivors.

What's worse, suffering a fate typical of travelers using an imprecise device, Cole is not sent back to 1996 but rather to 1990 when he cannot even collect specimens from the plague.[22] Disoriented by the physical and psychological toll of his journey, Cole makes his way to Baltimore where he is arrested and plunged into the bowels of the city's decaying mental health apparatus. The jailhouse and hospital scenes that follow, filmed not in Baltimore but in Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary, introduce Cole to major and minor characters that will shape his journey.[23] First Cole meets Kathryn Railly, a psychiatrist who initially dismisses his ravings as unremarkable illness but slowly comes to realize a deeper connection they appear to share. Cole also meets Jeffrey Goines, an inmate whose explosive outbursts convey a disturbing possibility that people designated as mentally ill may simply be unable to comport themselves within commoditized society. "We are not productive anymore," Goines exclaims, "They don't need us to make things anymore; it's all automated. What are we for then? We're consumers." Another character, L. J. Washington, offers a vivid summary of this condition: "Mental divergence." The rhetorical and socially constructed nature of reality posed by this notion calls

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

the audience of *Twelve Monkeys* to wonder whether James Cole is actually a time traveler or whether his "divergence" a more typical form of mental illness.

Gilliam portrays the nature of reality with his artful framing of hospital molding that divides cracked green paint from grimy tile. The style of that ornament is called the Greek key, also known as the Meander: a linear labyrinth whose pathway appears to advance while actually doubling back upon itself.[24] The effect is an endless reproduction of pattern despite the appearance of movement, the impossibility of change. Despite his struggles to adapt the circumstances of time travel, his transfer from one prison to another, Cole strives to explain that reality in dialogue with a hospital resident who asks (not mockingly but not seriously either), "Are you going to save us, Mr. Cole?" Cole replies, "How can I save you? This already happened. I can't save you. Nobody can."

Pulled back into 2035, Cole alerts the scientists of that era that he was sent to the wrong time. The scientists initially distrust Cole's motives for desiring to return to the past but realize that his interactions with Jeffrey Goines may have been fortuitous. The son of a noted virologist, Goines is known to have departed the asylum and formed his Army of the Twelve Monkeys sometime between 1990 and 1996. Perhaps he is the cause of the cataclysm. A more horrifying possibility, though, is that Goines may have conceived of his plan after hearing of Cole's efforts to stop the virus. By returning from the future to stop the pattern, Cole may have actually set the apocalypse into motion. He must therefore go back in time once more. In those scenes, set first in 1917 and then in 1996, *Twelve Monkeys* attends more closely to questions of fate and free will as Cole and Railly (not initially by choice) work together to uncover the mystery of Goines's plans.

Intriguingly, we are introduced to Railly in 1990 when she is called away from a public lecture assess Cole's condition. As Railly departs the presentation—visually dominated by Fra Carnevale's renaissance depiction of "The Ideal City"—a poet quotes from the *Rubáiyát*: "Yesterday this day's madness did prepare / To-Morrow's Silence, Triumph, or Despair." As it turns out, some film transcriptions err, suggesting that the poet says, "Tomorrow's silent triumph *of* despair" (emphasis added). This reading suggests a causal link between past and future when in fact the *Rubáiyát* invites readers to drink because "you know not whence you came, nor why" and, "you know not why you go, nor where." By 1996, though, Railly has begun to concentrate her attention to people who perceive reality as an unbreakable chain of causality. This is evidenced by her research into the Cassandra Complex, which borrows from Greek myth to convey what she terms, "the agony of foreknowledge combined with the impotence to do anything about it." At first

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

his prisoner, then his partner, Railly cannot help but empathize with his plight even as she rejects its implications.

Accompanied in the soundtrack by Tom Waits's "Earth Died Screaming," the pair travel abandoned Baltimore and journey to Philadelphia, a gleaming city center dominated by glass towers and surrounded with decay. In a flop house, Railly confronts the dreadful reality of unchangeable fate while Cole dreams of a way to avoid his destiny:

> Railly: "I can't believe that everything we say or do has already happened. We can't change what's gonna happen. . ."
>
> Cole: "I want the future to be unknown. I wanna become a whole person again. I want this to be the present."

Later, Cole offers an odd correlation of ruin and happiness: "I could live right here. You got water, air, stars. *Debris*. Oh, I love this world!" (emphasis added). Connecting the joy of the present with debris may see an odd choice. Yet it is the ruin of the present that conveys the only possibility of freedom from the future. Like the Greek key, however, the film concludes as it begins, in an airport. There, in a manner similar to the role of plague as justification for control, noted in the preceding analysis of *Things to Come*, Cole comes to read this rhetoric of control after being ordered to shoot the man who spreads the virus, knowing that such an action will result in his own death at the hands of airport security. "This part isn't about the virus at all, is it?," Cole says, "It's about followin' orders. About doin' what you're told." Caught within this interior symbol of order and discipline, forced into violence, Cole confronts the brutal intersection duty and destiny.

Twelve Monkeys deploys ruin in a way that differs from *Things to Come* and *Logan's Run*. As we've seen, Alexander Korda's 1936 film uses ruin as a sign of things that *were*, proof of the foolishness of nationalism and warfare, while Michael Anderson's 1976 film uses ruin—for all of its manifest mortality—as a counterpoint to the sterile artificiality and hidden discipline of the city of domes. In both films, time advances forward, away from ruin in Korda's underground city and gleaming Space Gun, or toward ruin in Anderson's exploding domes, and in the face of the Old Man who illustrates human dignity in the face of natural death. In the former film, change appears as a direct trajectory against earlier cycles of barbarism. In the latter film, change appears as a return to nature, but one that requires rejection of the present. *Twelve Monkeys* works differently by critiquing the very possibility of change, by suggesting that we live among ruins now. In this way, we observe the meandering path of progress—the Greek Key, the linear labyrinth—as

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

an illusion, an array of twisting passages that return, always, to their origins. People live and die, acting as if their choices produces consequences when, at least according to this film, their consequences produce the illusion of choice. For the well-healed denizens of 1996 Philadelphia, shopping at Wanamaker's for useless frills, the ruins are nearby, among the city's abandoned people and places, and relatedly in the prisons of that era's mental health care system. Materially, the ruin rests in parallel tension, present but possible to overlook. Temporally, however, the ruin is layered upon them; it cannot be ignored. We read this narrative most vividly in waterlogged opera house where Railly rebukes Cole for the savage beating he unleashes upon a street person who attacked them. When Cole replies, "All I see are dead people," he does not simply refer to his past or Railly's future; he explains that the cycle can never be broken, no matter what they do.[25]

Conclusion

Popular culture, with its constellation of books, films, comics, and other ephemera, offers us a glimpse into a rhetoric of order that calls forth an almost essential counterpoint of disorder. Such is the power, and the necessity, of ruins in our everyday lives. Signs of decay point provide a response and often a rebuke to the designs of planners who, despite their optimism and best intentions, seem far too often to insulate their mechanisms inside cords of control. We see this in our everyday lives, such as in those ragged paths carved by pedestrians who observe the organizing principles of sidewalks and other disciplinary devices and choose their own paths. Far from a collapse of order, ruins, even the gentlest trampling of feet upon grass, even the most faded smear of paint upon façade, convey alternatives. Ruins are material rhetorics whose messages cannot be read when their interpretations are forced through traditional structures of meaning.

We see the brutal optimism that ruins resist in William Gibson's Gernsback Continuum, in those spectral denizens of tomorrow and their perky "Chamber of Commerce" voices: "We've forgotten to take our food pills," one intones to the other (p. 10). Like the protagonist of Gibson's short story, we stare awestruck at such fantasy and then turn away—but to where? The fascistic Future may have passed us by, but it never really left us. It endures in films like *Things to Come* whose authoritarian engineers pledge an endless enclosure of artificial lighting and conditioned air. It endures in films like *Logan's Run* whose central computers direct assassins to murder runners seeking to break city seals. And it endures in films like *Twelve Monkeys* whose guardian scientists pluck prisoners from cages to carve straight lines of progress away from endless cycles of decay.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

In these apocalyptic visions ruins, like weeds, appear to offer little power to resist those powerful forces. Their presence seems at first merely to affirm the need for their absence. And in fact we would scarcely prefer the violence of *Things to Come*, the catastrophe of *Logan's Run*, or the plague of *Twelve Monkeys* over a continuum of white cities, secure interiors, and sealed domes. At the same time, though, the relics of these films—both their landscapes of decay and their human exemplars of resistance—articulate a rhetoric of ruin that undergirds this book. In ruin we witness an appeal to natural processes of struggle, mortality, and change, an awareness that progress narratives tend to serve those in positions to define progress toward their own ends.

NOTES

1. The theater was closed at the time of this writing.
2. Some of this text first appeared on the website for a course I teach at San José State University, COMM 149: Rhetoric and Public Life. Also see Wood (2003) for a preliminary application of Gibson's short story in the analysis of world's fairs.
3. While championed as the creator the phrase "science fiction," Gernsback actually advocated for the word "scientifiction."
4. While William Cameron Menzies directed *Things to Come*, the success of the project is generally attributed to producer Alexander Korda, who asked H.G. Wells to adapt his 1933 *The Shape of Things to Come* for cinema audiences. Wells agreed, with the expectation that no changes to the story would be made without his approval. The author envisioned this film as a means to repudiate the errors that he perceived to arise from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (Shelton, 1993, p. 22).
5. The Boss/Chief is also infrequently referred to by his given name, Rudolf. The character is indisputably patterned after Benito Mussolini, as evidenced by his rallying speech to pilots prior to their doomed battle against Wings Over the World: "To you, I entrust these good, tried, tested machines. You are not mechanics. You are warriors. You have been trained not to think, but to do, maybe to die. I salute you, I, your chief!"
6. See Anker (2005) for a discussion the role that Bauhaus and the Garden City movement played in Wells's dream of an underground city.
7. H.G. Wells selected the name Theotocopulos as homage to Doménikos Theotokópoulos, commonly known as El Greco. In Wells's screenplay, the character is a direct descendant of the artist.
8. In *Things to Come*, Raymond Massey plays both characters, John Cabal and Oswald Cabal.
9. Margaretta Scott is listed on film credits as the actress who played Rowena, though she does not appear in the standard print of *Things to Come*. The same actress does appear in the second act as the Boss's confidant Roxana.
10. To illustrate the overlapping visual vocabularies sci-fi films, YouTube contributor deidzoeb produced a clever "premake" of the original 1976 *Logan's Run* trailer,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

mixing scenes from *Things to Come* (along with clips from other films of that era) to produce *Logan's Run 1936*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d40BU1NXB_Q.

11. The city is never named in the movie; it is simply "The City." A subsequent short-lived television adaption refers to the citizens' urban interior as "The City of Domes."

12. Remember, this was also the time when children could catch their first glimpse of the apocalypse in episodes of the Filmation serious *Ark II*, which aired just after Saturday morning cartoons.

13. See Dowsett (2015) for a vivid account of the impact of *Logan's Run*'s somewhat revolutionary depictions of sexuality.

14. Painless, that is, unless its operator doesn't like sandmen, as evidenced in one of *Logan's Run*'s more frightful scenes.

15. Citizens are "seeded" into biological mothers and subsequently raised in incubators before being released into the City. Children born outside of the machine-system are relegated into the Cathedral slum area. In this arrangement, which may remind some readers of the sexual practices of Plato's *Republic*, citizens are taught to reject any efforts to know their parents, or their children.

16. Citizens are expected to wear clothing colored to correspond with their Lifeclocks.

17. While many readers are likely to be more familiar with the spelling "carousel," the film's producers opted for "carrousel."

18. Logan initially accepts his mission to infiltrate and destroy Sanctuary. But when the City computer strips four years from his Lifeclock and implies the impossibility of Renewal, the Sandman decides to run.

19. I cannot be the only person who first witnessed Platonic idealism by watching the *Star Trek* original series episode "Spectre of the Gun," in which Spock inveighs against "shadows without substance"!

20. While scripts and promotional material date the film's post-plague society as occurring in 2035, the script never refers to a specific date for this era.

21. As of this writing, Macy's had taken over the Philadelphia Wanamaker's site.

22. "Science ain't an exact science with these clowns," another "Old Man" character cackles, "but they're getting better."

23. Eastern State Penitentiary closed in 1971 and is how designated as a U.S. National Historic Landmark, maintained in a state of arrested decay ("preserved ruin," according to local parlance).

24. Referring to the Maeander River of Asia Minor, noted in (among other texts) *The Iliad* 2.869.

25. Fans of Bruce Willis, the actor who plays James Cole in *Twelve Monkeys*, will no doubt recall the utterance of a similar phrase in M. Night Shyamalan's 1999 *The Sixth Sense*.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

2

Post-Human Futures

"Some men," says the wise advisor to a caped crusader, "just want to watch the world burn." Many of us judge such figures to be evil, and with good cause. Of course as Hannah Arendt (2006) reminded us, true evil is not the stuff of comic books; it is the banality of rendering a verdict and counting up the deaths as details. Even so, we might ask: Why do so many films, books, television series, video games, and other media portray what is to human sensibilities, the *ultimate* ruin of the planet, either through extraterrestrial assault, natural disaster, or human made catastrophe? We must perceive a perverse hedonism at the sight of cities swept up in flames, in the entirety of the world's living creatures wiped from existence, in the permanence of death. Most of us recoil in horror at the thought. Still, we acknowledge the guilty pleasure that arises from our meditation upon ruins, particularly those monuments that persist after our passing.

Warnings, narratives, and fantasies of global collapse invariably tack between alternative themes of safety and risk. We find hopes for protection in the "bunker mentality" associated with expectations that hearty survivalists will carve out caverns underground, stocking them with supplies: medicines, weapons, ammunition, tinned food, potable water, and other necessities that will enable them to endure all manner of global calamity. In artifacts of what Foster (2014) identifies as "apocotainment," our heroes will haul themselves and their loved ones beneath the earth and wait the catastrophe out long enough to reclaim the surface following the dispersal of deadly radioactivity, poised air, vicious bandits, or any other combination of threats. They will survive. Elsewhere, Foster (2016) connected much of this mentality to a fashioned "crisis around whiteness, class, and masculinity" (p. 288), while Kelly (2016) adds that this "apocalyptic manhood has become infused into

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

the mainstream of American culture" (p. 98). There is, in short, a strange and unsettling privilege to be found in modern ruins.

Part of this strange delight may be associated with the power we possess in the mere ability to ponder such calamity as one who brings it about. Ponder, for example, Sidney Lumet's 1964 Cold War thriller *Fail Safe*. A sober counterpoint to Stanley Kubrick's burlesque *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, which appeared during the same year, *Fail Safe* depicts the horrific choices required after the accidental deployment of nuclear bombers over the what was then the Soviet Union, showcasing the threat that follows the choice of war planners to trust automated systems with the power to prosecute war. Early in the film, a professor who advises the Defense Department on the practicalities of nuclear annihilation thrills a well-healed group of dinner party guests with his dispassionate account of atomic holocaust, musing at the possibility of survivors who will climb from the rubble and struggle for mastery of what survives after the third world war.

Who, he wonders, would triumph in the last conflict between survivors? Prisoners and file clerks, most likely. Later, we will add a combination of the two, bank tellers, to that list. But for now we shall proceed with the commonality of communities that know something about the material power of numbers, either years in a sentence or figures in a ledger. The horrors known by one, the banalities known by the other, one hastens to add, are not oppositional so much as they are polarized along the same continuum. So bold, so fearless the *Fail Safe* consultant is at the prospect of correlating abstract mathematics with human cataclysm, that the professor attracts a party guest who beckons him home. His is a fantasy shared by more than a few academics: the homely intellectual who earns lusty attention through the power of ideas alone. So they sit together in his car in the morning glow after a full evening dedicated to gaming out the end of the world. And he torments her with the fearless courage of his capacity to count in magnitudes of obliteration. "You'd love making it possible," he says:

> You'd love pressing that button. What a thrill that would be, knowing you have to die, to have the power to take everyone else with you, the mob of them with their plans, their little hopes, born to be murdered, and turning away from it, closing their eyes to it. You could be the one to make it true, do it to them. But you're afraid, so you look for the thrill someplace else. And who better than a man who isn't afraid?

Silently she gazes upon him, drawn to him, Eros and Thanatos. She is transfixed by his ability to unleash death and destruction, or least his role within the mechanism that makes it all possible, and not only by the absolute power

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

that he possesses, but by the clarity of his confidence. She opens her lips, inviting his kiss. Though she cannot possess his authority, perhaps she can possess him. The professor, though, slaps her face: "I'm not your kind." Despite his ferocity, the professor's calculation is not a passionate one; it is a necessary one: a forest of decision trees to be climbed only by the most determined Cold Warriors.

The conclusion of *Fail Safe*, a *denouement* in the most literally awful sense, need not be revealed here. Those who have seen the film never forget the horror of its final revelation. Such is the true meaning of apocalypse: the revealing of ultimate truth. The question that awaits us is one of residue. We must interrogate our position in such a moment, our own presence amid that terrible, final absence. From what privilege do we regard such total devastation? This is not obviously a question of religion or rhetoric, for no spiritual or suasory power can fully frame the end of the world. At the same time, the framing of the final ruin of humanity is not entirely beyond the realm of communication. In this chapter we therefore shift our attention toward a longer scale of post-human experience. We do so through two lenses: Robert Smithson's photoessay, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey," and a Canadian documentary film called *Aftermath: Population Zero*, which presents a fanciful depiction of nature's reclamation of Earth over a period of 25,000 years following the collapse of human civilization. These texts, albeit in different ways, illustrate a common strategy through which ruins drag a seemingly inaccessible future into a malleable present. We witness this phenomenon in a passage that recalls the Gernsback Continuum:

> I am convinced that the future is lost somewhere in the dumps of the non-historical past; it is in yesterday's newspapers, in the *jejune* advertisements of science-fiction movies, in the false mirror of our rejected dreams. Time turns metaphors into things, and stacks them up in cold rooms, or places them in the celestial playgrounds of the suburbs. (Smithson, 2011, p. 50, emphasis in original)

We might initially read this sort of placement, the phantasmagoria of tomorrow rendered as contemporary ruin, as a dreadful prospect of progress. Such is one implication of narration found in *Aftermath*: "Schools once taught about human triumphs over nature. But… nature reclaims much of what humans took away." Time, we find, is inevitable, a linear progression that allows no detour. But we should allow another interpretation, one in which the temporal rhetoric of a world without people, supposedly the final ruin, in fact is a production of our *power* rather than the consequence of our *weakness*. When we see ourselves as the producers of ruin, not its victims—that is to say, as creators of its definition, as curators of its artifacts, confounders

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

of its coherence—we may perceive some rationale for the strange, apparently ironic longing to witness the end of things.

Creating Ruin

To create ruin is to occupy a place from which one knows, and sometimes understands, the extent of our own impotence. Fernando Pessoa (2003) conveys this sentiment in a typically melancholy manner: "I'm the ruins of buildings that were never more than ruins, whose builder, halfway through, got tired of thinking about what he was building" (pp. 61–62). Within the ruin that one builds, a life subject to one's own destructive power, creation can be a form of mortification: an act or utterance that demonstrates one's acceptance for whatever ruinous forces have been unleashed. It is a statement akin to the Latin phrase *Fīat jūstitia ruat cœlum*, often translated as "Let justice be done though the heavens fall." This utterance, typically presumed to refer to justice done toward another person at any cost, may also be interpreted as a willingness to pursue one's course no matter the personal pain. Whether it is an obligation or a choice, though, this standpoint calls forth notions of willful self-destruction. Kenneth Burke (1970) describes this performance, this counterpoint to victimage, as a means through which one seeks to purify one's self of sin:

> In an emphatic way, mortification is the exercising of oneself in 'virtue'; it is a systematic way of saying no to Disorder, or obediently saying yes to Order. Its opposite is license, *luxuria*, 'fornication,' saying yes to Disorder, or disobediently saying no to Order. (p. 190, emphasis in original)

Rather than hoisting blame upon another person, group, or natural force, mortification defines the rhetor as one who must reveal and remove sickness from the body, just as a surgeon would remove a tumor: a painful but necessary process, which begins from *knowing* that one is the creator of one's own pain. From this context, the ruin of self, the exteriorization of interior sin, either through social "cancellation" or more permanent forms of self-harm, enables a manifestation of order over chaos that otherwise appears to be insurmountable.

In contrast, one may adopt an external positionality, an understanding of ruin that stretches beyond the expanse of its effect. Most obviously we observe this phenomenon through the act and art of naming and framing. The term "ruin," we find, cannot be distinguished from the process of classification that yields its usage. The ruin is a device of enclosure, a rhetorical act. To make sense we must *take* sense. Here we might recall Susan Sontag's (1977) analysis of photography, most obviously her observation that, "[i]n a

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

world ruled by photographic images, all borders ('framing') seem arbitrary. Anything can be separated, can be made discontinuous, from anything else: all that is necessary is to frame the subject differently" (p. 22). A quarter of a century later, observing efforts to reproduce the horrors of the World Trade Center through photography, Sontag (2003) would admit, "the landscape of devastation is still a landscape. There is beauty in ruins" (p. 76). Finding beauty is, in other words, the production of perspective. Such framing calls for an invention of disorder that is, borrowing from Philip Wander (1984), "silhouetted" by order (p. 209). When observing a ruin, we accept (though we sometimes forget) that we have chosen to frame what we see as something separate from the homogenous plane and flow of experience. To mark something as ruin, despite its apparent reference to destruction, is a creative act.

We might therefore ask a question: What distinguishes a ruin from the category of junk? To unpack this query, think about a metal trash receptacle such as you might find at a metro stop or inside a convenience store. Can you see it? The container is packed with cigarette butts, discarded newspapers, soggy leftovers, and the related litter one might find left an urban environment. If you were to sift your fingers through this sticky collection of objects, perhaps laying them on a flat surface for careful scrutiny, you might trace the tangible detritus of one or, more likely, several narratives: a bite mark or coating of lipstick on the tossed cigarette, the smudged ink from forgotten newsprint, the fetid odor of a greasy chicken wing. Each of these objects offers fleeting proof of human experience. One might even conceive how one such object, suitably contextualized, might even be saved, preserved, framed. But objects such as these seldom endure; they are abandoned, displaced, forgotten. We mark a ruin as such when we dislocate an object of observation (typically a physical structure, but potentially a more abstract manifestation, such as a life, a relationship, a dream) from its surrounding domain. Such an act might remind you of those *memento mori* artworks produced by folks who seeing a dead animal on a public sidewalk choose to commemorate the scene, often from an ironic positionality, by adding a miniature collection of flowers, trinkets, votive candles, perhaps a tiny sign. One illustrative headline (a real one, incidentally): "People In Toronto Made Memorial For Dead Raccoon After City Forgot To Pick It Up For 12 Hrs" (Silverman, 2015). Indeed, and this is a central point of the present analysis, a ruin requires some degree of detachment from the world that surrounds it, at least the idea of nonruin, to make sense. We may better grasp this idea by distinguishing between the sublime and the picturesque.

We enter this conversation with some interest in aesthetic considerations, but more directly we chart the distinction of sublime and picturesque from the framework of apocalyptic rhetoric: the production of *revelation*. Traditional

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

articulations of apocalyptic rhetoric, we should observe, produce modes of discourse whose teleologies—threads of narrative that produce linear pathways from past through present toward futurity—activate and justify behavior. We locate more than narrative in the apocalypse, though; we uncover a coherent sense of purpose from what might be a miasma of motives. The end of the world, as we have seen, denotes an Aristotelian "end" to all things, a reason for their production and a rationale for their functions. Scholars of the apocalypse usefully locate this discourse in eras of anxiety. Andreas Huyssen (2006) reminds us that ruins possess the power to reveal our doubts about progress narratives:

> An imaginary of ruins is central for any theory of modernity that wants to be more than the triumphalism of progress and democratization or longing for a past power of greatness. As against the optimism of Enlightenment thought, the modern imaginary of ruins remains conscious of the dark side of modernity. (p. 13)

This articulation of ruin responds to recent articulations of an apocalyptic sublime (Gunn & Beard, 2000, 2003) that borrows from Frank Kermode and Jean Baudrillard to propose an immanent rather than an imminent notion of apocalypse. This is to say that the end of human order does gesture beyond some point in time, such as the Christian eschatology of "last days"; it is a rhetorical state of affairs. Immediately, the reader may observe a tension in that argument, particularly when we recall the revelatory nature of apocalyptic discourse. The apocalypse, etymologically, refers to the final disclosure of truth. As the day draws towards its end, the news of the apocalypse is culmination of a drama whose tensions and terrors are released by a renewed understanding of the hidden order revealed at last. Yet the apocalyptic sublime, at least as Gunn and Beard (2000) define this process, is never resolved; it goes on and on, gathering up fragments of meaning that are never lost, never abandoned, always recycled:

> The emergence (or perhaps reappearance) of circular or "spherical" temporalities, hastened by technologies of representation that collapse the symbolic distance between the sign and its referent, leaves us constantly negotiating our being in—or forever just outside of—"the end." (p. 274)

Gunn and Beard cite Baudrillard's (1994) reference to "defunct ideologies, bygone utopias, dead concepts and fossilized ideas which continue to pollute our mental space" (p. 26). We are surrounded and inundated by the proof of endless destruction. So much better then, that we produce some of our own, not in some sort of barbaric yawp but instead for something more tangible, more local, more manageable. Once more we think of that dead raccoon in

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Toronto. Think of all of those folks piling up relics for a dead animal they never knew. Why do they produce this pathetic tableau?

To answer, we should admit an abrupt assertion that all ruins are picturesque; they are never sublime. We do not read a ruin through some pre-linguistic understanding. While death and decay occupy a reality beyond language, ruins are ruins by *definition*. This apparently pedestrian observation suggests an important distinction: while ruins possess the ability to rouse feelings of contemplative dread and the realization of one's mortality, they do not reside beyond the scope of human agency. Here we should more clearly define our terms. When we speak of the sublime, we refer to those moments, brushes with reality, which reveal our comparatively minute stature when faced with the awesome scope of nature. In the oft-told narrative, we begin our reading of the sublime ascribed to Longinus who describes, "a certain loftiness and excellence in language [that takes the reader] out of himself" (p. 2). In the eighteenth century, Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant would expand that concept, although in vastly different ways, by articulating how the sublime produces feelings of being overwhelmed—sometimes in horror, sometimes in awe—by the scale of the material and symbolic world beyond the scope of human experience: "The passion caused by the great and the sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror" (Burke, 1909, p. 51, emphasis in original). Putting the matter more concretely, the sublime is that feeling when one stumbles over the jagged rocks of a pool formed under the crashing bursts of a waterfall, such as in California's Yosemite National Park, when the traveler, distant from urban conveniences, faces an embodied balance of enlightenment and oblivion.

Here, we read a necessary insight into the sublime that provides both a close parallel and a critical departure: the *abject*, what Gunn and Beard (2000) propose as "coming closest to the kind of concrete experience we would like to characterize as the sublime experience" (p. 277). If the sublime is, recalling our previous recollection of *Fail Safe*, the potentially pleasurable failure of safety, the abject lies at the porous and permeable boundary between protection and precarity. Later in this book, we will confront this boundary-play in Chernobyl where invisible arrows of radiation pierce the flesh of tourists who pay for the privilege to play with the edges of their bodies. For now, though, we strive to better understand both the indulgences and impossibilities of abject desire. To Ellis (2018),

> The abject is an experience of the limitations of one's embodiment in the world and/or the meaningful relationships that one holds with respect to various aspects of the world. In as much as the experience of the abject threatens stable

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> boundaries and limits, it is not something that is forced upon the subject; rather, there is something alluring and seductive about the abject. Individuals are drawn towards it. (p. 60)

The abject is the invisible space between failure and safety, the keystroke flash that collapses opposition into itself: Fail Safe/FailSafe. The Abject is no mere play of words, though. It is the call to cast off the danger and its threat to the edges of self. It is a reminder, though, that one cannot so easily cast the self *itself* away when the danger sinks itself into the body, the blood that courses through one's veins, *your* veins. And there it is, the collapse between word and deed, between author and reader, between here and there. It is a pinprick against the constancy of being that threatens to blow the whole apparatus, the artificial divide, apart.

To Julia Kristeva, the abject is the shearing of the maternal embrace, the act of carving against the body that birthed you, the hope—impossible, endless—that one may reveal the self apart from its material creator as one would split, break, cut, and then caress the marble to release an idealized essence. To perform this excision, the abject becomes associated with uncanny filth and fear; it is so familiar, far too familiar, yet placed outside of traditional modes of comfort, home, domesticity. The fabric is frazzled, the home is filled with shadows, the domestic chore becomes a prison. No, despite the absurdity of the scene in *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, one may not weather a nuclear holocaust within the confines of a midcentury modern house—all that teal, all that glass, all that Howdy Doody banality, even in a lead-lined refrigerator. It is our homebound desire that dooms us, so we must be ejected from our banal origins. The act of rejection is the ancient and eternal struggle to forge the self. In throwing out, throwing up, throwing away, we come to respect another power of the posthuman future. Kristeva (1982) explains:

> On close inspection, all literature is probably a version of the apocalypse that seems to me rooted, no matter what its socio-historical conditions might be, on the fragile border (borderline cases) where identities (subject/object, etc.) do not exist or only barely so—double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject. (p. 207)

A materiality of the sublime, the abject suggests the distance of aura that we hope we may manage via the final schism, even as we are drawn back, always and again, to the place we hoped to escape.

The sublime, whether material or idealized, produces a feeling of connection, yes, to feelings and perceptions that burst beyond the shells of words that could never contain them. The self in awe of the sublime becomes

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

unmoored from firm foundations, unsure of things that once felt stable. In such a circumstance, one may stand atop a mountain, once more recalling Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*. Yet one observes in the far distant peaks that climb higher still, reminders of the human inability to ever fully rise above nature. When we behold the fusion of sand and heat that transforms the nuclear landscape into glass, we witness the sublime. It is another thing entirely, though, to mark one last building, or tree, or shadow, as an object that endures. That production of meaning, that rhetoric of ruins, is not sublime; it is the picturesque tactic of authorship.

When we view the picturesque, we do not atone for our sins but rather attune ourselves to some possibility of redemption. This is not to demean the power of ruins; it is rather to acknowledge that they are never natural, never fully beyond human agency, despite their apparently awesome expanses or their miniaturized projections of mortality. For a ruin to exist it must be recognized; it can shock or horrify or humble us; it may even appear to shatter and rupture the framework of civilization and modernity, but only to a point. The ruin, no matter how powerful it may appear to be, is located within the frame of its naming. In the beginning was the Word, in the end too. It is always a sign. It may not necessarily be, to borrow from Albert Speer's theory of ruin value, proof of humanity's grandeur, its capacity to endure, but the ruin is nonetheless a mark of human agency amidst natural power.

Robert Smithson both critiques and appropriates Albert Speer in his ironic tour. He describes a journey he makes from New York City to Passaic, the New Jersey town of his birth. On the bus ride to his hometown, Smithson makes a study of what he calls monuments, not to allegories of public virtue or to historical figures whose lives demonstrate lives well led, but to something antiheroic: a modern era viewed, at least from a certain point of view, as a projection of human ruin. The photographer captures images that speak not of human achievement but of the reminders of human passage, sad tableaus: a vacant field etched by heavy equipment whose workers have departed for the day, a wall carved into a grid marred by shadow that creates a perception of collapse, half a dozen pipes pouring white-capped sludge into a river, a concrete wall marked with a warning and a lament: "Passaic Boys Are Hell!" Smithson's choice to label images like these, among others he includes in his essay, epitomizes the picturesque technology of photography to manufacture ruins, to locate them, and us, in their place—while previewing a subsequent production of aura, of distance from its effects, which we will investigate later.

We must admit some degree of extrapolation in this analysis. Smithson never states that he occupies a post-human landscape. Human beings haunt his monumental backdrops. A bridge-keeper responds to a barge, children

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

throw rocks at each other near a ditch, the air fills with the P.A.-projected-sounds of fans watching a football game somewhere in the distance. This is not a world without people, such that we will visit presently. Smithson's Passaic is, though, a world in which people seem no longer to be human, either acting as extension of mechanical forces, acting in a manner that forgoes the former niceties of civilization, or transformed into disembodied ghosts: "a kind of self-destroying postcard world of failed immortality and oppressive grandeur" (p. 49). This notion of human beings subject to self-destroying environments recalls similar meditations on mortality, such as William Gibson's (1992) *Agrippa*, a multimedia artwork the author intended to become unreadable and inaccessible once viewed. "To read Mr. Gibson's story," one reviewer noted, "is to destroy it. Even turning the pages to look at the pictures is to risk altering the book irreversibly" (Jonas, 1993, p. BR12). We observe a more recent example of this phenomenon with guerilla Graffiti artist Banksy who, having sold a replica of his *Girl With Balloon* in 2018 for the equivalent of $1.1 million at auction, initiated an automated process in which the work was shredded before a host of viewers who were delighted, surprised, and horrified. In a subsequent Instagram post, Banksy quoted Picasso: "The urge to destroy is also a creative urge" (Kumparak, 2018, n.p.). In our optimistic moments, we hope that authorship, photography, and other productive acts allow us to define ourselves. This rhetoric of ruins, in contrast, is a production of our own demise.

Smithson suggests as much when, early in his essay, he cites the opening sentence to Brian Aldiss's *Earthworks*: "The dead man drifted along in the breeze." Soon thereafter Smithson (2011) evokes Picasso's *Guernica*, that shattering depiction of soul-crushing violence spawned in the Spanish civil war, when he places the technology of reproduction between himself and what he hopes to capture on film:

> Photographing it with my Instamatic 400 was like photographing a photograph. The sun became a monstrous lightbulb that projected a detached series of "stills" through my Instamatic into my eye. When I walked on the bridge, it was as though I was walking on an enormous photograph that was made of wood and steel, and underneath the river existed as an enormous movie film that showed nothing but a continuous blank. (p. 47)

Photography in this instance is a process of detachment, a reproduction of copies without originals, a search of life in a world of simulacra. The "eye" sheds light and life, even when the "I" is gone. Within this pitiable gesture, lifelessness and life collapse, tesseract-like, into one another: "I was completely controlled by the Instamatic (or what the rationalists call a camera)," Smithson writes. "The glassy air of New Jersey defined the structural parts

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

of the monument as I took snapshot after snapshot" (p. 48). Being defined by our technology, taken by it, and yet framing what survives, *taking* it, is the creation of ruin. Our tools, Smithson adds, enact this tension in the ironic manufacture of protection and exposure.

We pause to study the cardboard box that contains the film Smithson uses to produce his monuments. "READ THIS NOTICE," the box warns. What follows is a grim poetry of the modern world, the convergence of presence and absence, of "is" and "without":

> This film will be replaced if defective in manufacture / labeling, or packaging, even though caused by our / negligence or other fault. Except for such replacement / the sale or any subsequent handling of this film is / without other warranty or liability. EASTMAN KODAK / COMPANY DO NOT OPEN THIS CARTRIDGE OR YOUR / PICTURES MAY BE SPOILED—12 EXPOSURES—SAFETY / FILM—ASA 125 22 DIN. (p. 50)

Once more, we take pictures and are taken by them. The ruin of modern creation is the atomization of experience into a dizzying explosion of frames, each produced by technology that threatens their destruction in the act of their creation. We are tenuous, tipping near an abyss, wondering just how close we are to a world without us.

We enter that world more formally in *Aftermath*. In that projected future dragged by filmmakers into the present, we foresee the moments, years, and centuries that follow the instantaneous removal of human beings from the planet. There is no pandemic explanation, no military conflict, no nuclear fireball that sets this apocalypse into motion. The cause is unknown: "One minute from now," the narrator warns, "every single person on earth will disappear. It doesn't matter how or that it's far-fetched. What's important is what will happen when we're gone." Presence and absence: In rhetorical terms, we may compare this dichotomy to syllogism and enthymeme, the argument that is complete compared to the argument whose missing premise calls for its auditor to supply that which is gone. We fill the empty space with our fears, our stories. We become partial authors of this narrative, even when we lose ourselves in the process. This is a much more important move than may initially be apparent. The enthymematic quality of this argument is epitomized by the assertion that "The only way to fully understand the scale of our influence is to witness the world without it." Our death and destruction, a revelation we *create*, is proof of our power.

Here we must attend to the Anthropocene, the proposed amendment to the Geologic Time Scale that marks a transition from the Holocene (following the last glacial period) to the present era in which human beings and their technologies possess the power to enact change on a planetary scale. The

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

beginning of the Anthropocene is subject to ongoing debate. Some scientists trace that era to the First Agricultural Revolution, roughly between 15,000 BCE and 10,000 BCE. Others suggest a more recent point of departure from the Holocene: the mid-twentieth century initiation of ground and atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons whose impacts, radiological and symbolic, are comparable to the convulsions produced by previous geological ages. Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer (2000) who are often credited with coining the word, though their initial writings on the subject acknowledge previous uses of the term, noted how technologies such as the steam engine "coincide[d]" with an increase in atmospheric greenhouse gases (p. 17). The authors therefore proposed the late eighteenth-century as a starting point for the Anthropocene. These dating debates, relevant as they are, are merely prelude to more substantial questions about the long-term impact of human behaviors on the natural world.

An array of violent acts of human beings upon each other, upon nonhuman beings, and upon the planet itself, the Anthropocene is also, to some scholars, a mode of thought: a way to de-center human beings from the natural world (Cielemęcka and Daigle, 2019). It is a means through which we read the ruins of today's world as a future history through which we glide as ghosts. In this way, "[t]he ruin seems both ephemeral and regenerative. . . the hope that an understanding of the human species' geosocial responsibilities in ruining the planet might still make it possible that a future apocalypse could be averted through corrective steps" (Mukherjee, 2017, p. 288, 292). And, yes, we may approach the Anthropocene as an engine of hope. Yet Rahul Mukherjee's sensibility confronts, as must we all, Benjamin Haas's (2016) reminder that "[h]ope in the face of environmental catastrophe feels like a bandage for a viral infection" (p. 282). To Hass, our planet has already passed a point beyond which human beings have even a right to persist. What is left for us, before we fade into a posthuman era, or bring it about, is the demand that we bear witness to what we wrought: "In the end," Hass affirms, "we have an obligation to watch the world burn" (p. 292). At this juncture, though, and not simply as rumination but potentially as a call to more direct action, we are compelled to question the constitution of "we" (Barnett, 2019, p. 296).

After all, despite the sweep of humanity churned forth by the Anthropocene, the production of transformative violence on a planetary scale is selectively authored, and unequally felt. As such, this age calls to mind the Benjaminian rebuke of progress narratives. I therefore share with Dustin Edwards (2020) a rejection of the singular tale: "and instead compose a series of entangled stories where different patches of landscape, multispecies actors, and temporal scales somehow hold together to give us a view from somewhere" (p. 65). These patches, these peoples, these eras, despite their

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

apparently global scale, find individual courses. The shipbreakers of Bangladesh, the islanders of Tuvalu, the indigenous peoples of all nations who find their lands stolen, mined, irradiated, and otherwise poisoned: these peoples know all too well the inequitable pace, and price, of modernity. Advancing a thoughtful conversation about Achille Mbembe's notion of necropolitics, the demand that we unpack the structures that determine who lives and who dies, Mitch Reyes and Kundai Chirindo (2020) emphasize, "In the Anthropocene, the precarity that had been the nearly exclusive preserve of people occupying the bottommost rungs of human society is becoming generalized to most if not all humans—though not in equal measure" (p. 436). Tom Lehrer, we find, may have indeed been grossly optimistic when he sang "We'll all go together when we go." Indeed, despite our growing awareness that a new and planet-changing Anthropocene era is upon us, the ultimate inequality is that we individually—and in this instance, I mean you and me—hold out the impossible hope of survival, at least in some form that endures.

One produces from this perspective a strangely satisfying mode of human endurance. "Humans may be gone," *Aftermath* reminds us, "but we're still contributing to this destruction." How does this happen? It is the greatness of our creative and destructive acts, the endless unspooling of our effect upon earth, which allows us to live beyond our years. Our factories decay, unleashing poisons into the air, earth, and water. Our fires billow for a time, but even when they burn themselves out, the residues they create promise some semblance of human impact: "In a world without humans, cities continue to function on thousands of automated systems." As we have already seen, Smithson hints at this future in which Passaic journey through landscapes of crumbling walls, draining pipes, empty lots, where the voices of children, their arguments and their playful performances, echo in the empty canyons. When the children of men depart at last, though, those echoes continue. This, then, is the creation of ruin: the positioning of one's self as its author and auditor, viewing it from the safety of the picturesque frame. What remains, thereafter, are, well, the remains. It is to these pieces that we now turn.

Curating Ruin

As we have seen in previous analysis, ruin summons action. It is the broken foundation upon which a new world may be set back to order. We might envision this action as a sort of curation, which is to say, the guardianship over objects of the past—but also, potentially, the curation of one or more futures. We need not fixate too much on the *Star Trek* original series episode "The City on the Edge of Forever," with its Guardian's curation of all times, to illustrate this idea, though we could do far worse than to review that exemplar

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

to better understand what follows. In the meantime we remember: The curation transcends the mere creation of ruin. Curation is an act of protection, and of projection. To curate is to hail alternate temporalities. In doing so, we occupy a paradoxical intersection of axes that allow us, even in the midst of own mortality, to persist beyond their provinces. We ponder the possibility somewhat in the smaller mementos of destruction, such as when we sift through the ashes of a burned home in search of the urn of a loved one, selecting their light gray ash from the darker detritus left by those scorching flames. Such an act, the ordering of disorder, calls us to review what Huyssen terms the Museal Gaze: a production of authenticity through distancing, a structure associated with aura, made real (or real enough, at least) by the individual encounter. Pushing against those who reject museums as being essentially artificial, Huyssen (1995) observes:

> Objects of the past have always been pulled into the present via the gaze that hit them, and the irritation, the seduction, the secret they may hold is never only on the side of the object in some state of purity, as it were; it is always and intensely located on the side of the viewer and the present as well. (p. 31)

The collection and presentation through which we may pull the future into the present is no less a meaningful act of curation, even when we contemplate catastrophe on a planetary scale: the destruction and abandonment of humankind the toolmaker, overwhelmed by its own tools, by its own hubris, until it is swept away into fire, or ice, when the Earth engulfs civilization under nature once more. In these instances, *especially* in these instances, we find in ruins a future as present; we are surrounded by the rubble of tomorrow.

This curation of tomorrow's deprivations amid today's excesses calls for us to re-read Whitley Strieber and James Kunetka's (1986) *Nature's End*: a harrowing depiction of environmental collapse, most particularly in a moment in Denver, in 2021, when the consequences of human inaction in the face of overwhelming evidence concerning the origins and implications of climate change. This image outlines a sense of pluritemporality, written to project a reader in the 1980s amid the cornucopia of their present and the desperation of their future:

> It was a happy, rich time, the last of the fatted years. People shop in supermarkets containing ten thousand and more different items. There has never been a food shortage in the United States, and such a thing seems impossible. . . One of them might drive cheerfully past the very corner where he will die thirty-three years later. . . He does not get a chill, passing the place of his death. He does not even slow down. (p. 4)

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

This passage, first published more than three decades ago, suggests an odd process of curation: dragging a sign of future ruin from the past into the present, most importantly the moment it is intended to be read. The authors recall that the future "was already waiting for us even when we were young" (p. 12). In this way *Nature's End* is an artifact from a potential future that presents a continuum of anxieties, arrayed diachronically through fictional news accounts stretching from the past to the future—and synchronically, as it turns out, in a cluster of intersecting narratives.

This is another way of saying that the things of the world do not vanish. There the bits and pieces of what *was*, endure—if only from the natural tenacity of matter to persist. Even more importantly, this destructive potential need not come to pass, or even be imminent; it is, as we have seen, immanent to the modern condition. Let us then attend more closely to the notion of ruins in the future that are projected into the present. Even more than *Nature's End*, we find an ideal example of this process in a beloved *Twilight Zone* episode entitled "Time Enough at Last."[1] In that episode, a bank teller, a bookish fellow with Coke-bottle eyeglasses named Henry Bemis, has grown tired of people and their petty annoyances. He isn't a misanthrope—he's played by Burgess Meredith for goodness sake—but Bemis is no Organization Man either. He is a dreamer who yearns to lose himself in his books. His boss summarizes his sickness, attacking his avocation as a curator of miscellany: "You are neither an efficient bank teller nor a proficient employee. You, Mr. Bemis, are a Reader. A Reader. A Reader of books, magazines, periodicals, newspapers." An older version of the *Twilight Zone* script added for good measure, "Pamphlets. Brochures. Catalogues. Advertisements. Tracts. Ad infinitum!" Bemis's spouse is, if anything, even more dismissive: mocking his joys and then destroying a book of poetry (*A Book of Modern Poetry*, as it turns out) because she prefers, in her words, the art of conversation. After she tears up Bemis's book, the poor man slumps to his knees, gathering the torn pages into ragged clumps. He is, perfectly, pathetically, a curator of ruins. Whether at the bank or at home, Bemis wants only "time enough at last" to read. And, this being the *Twilight Zone*, he appears to get his wish.

A hydrogen bomb, that Damoclesian sword that hung over the midcentury world, erupts outside the bank, wrecking what appears to be the whole of human civilization. The explosion imprisons Bemis, but it saves him too. He awakens after the blast, adjusts his glasses, and climbs back to the surface, which now resembles the horrific landscape of post-atomic Hiroshima. Rod Serling intones:

> Seconds, minutes, hours: they crawl by on hands and knees for Mr. Henry Bemis, who looks for a spark in the ashes of a dead world. A telephone connected to nothingness. A neighborhood bar, a movie, a baseball diamond, a

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> hardware store, the mailbox at what was once his house and is now. . . rubble. They lie at his feet as battered monuments to what was but is no more.

Bemis makes a cursory search for other survivors and, finding none, contemplates suicide. At that moment he spots the ultimate container of good fortunate: a library. Amid the collection of scattered volumes, dusty but legible, he will survive. The library is, in Foucault's (2008) sense, a heterotopian space that enables the curation of things: "the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time, and inaccessible to its ravages" (p. 20). And having found this archive, with its collected works of "Shelley, Shakespeare, Shaw" and others, "Books. Books. All the books I'll need," Bemis is indeed a lucky man. He is like an occupant of T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land*: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins." Bemis has plenty of fragments to gather, plenty of time to read, all the time in the world. So he stacks those irradiated tomes in to dusty piles, organized by the months of his reading, and those months arranged into stockpiles that stretch out into years. Bemis will curate the ruins of the world into piles that resemble Greek columns. In typical *Twilight Zone* fashion, though, his reveries come to an end when, by a cruel twist of fate, his one set of eyeglasses slip and shatter on the ground. His fate thereafter is left to the viewer's imagination. But those columns are now added to the ruins of the world.

What then shall we make of these ruins? This question—What shall we do in this moment?—lies at the heart of many rhetorical forms. Our answer is to pile up hope against hope that we will endure in the form of what we leave behind. To illustrate this argument, we must dig further into Baudrillard's (1994) argument, recalling his claim that "our age no longer produces ruins or relics, only wastes and residues" (p. 79). Elsewhere the author recalls a visit to the Berlin Wall after a "temporal bomb" has blown all experiences into the past. There is no center and there is no periphery, only a flat, slippery surface composed of an apparently endless array of texts. Baudrillard (1989) writes, "Here, the labyrinth of the city and the Gordian knot of history are destroyed at the same time in one stroke by a murderous incision" (p. 36). The incision cuts not only places but also meanings.

While we may hope to bind the wounds of history back together, many contemporary visitors to Berlin flock to a sign of its endless remainder, that apocalyptic sublime. Tourists at Berlin's East Side Gallery to photograph its collection of 105 murals, which were first produced in 1990 to celebrate German unification, thronging alongside artifacts such as Dmitri Vrubel's *Bruderkuss* (a depiction of Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honecker engaged in a fraternal kiss). These murals, totems of *Ostalgie*, are in fact largely recreated from the originals, which suffered from vandalism and neglect. In cases,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 2.1. *Bruderkuss*. Photograph by Author

the work necessary to return them to their original appearance was undertaken by replacements hired after some original authors refused to participate in the restoration plan.

We find a similar curation of ruins at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., the slice of black granite erected to commemorate the more than 58,000 Americans who died (or remain unaccounted for) in the Vietnam conflict. Their names, inscribed in stone, are not ruins; yet they are neither a celebration. Viewers of either wall struggle to recreate some sense of the past. At the Memorial many visitors repeat the ritual of rubbing names onto paper, "a special token that the wall gives to them as a remembrance" (Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci Jr., 1991, p. 274). One would be most churlish to dismiss that activity with the mere gathering of souvenirs. Yet, and this is hardly the first site of such analysis, the visitor to the Wall invariably stares into their own reflection, their present face staring back at them. Past and present blur. Visitors carve bridges between those temporalities through their curation of artifacts. Cleaned, polished, sorted, and named, our residues wait in silence behind secure frames and glassed enclosures.

Smithson's Passaic journey may be read from this viewpoint as more than a production of ruins by naming and framing. His is an act of curation: the recognition and subsequent articulation of a rambling assemblage of

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

monuments. A few may be laid out before the visitor, such as those appearing on a map or god's eye view. But most monuments are met at ground level, lacking the heroic nomenclature. Their alignment to grander values must be discerned, not just discovered. From this vantage point, Smithson points to objects that otherwise might appear as visual noise: a pumping derrick, a green highway sign, a concrete plant, a used-car lot, a downtown parking lot, a series of "holes" through which an "an abandoned set of futures" (p. 49), an expanding constellation of artifice stretching from modern to *moderne*, seeps from the netherworld of tomorrow into the ruins of today. The ruins of Passaic constitute a world without a center, "a typical abyss or an ordinary void" (p. 50). To guard these ruins is first to produce them by naming, and then to arrange them, like Bemis and his books, into matrices of meaning. Smithson (2011) peers through the roadside frames to assay the promise of new cars, ghosts of future ruins, which glow behind the glass:

> The windows of City Motors auto sales proclaim the existence of Utopia through 1968 WIDE TRACK PONTIACS—Executive, Bonneville, Tempest, Grand Prix, Firebirds, GTO, Catalina, and Le Mans—that visual incantation marked the end of the highway construction. (p. 49).

His reference to utopia is playful, wistful, and only slightly sarcastic. The non-place, we cannot forget, is a critique of place and its values, an "incantation" that forecasts what comes next. Used car lots. He asks, "Was I in a new territory?" Yes, he concludes: a "lower state of futurity" (p. 49). This is the art of curation, the Museal Gaze. Real futurity and its false doppelgänger are arrested and arranged, not in a singular frame but as an argument, a rhetoric of distance. The distance Smithson proposes is not a disjuncture, though. It is an overlap of layers made possible by the same sort of pluritemporality we witnessed in Strieber and Kunetka's Denver: a doomed city of the mid-1980s, a future version of 2021, and the present.

This slippage of time is what the Smithson means when questions whether "Passaic replaced Rome as The Eternal City" (p. 51). What, then, is eternity? We may picture a Platonic form that exists beyond human experience or perception. We hope to find in that eternity proof of that which endures our mortal struggles. Yet Smithson finds in Passaic something that is both less reassuring and more rousing:

> If certain cities of the world were placed end to end in a straight line according to size, starting with Rome, where would Passaic be in that impossible progression? Each city would be a three-dimensional mirror that would reflect the next city into existence. The limits of eternity seem to contain such nefarious ideas. (p. 51)

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

This act, the placing of cities in a line, or within a frame, or as a constellation, is the *logos* of ruins. It is an ordering not of eternal structure but of ourselves across time. Such an idea is nefarious to the extent that we anticipate a meaning and purpose beyond human affairs. But when those chimeras are banished at last we are left with ourselves as memories for others, even as the lives of others become the raw materials for our own stories. Curation, then, is a different kind of guardianship than one might first imagine: not quite *Plato*, not quite *Star Trek*. To curate ruins is not to protect the bits and pieces of today for tomorrow. It is instead to rouse tomorrow as proof against the ruins of our lives today.

The producers of *Aftermath* demonstrate that sensibility with their documentary's artful arrangement of human artifacts. We witness the decay and collapse of typical monuments: Hoover Dam, the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty. The gathering of these relics points both to authorship and obfuscation. The futures of peoples in most parts of the world, in Africa, for example, is much like their pasts, unknown to many modern readers though knowable nonetheless, at least to those who care to look. The radiation of exploded reactors will reach North Africa, the narrator assures us, but nothing is foreseen for those ancient cities made dusty by human footsteps millennia before Europeans began to erect their cathedrals. Similarly an African elephant taken to a North American zoo will suffer in the nuclear winter, but the place and peoples of its origins are silent. Instead *Aftermath* dutifully catalogues the wreckage of modern technology: "Humans left 25,000 objects orbiting the Earth," the narrator announces. "Most of it was junk, clamps, pieces of rockets, remnants left from our 50 years of working in space. And without us there's nothing to keep it from falling back where it came from." *Aftermath* is a reminder once more of human power, the power of human trash to avoid the natural fate of gravity until our departure. Similarly, the narrator counts "at least 50,000 ships… strewn along seashores or rusting on the sea bottom." Here we glimpse those vast symbols of neoliberal conquest, those hulking oil tankers and mammoth container vessels, that are now being dismantled, sometimes by hand, by postcolonial de-constructors who refashion the detritus of modern world into the means of their material survival. Yet ultimately the act of curation is, again, one of distance. The documentary concludes with a reminder:

> Unlike Earth, the moon's landscape changes very slowly. Craters more than 4 billion years old are still preserved. Along with some human artifacts. A car. A television camera. The only reminders of the human species that will last for millions of years aren't even found on Earth.

Curation, then, is the production of detachment, the sight made possible when we look at ourselves from distant locale. Gazing upon our planet from

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

that emplacement, we gather, select, and order, and even dispassionately discard all human creation. The rhetoric of curation is compelling, even if its narrative presumes our deaths. It is, in fact, all the more so in that case. How, otherwise, could we forecast such a future if not from some degree of persistence in the present?

Confounding Ruin

We are left with the power, such as it is, to confound ruin. To confound in this sense is to pull together, apparently in a chaotic manner, previously distinct things and ideas. This process extends from our previous examinations of creation and curation by integrating the ruin, otherwise detached from us, into our lives. To live among ruins is a confounding act. It is a rejection of the myth that human life, to be meaningful, must be productive. Fernando Pessoa (2003) asks, “The beauty of ruins?” His answer: “That they’re no longer good for anything” (p. 278). But more than this, to confound ruin is to deprive its monumental power to stand outside of human life and, in doing so, to mark its limits. To confound the ruin is to collapse the distinctions that it produces. Here we recall that ruins persist, apparently, when we do not. Their persistence, as a construct of the modern project, denotes the unchanging cycle of natural forces beyond human control.

To be sure, we hope and even attempt to reproduce those cycles, to produce linear momentum away from the here and now to greater and grander vistas of human ambition. Henry Adams (1918) conveys a glimpse of that sensibility in his autobiographical *Education*, offering an account of his visit to the 1900 Paris Exposition. We need not recall in too much detail the ways in which those modern fairs, starting in 1851 and culminating most recently, prior to the pandemic, in the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. In these grand phantasmagoria, we observe our efforts to galvanize natural forces toward human ends. Enraptured by the sparks of energy, the dazzling blaze of current, we behold visions of a bigger, brighter, better tomorrow. We wander their glittering boulevards, gazing upward at whatever technological wonders have been gathered for us, hopeful and awestruck. Such is the sense conveyed by Adams when he stared in rapt attention at the grand dynamos gathered in Paris:

> To Adams the dynamo became a symbol of infinity. As he grew accustomed to the great gallery of machines, he began to feel the forty-foot dynamos as a moral force, much as the early Christians felt the Cross. The planet itself seemed less impressive, in its old-fashioned, deliberate, annual or daily revolution, than this huge wheel revolving within arm’s reach at some vertiginous speeds, and barely

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

murmuring—scarcely humming an audible warning to stand a hair's-breadth further for respect to power. (p. 380).

Such power, though, no matter how carefully and expertly channeled by human hands, soon spins beyond our control. The straight line of human progress breaks past the horizon, for a while, only to be crushed by endless cycles of human misery. Even when we attempt to exploit those cycles, as is the case with Adams's dynamos, we are further broken by them. Smokestacks, symbolically but also in a material sense, churn hurricanes.[2] The resulting ruin draws outward then, not like a blade but like Yeats's turning gyre. We might then propose that to confound ruin is simply to mock its consequences, such as when some folks modify their diesel engines to emit noxious smoke. This performance of "rolling coal" is an anti-environmentalist statement that pokes at the coherence of doom-narratives. Confounding ruin would then appear as a production of marginal power, a space of agency within a place of fate. But that is far too simple an interpretation. To confound ruin is not only to co-found it; to confound ruin is to pierce its temporal enclosure, to inject its presence with the present.

This confounding process requires a perspective through which all time exists simultaneously as an enduring synchronicity of identities, possibilities, and obligations. To an extent, we practice this perspective already. Faulkner (1994) said as much when he wrote, "The past is never dead. It's not even past" (p. 73). Ponder for example the laudable practice of indigenous land acknowledgements that mark a territory occupied by multiple communities. It is one thing to solemnly utter that an aboriginal population once possessed this place. It is another thing entirely to *act* from that knowledge. From time to time we may practice a sort of double vision, layering memories upon the standpoints we presume to possess. There, glowing in the half-light of yesterday, stood a native dwelling, and there, in the further distance, their crops break the concrete of the present. Squint your eyes; you can almost see it. At the same time those peoples are relocated safely and permanently into a separate capsule of yesterday. All those yesterdays, all of those peoples, await us now in the containers of memory.

Think also about modern debates about the preservation of memorials to people who bought and enslaved other human beings. Some partisans hold that heritage does not necessarily construe hate, claiming that memory warns against the territory of our past sins. Such is a convenient fiction. It is a useful one too. Irish rock band U2 suggested as much when observing, "you glorify the past when the future dries up." Gradually we find that the distance between past and present often works to obscure the corollaries between present profits and past pains. We concentrate our attentions upon sculptures and statues as if we are surrounded only by figments of an otherwise distant

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

realm. Our choices to personify our yesterdays as ghosts, semiotic or otherwise, further allow our sins to haunt, but only from a distance.

Collapsing the distinctions between past and present, in contrast, allows us to haunt other times beyond our mortal limits. To confound ruin is to find gratification in the fissures, the slippages, the cracks, and the gaps of an otherwise monolithic incursion of threatening temporality. The confounding of ruin is a rhetoric of ambiguity that harkens, not quite to hope—for we cannot ever abandon our belief that, as the British new wave band The Fixx once sang, "one thing leads to another"—but at least to the pleasure we perceive when ruins are themselves shot through by opposition. Writing of Passaic, Smithson (2011) describes the essential contradiction of the town:

> Along the Passaic Riverbanks were many minor monuments such as concrete abutments that supported the shoulders of a new highway in the process of being built. River Drive was in part bulldozed and in part intact. It was hard to tell the new highway from the old road; they were both confounded into a unitary chaos. (p. 48)

This unitary chaos serves to explode the singular narrative, projecting us across multiple temporalities. Yes, inevitably, we who contemplate our ruins do so as mortal beings. Our deaths may not be undone. They have already occurred; they always will occur. At the same time, we may dream darkly of places of even the most totalizing destruction, places in which our choices are sealed as glass, the collapse of those walls that separate us from eternity.

Looking upon the darkened shadows of Hiroshima's Ato Genbaku dome, for example, perhaps while walking alongside Motoyasu River, one may glimpse those flickers of light, and those other fires too. Doing so, the tourist observes what Smithson (2011) terms the "holes" of some places: warping, carving transit spaces that are "the monumental vacancies that define, without trying, the memory-traces of an abandoned set of futures" (p. 49). In one future, Hiroshima was never struck with atomic fury; in another, Hiroshima portends the seas of flame that threatened to engulf the whole world; in still another future, Hiroshima came to occupy what we call the present. The confounded ruin, then, is the presence of these multiple trajectories. It is our response to the unforgettable fire, not to forget but to layer other memories upon the permanence of place.

A ruin thus composed works to unify of otherwise impossible contradictions. Smithson expounds upon this theme in his response to that most banal counterpoint to Hiroshima: '60s-era suburbanization. Once more we recall the heterotopian convergence of apparently oppositional narratives (town and country, discipline and resistance) and learn to read the ruin as a necessary

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 2.2. ***Ato Genbaku dome*. Photograph by Author**

counterpoint to the omnitopian continuum of ahistoricized environments. With some effort, we may perceive what Smithson terms ruins in reverse:

> This is the opposite of the "romantic ruin" because the buildings don't *fall* into ruin *after* they are built but rather rise as ruins before they are built. This anti-romantic *mise-en-scene* suggests the discredited idea of time and many other "out of date" things. But the suburbs exist without a rational past and without the "big events" of history. Oh, maybe there are a few statues, a legend, and a couple of curios, but no past—just what passes for a future. A Utopia minus a bottom, a place where the machines are idle, and the sun has turned to glass. . ." (Smithson, 2011, p. 49, emphasis in original)

We learn to read ruins onto places, as if we might project light onto a darkened building or, more to the point, how we might see darkness in the light. Doing so, we do not create ruins out of habit, and we do not fetishize relics out of faith. We confound the flow of things, damming the waters with stones hewn from the future, turning past and future into "a mirror and a reflection" (Smithson, 2011, p. 50). The author concludes his "suburban Odyssey" at a sand box, which, to him, calls to mind "a vast deposit of bones and stones pulverized into dust" (p. 51) and, more than that, the irreversibility of entropy. And he is correct. We cannot undo the arrow of time, even by rewinding the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

media we produce of its inexorable passage. What we can do, though, is stack past, present, and future within a singular frame of reference. Such is not a rhetoric of despair; such is a rhetoric of transcendence.

Aftermath offers such a confounding of ruin in its depiction of collapsed borders. Now that "nature is invading civilization's citadel," the towers of human confidence falling into disrepair, we become ruins. This is the means of our transcendence. To admit ruin into the human condition is to seek the convergence of built environment and natural processes, to blur linear projection and circular return so that past and future float within the same continuum:

> Once, glass-covered office towers symbolized the modern age. There was more glass in one skyscraper than all of the glass made during the Roman Empire. But most skyscrapers were built using caulk and metal clips to keep the windows in place. After thirty years, the clips are rusting. The caulking cracks. Water gets into the cracks and the frames get weak. The era of the gleaming skyscraper is ending.

The towers fall, all of them do, as does the *Things to Come* Age of Windows. But this is not our doom; this is our promise of what Mircea Eliade turned eternal return. For the confounding of barriers is the hope of our transcendence. So it is also with *Aftermath*'s depiction of animal life after humans. "Trapped in their cages, many of them will die. But those once contained by electric fences are prisoners no more. They finally break free." The collapse of the fence, once powered by human agency but no more, unleashes the forces of ruin that convey our species not forward to our doom but backward to our renewal.

To confound ruin, at last, is to drag from its premonition of our absence the raw material of our presence. In both realms, we must remember, though, *we* are raw material. Think, for example, about all of the digital detritus you shall leave upon your death, all of those emails, texts, social media posts, and other relics of our lives will persist beyond your years. Right now, this minute, reading these words, you walk among ruins, and your descendants (academic and otherwise) will provide fodder for as yet unknown investigators who will, in the lyrics of MC Frontalot, dig through your leavings like archeologists: "They'll glance you over, I guess, and then for a bare moment / you'll persist to exist; almost seems like you're there, don't it? / But you're not. You're here." Temporal tourism frees us from moral obligation, but only for now. Consider that clichéd defense frequently uttered by a person condemned for their past actions: "That is not who I am." Consider also the justification for inaction offered by one who procrastinates: "That's a problem for future-me."[3] These tactics, essentially "I am not now what I was then" and "I am

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

not now what I will be," are not simply a consequence of individual weaknesses; they signify struggles, generally failures, to disperse our perceptions into multiple "wavelength[s] of probability" (Gibson, 1988, p. 1). We work toward this end only to find ourselves returning to the foundational truth of our singular mortality. But when we confound our ruins we release from their barriers the simultaneity of temporality that reveals not only their persistence but also our own.

Conclusion

Departing our current inquiries, we recall three moves designed to produce a framework through which we may understand the odd satisfaction of ruination. We have surveyed the potential that to *create* ruin is to enable an epistemic position in which we become the authors of our fate by producing the picturesque frame that sets us within but also apart from the consequences of modernity. We then considered that to *curate* ruin is to produce some sense of order not despite but rather through the explosion of disorder. This gathering of relics enables us not only to stand apart from our doom but more importantly to carve at the homogeneity of the post-human plane and, doing so, elicit the possibility of multiple temporalities in which we might preserve ourselves. We then assessed the resulting power to *confound* ruin by dislocating its coherent trajectory of the present that leads ceaselessly toward the future, establishing within their fissures a rhetorical circularity that rouses not so much the hope of return or renewal but at least the distribution of our present lives across a perpetual continuum that we secretly hope to inhabit. Such is the illicit delight of that film that helped launch this chapter. What, we must ask, is *Fail Safe* without a belief, no matter how dubious, that we may turn back the gears that grind us into dust, to hope that we are safe from the ultimate failure? In a purely material sense, we cannot hope to undo entropy. All the more, then, we find refuge in the rhetoric of ruins.

NOTES

1. A short story appearing in a January 1953 issue of *If: Worlds of Science Fiction* inspired "Time Enough at Last."
2. I borrow this image from Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*.
3. As usual, we find a useful example in *The Simpsons* (Production code MABF18, Season 22, Episode 3) when Marge warns that Homer will one day regret not having spent time with his children. His oft-meme-ified reply: "That's a problem for future Homer. Man, I don't envy that guy."

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

3

American Carnage

We now turn from fantastical ruins, the apocalypses of comics, photography, television, and film, and toward the dream of doom for political purposes. We begin in May 2020, when the Lincoln Project, a political action committee organized by Republicans working to help thwart a second term by President Donald Trump, released a spot titled "Mourning in America." The video opens on a dismal key: a grim, gray panorama of Detroit that registers convenient visual shorthand for industrial decline, economic failure, and racial violence. The sickness of the city, as portrayed by producers of this spot, is intercut with images of pandemic fatalities wrapped in white sheets and being wheeled away by gurney. Numbers of the dead embody social ills: unemployment and the concordant collapse of Main Street. Houses in the background, their wooden banisters fallen, their windows caked with dust, their yards choked with weeds, solidify the message. An upside-down American flag signals distress, forlornly waving in soft breeze. The White House, set within a fortress of iron gates, transforms the viewer into a supplicant. An image of children's swings, wrapped in yellow caution tape, cuts to footage of masked medical personnel wheeling another person, alive for now, along a walkway that declines to the right. The spot concludes: "And now Americans are asking, if we have another four years like this, will there even *be* an America?" (emphasis in original).

This sixty-second video derives its power, at least somewhat, by rousing the memory of an older political spot: Hal Riney's "Prouder, Stronger, Better" spot, which was produced as part of President Ronald Reagan's 1984 reelection bid against Walter Mondale—and is colloquially referred to as "Morning in America." That counterpoint, and its associated slogan, has burrowed its way so deeply into American political discourse that one regularly expects it be cited at least in passing by at least one major Republican

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

candidate for national office, as illustrated by 2016 references made by Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz. While it would be inaccurate to suggest that this one spot cemented Reagan's victory, one may place this political ad within a larger constellation of applications designed to differentiate the incumbent from the economic, political, and spiritual "malaise" of the 1970s.

"Prouder" opens with a sunrise view of San Francisco, a city that once signified a terminus of the West before assuming a more reactionary association with the Left. Contributing a folksy voiceover, Riney assures the audience, "It's morning again in America." This is an important distinction from traditional accounts of the spot. Most folks tend to remember a simpler opening line: "It's morning in America." The addition of "again" is not incidental; it is essential to understanding the spot. As we will shortly see, the eternal return, borrowing once again from Mircea Eliade (1971), constitutes an essential component of this discourse, and to the rhetoric of ruins. Ruins offer evidence of entropy. As William Butler Yeats reminds us, things fall apart. The absence of ruin, though, while subject to imagination, cannot be perceived, lest even the slightest shimmering relic pierce the present with some alternative temporality. The invisibility of ruin, the eternal "morning," must eventually confront eternal "mourning." But for now we concentrate our efforts on the optimistic death of ruin.

Let us then study the manner in which the "Prouder" spot calls forth the values that warrant President Reagan's reelection. We begin with productive labor, epitomized by a boy hoisting the morning paper while riding his bicycle along a sidewalk in a leafy neighborhood. We see this vision further affirmed by a man crossing the boy's path, greeting an awaiting carpool. The man is going to work, joining a joyful America. Another of those values is an intersection of Christian faith and heteronormative marriage, conveyed by the montage of a Protestant wedding: a bride and groom, beaming faces looking upward, kissing with chaste decency in front of their families, running in slow motion through a cheerful gauntlet of tossed rice. Contributing to this cluster is the value of patriotism, identified with American flags—right-side up—waving in front of the Capitol Building, hoisted by a group of children; then, sent aloft by a firefighter; then, once more for good measure, by an older man. An additional unspoken but undeniably effective dimension to this ad is its racial homogeneity. In this mediated America, one can hardly visualize the presence of people who are not white. "Why," Riney concludes, "would we ever want to return to where we were less than four short years ago?"

This enthymematic technique, suggesting but not portraying ruin, mirrors the lack of diversity in "Prouder." White middle-class suburban voters, the kind that producers imagined would throng to a place like Petaluma, are free to fill the tableau with their own visions of urban desolation—a dystopian

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

continuum comprised of radicals, trade unionists, feminists, civil rights activists, and other malcontents—perhaps envisioning northeastern cities packed with racial and ethnic threats to their cherished ways of life. But the actual wreckage assured by one's vote for the opposition, at least as suggested by GOP-affiliated ad-makers, resides safely beyond the frame. We might presume that the reelection of President Reagan culminates a revolution so complete that even the name of the opposition, and the signs of its presence, are perfectly, "proudly," banished from public life.

"Mourning," among a range of political messages we investigate in this chapter, demonstrates a rhetoric of ruins that marshals scenes of decline and despair to motivate change in attitude and action. Articulating the mechanism of this appeal requires that we focus our attention somewhat more narrowly. Our present investigation identifies a Jeremiadic mode of persuasion that attempts to depict ruins as tools of public policy. The forthcoming analysis concentrates on three U.S. orations: Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1933 inaugural address, Jimmy Carter's 1979 "Energy and National Goals" address, and Donald Trump's 2017 inaugural address. But first we must better understand the Jeremiad in its own terms.

The American Jeremiad

When used as a genre of political discourse, the rhetoric of ruin constitutes a counterpoint to the rhetoric of progress that bends individual agency to collective will. In Aristotelian terms, the discursive ruin is epideictic in its concern with praise and blame, and in its reference to past and future vantage points from which one may appraise common values. As a rhetorical style, the ruin is obviously Jeremiadic in its lament of broken foundations and collapsed order, and, initially, in its promise of potential renewal. We see a literal correlation of Jeremiadic rhetoric and physical ruin in Lewis Mumford's critiques of suburban design (Ekman, 2016). Still, whether the application is literal or figurative, the goal is not simply to lament the present. The Jeremiad relies upon a rhetor's ability to renovate the past. As Murphy (2008) notes, the Jeremiad "is more than simply a litany of communal sins; it is crucial, rhetorically speaking, that there was a time prior to the onset of these national sins, a time of national moral and political health" (p. 94). Borrowing from Sacvan Bercovitch (1978), we encounter an *American* Jeremiad that transforms the fall into a call, an assurance that our mangled lives may be reformed so as long as we bind our individual behaviors to the common good.

Among other examples, Bercovitch uses John Winthrop's *Model of Christian Charity* to describe the American Jeremiad: a sermon that seeks to unify

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

a people by marking the struggle between ideal social life and its real manifestation.[1] The Jeremiad is named after the biblical lamentations of Jeremiah 2:21: "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" Of course, we don't seek to understand the Jeremiad strictly for its religious significance. We seek to understand the Jeremiad because of its role in the construction and critique of public life. Bercovitch contrasts the American Jeremiad with its European predecessor. The European Jeremiad depicted a static society condemned to fall perpetually from its mythic roots; it wailed from the pulpit and unleashed a torrent of guilt upon its audience. The American Jeremiad would respond to fate by adding the dimension of progress, the hope that public life can improve. Here we may recall those sermons of predestination that badgered and burned against human hubris, only to remind their audiences that the deity that made them will dispose of them according to a cosmic plan that makes no allowances from individual works. The American Jeremiad would posit the potential for revolution, the complete turn of the wheel that brings us back to our foundations, and to our liberation. Its European predecessor, in contrast, deprived its audiences of that freedom, but also of the obligation to act. What a dreadful prospect: the inability to change what has already been set in motion! What relief we may find in that ghastly circumstance, though. For in the moment the scene becomes the agent, leaving us to observe what remains of our choices: the choices that produced our remains.

This conservatism, one need hardly stress, bears little resemblance to what passes as political debate either in the United States or elsewhere. It is a more fundamental myth that calls an audience to commit itself, as a mass consciousness but also as a gathering of individuals, to the rites, rituals, and cosmic order of its culture. It is an entreaty that listeners, readers, and other participants find within their own souls, and their own actions, the cause of collective suffering. Murphy (1990) affirms this quality by noting, "[t]he Jeremiad deflects attention away from possible institutional or systemic flaws and toward considerations of individual sin" (p. 402). Yet as we will presently see, such an appeal, though initially compelling, may ultimately fail to sway contemporary audiences. Perhaps, we may surmise, a collapse in confidence that progress may be attained might return us to a pre-American Jeremiad, one that replaces the linear eschatology with a pre-modern circularity in which individual responsibility may be abandoned. In such a circumstance, the rhetoric of ruin is not simply an assemblage of wreckage, either of cities or bodies or souls, but is instead an assertion that individual responsibility has become obsolete.

To advance that argument is to accept a challenge to all students of genre, that we ought not confuse criticism with classification. Genre, whatever its

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

kind, "is an aspect of critical method, not a critical method in and of itself" (Fisher, 1980, p. 299). Our goal then is not only to enumerate examples of ruin discourse but more meaningfully to trace a trajectory of U.S. speeches whose varied articulations of agency indicate not so much a chronology but at least a means of evaluation. We will begin with an account of Franklin Roosevelt's performance of the Jeremiad to signify the work needed to overcome economic depression.

Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address

When Franklin Roosevelt addressed the nation on March 4, 1933, he spoke before a nation fully engulfed in a state of economic depression sufficiently dire enough to shake the foundations of the American experiment. A combination of stock market speculation and ill-conceived protectionism contributed to a cascade of market plunge, bank failure, and mass unemployment that would not be resolved for nearly a decade. One speech could hardly hope to ameliorate those woes. An alphabet soup of federal policies, augmented by local and state initiatives, helped produce economic recovery. Nonetheless, Roosevelt's assertion that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance"—a phrase likely borrowed from Roosevelt's reading of Henry David Thoreau, itself an adaptation from Michel de Montaigne—contributed greatly to a sense of American renewal.

An exemplar of epideictic address, Roosevelt's oration epitomizes many aspects of the presidential inaugural genre. Campbell and Jamieson (1985) outline five qualities: An inaugural speech should constitute its audience as a "people," recall past values to contextualize present circumstances, outline a coherent set of political principles, assuage concerns about executive overreach, and achieve its ceremonial purposes while "urging contemplation not action" (p. 396). To this point, Daughton (1993) offers a productive response, observing that Roosevelt's first Inaugural veered from conventions of the genre, proposing immediate and direct action: a departure from tradition that he terms a "temporary departure from that normal balance of public procedure." Daughton adds that Roosevelt's oration may be read though the metaphoric framework of a Holy War, demanding that listeners not "retreat" but to instead advance "lines of attack" "as a trained and loyal army" determined "not to be ministered unto but to minister."

Once more we are reminded of the futility that follows efforts to force a framework upon our text. The goal here is not to advance the notion that Roosevelt's first Inaugural must be strictly read as a Jeremiad. It is enough to recognize the orator's contrast between the present challenges wrought by

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

"generation of self-seekers" and the spiritual foundation of "our forefathers" who "conquered because they believed and were not afraid," of the "old and permanently important manifestation of the American spirit of the pioneer." The larger ambition of this analysis is to read Roosevelt's evocation of ruin as justification for political and spiritual transformation that, despite its apparently radical nature, derives its authority by cyclical return to original values.

Roosevelt's oration cites a litany of practical woes that await political resolution clothed in a combination of martial and spiritual redress. Economic values, as is well known by his audience, are down; taxes are rising, yet government coffers are increasingly bare. What's worse, though, is the utter senselessness of this plight. The nation's economic despair is not, the president argues, caused by structural or natural fault but is rather manufactured by greed and shortsightedness. Roosevelt castigates the "money changers" who are, he says, liable for this plight. Despite the bounty of nature and the capabilities of a dedicated workforce, "the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side."

This phrase, "withered leaves," brings to mind the decay of nature amid the torrent of human suffering but also signifies the eternal return. It comes from the Book of Isaiah's warning of God's anger and impending judgment, a reminder that the Old Jerusalem must suffer the penalty for its wickedness and idolatry before the New Jerusalem may be established. Prior to that glorious return, Isaiah prophesizes, "all the starry host will fall / like withered leaves from the vine" (34:4). Once the people come through that cleansing fire, will vanquish all nations, they will be redeemed. Republican orator Robert G. Ingersoll cites a similar act of judgment in his 1876 "Vision of War" address. In that speech, Ingersoll lays the deaths of Civil War soldiers, cut by bullet, shattered by shell, their lives "ebbing slowly away among the withered leaves," not upon the alter of God but upon the alter of a civic religion (Stob, 2016, p. 293). Speaking from an agnostic point of view, Ingersoll prophesizes that memories of those honored dead will win a political, not religious, rebirth of freedom. William Butler Yeats too evokes the withering of leaves, not for political purposes but as a necessary predecessor to human transcendence over material things. In his 1898 essay "The Autumn of the Body," Yeats describes ways in which artists and poets have begun turning away from exterior details to interior sensibilities, reflecting an existential rot produced by an ironic human victory over nature:

> Man has wooed and won the world, and has fallen weary, and not, I think, for a time, but with a weariness that will not end until the last autumn, when the stars shall be blown away like withered leaves.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Yeats's withered leaves align with the decline in human attachment to "everything that smacks of trade, industrialism or modernity": a symbol of "languorous and decadent apocalypticism" (Armstrong, 2014, p. 34). In a similar manner, T. S. Eliot describes a crisis of the everyday. In his *Preludes*, Eliot calls us to contemplate "[t]he grimy scraps / Of withered leaves about your feet." This world of monotony, of soulless modernity, is "devoid of real life" (Post, 1970, p. 206). Yet we may find some hope amid the gloom, maybe when we sense the power of the dead to bring forth *new* life. Parrish (1936) explains as much, recalling how Percy Bysshe Shelley exclaims in his "Ode to the West Wind," "Drive my dead thoughts over the universe / Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!" Originating knowingly or unknowingly from many of these ideas, from Shelley's Romanticist hope to Eliot's modernist lament, Roosevelt demonstrates how the roots of the inaugural framework erect human activities upon deeper foundations.

Clearly we read some rebuke of pride in Roosevelt's withered leaves. Yet we also detect an argument concerning the intrusion of the industrial machine into American garden (Aden, 1994). The machine, needless to say, is not organic. Roosevelt adapts an earlier passage in Isaiah (33:4) to confirm that America faces no "plague of locusts." The modern machine, he says, is a construction of wicked men. Its danger is not in its design but in its ascension, from mortal tool to deistic power. Roosevelt reminds his audience that such power, the industrial marshaling of selfish economic interest, ought not beguile us. The turning of Henry Adams's dynamo, just like the widening of Yeats's gyre, cannot be confused with organic forces that reside across and beyond human history. The machinations of human agency continue to be subject to the will of God.

The turning point to Roosevelt's address, though, is his affirmation that the collectivity of *human* will, guided by heavenly judgment, can set things aright. This is the irony of his speech, his statement that a new holy machine will beat back the vices of the old. "We," he affirms, "may now restore that temple to the ancient truths." The way forward, Roosevelt explains, requires an articulation of U.S. democracy, what Roosevelt terms "essential democracy" (a phrase he would use in his second and fourth inaugural addresses), that secures individual freedom through "national unity." From this perspective, "pride of place" and "personal profit" become affixed not only to the "selfish wrongdoing" of crooked bankers and stock market speculators but also to any American unwilling to heed the collective call. "Hand in hand," Roosevelt advocates, American citizens will reform their institutions. An "overbalance of industrial population" will be subject to "redistribution," relief efforts will be "unif[ied]"; and transportation, utilities, banking, and other sectors will be subject to "national planning" and "strict supervision."

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

In these utterances, Roosevelt rightly summons the fear of government outreach. And indeed, Roosevelt's New Deal, his attempts to pack the Supreme Court, and his choice to hold onto office beyond a second term will conjure references to an Imperial Presidency that could not be realized by the likes of Nixon or Trump. Even so, confronting economic collapse, recognizing the real possibility that the Republic is destined for the ash heap of history, Roosevelt reads within his audience a willingness to interpret an expansion of federal power not as a breaking of national covenant but as the only means to saving it. Such a transformation requires nothing less than a militarization of public life:

> If I read the temper of our people correctly, we now realize as we have never realized before our interdependence on each other; that we can not merely take but we must give as well; that if we are to go forward, we must move as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice for the good of a common discipline, because without such discipline no progress is made, no leadership becomes effective. We are, I know, ready and willing to submit our lives and property to such discipline, because it makes possible a leadership which aims at a larger good. This I propose to offer, pledging that the larger purposes will bind upon us all as a sacred obligation with a unity of duty hitherto evoked only in time of armed strife.

This, then, is the role of ruin in political discourse: the conjuring of crisis so immense and so seemingly intractable than nothing but collective will, armed by self-sacrifice and vast executive power, can hope to respond.

Subsequent addresses by Roosevelt would draw even more deeply from this reservoir. In his September 6, 1936, fireside chat, he would convey to his listeners the grim despair of Dust Bowl America:

> I shall never forget the fields of wheat so blasted by heat that they cannot be harvested. I shall never forget field after field of corn stunted, earless and stripped of leaves, for what the sun left the grasshoppers took. I saw brown pastures [that] would not keep a cow on fifty acres.

While allowing for the complexity of the challenge, of the distinctly individual solutions that would need to be implemented—some approaches here, others there—Roosevelt would return to his theme of unification, affirming the need for common struggle:

> All American workers, brain workers and manual workers alike, and all the rest of us whose well-being depends on theirs, know that our needs are one in building an orderly economic democracy in which all can profit and in which all can

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> be secure from the kind of faulty economic direction which brought us to the brink of common ruin seven years ago.

When delivering his second Inaugural on January 20, 1937, the President, despite four years of gradual departure from Depression's depths, would observe, "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." Once more he would remind his audience that social ruin demands social order: "In our personal ambitions we are individualists," he would say, "But in our seeking for economic and political progress as a nation, we all go up, or else we all go down, as one people."

Subsequent speeches, responding to differing exigencies, would shift away from ruin to renewal, and then to American response the emergence of fascism. In all these cases, we might think a bit about Roosevelt's audience, imagining those battered families of Americans in teeming tenements and farming towns and on windswept prairies, gathering around a radio, a dim yellow light glowing in the gloom, harkening to Roosevelt's patrician vocalism, that strangely chipper Mid-Atlantic dialect. We hear the darkness cut by those scratches and crackles of a distant broadcast signal. And for a moment we might project ourselves to that tableau as we turn the knob that tightens before relenting to a click. It is a romantic image, Roosevelt's radiated voice in the darkness, one surely complicated by memories of those who may still yet recall hearing his orations in the real and more complex circumstances of their lives. One finds in such a moment some sense of ruin discourse: its potential to transform the gloom into a call for a peculiar sense of agency.

Carter's Energy and National Goals Address to the Nation

While Jimmy Carter's inaugural address sought to meet the unique exigency of his time, to mark the turning of American executive power from an administration tainted by his predecessor's pardon of Richard Nixon, it also previewed a vision of America's role in the world that would be marked less by lofty ambition and more by responsible limits. It was that spirit that inspired his words, "I have no new dream to set forth today, but rather urge a fresh faith in the old dream." Yet it was not that address for which Carter is most known. History records instead a more consequential address, delivered on July 15, 1979, in which President Carter sought to renew his country's determination to confront an energy crisis produced by a combination of deregulation and declining production at home and efforts by oil producing countries, most notably Iran, to challenge U.S. foreign policy. Recognizing the rising frustration of Americans waiting in lengthy lines to gas up their cars, a shock reminiscent of the 1973–1974 Oil Embargo launched by members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, Carter

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

initially announced plans to address the nation on July 5, but chose instead to cancel that speech and depart for Camp David for ten days of deliberation, a "Domestic Summit" of experts and advisors, but also, in Carter's words, "teachers and preachers, governors, mayors, and private citizens." While most of Carter's inner circle anticipated a detailed discussion of economic and political responses to the crisis, pollster Patrick Caddell inspired Carter to connect America's oil woes with a "Crisis of Confidence" (Strong, 1986). The resulting oration would be labeled the "malaise" speech.

This is a misnomer. Though Carter did indeed note an American "crisis of confidence," the word "malaise" did not appear once in his address. That word, which would hang around the president's neck throughout the rest of his career, arose from the conversational shorthand shared by participants in the Domestic Summit. Writing in the *Washington Post* (July 10, 1979), Martin Schram and Edward Walsh cited Carter advisor Clark Clifford's observation that the president "had the feeling that the country was in a mood of widespread national malaise" (p. A1). On the day of the speech, *Washington Post* staff writer David Broder (July 15, 1979) anticipated that Carter would address what "he sees as a malaise in the country—declining confidence in the future and distrust of leaders and institutions" (p. A1). Prior to the speech, an unsigned editorial in the same issue of the *Washington Post* confirmed, "The President has made malaise a household word" ("Changing," July 15, 1979, p. E6). Once more, Carter did not use that word in his speech. But by the time reporters had repeated Clark Clifford's summary of the president's attitude enough, the word "malaise" was inextricably tied to his character. The speech that Carter delivered on Sunday, July 15, 1979, would bear the weight of America's collective exhaustion and frustrations, about the energy crisis, but also about Watergate, Vietnam, and fears that the nation was no longer able to manage its destiny.

Offering a turning point, President Carter delivered a much more purely Jeremiadic oration than most members of his audience could recall from a political figure. In his address, Carter would draw from his personal faith and Southern Baptist upbringing, applying Caddell's call that the president confronting the challenges of the day would need to conduct a personal inventory of his sins and frankly seek the help of the audience he would hope to lead. The speech was a stunning turn from previous efforts to assuage American doubts by promising new policies and affirming a new vision. Carter's address would instead call for renewal not just in energy but in humility. Writing in the *Washington Post*, Edward Walsh described Carter as a "crusading evangelist" delivering a "sermon" in "moralistic tones" (p. A1). As we shall shortly see, that sermon advocates for another form of Holy War, one quite different than the manner espoused by Franklin Roosevelt. This war

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

would enlist individual Americans to critique their own choices and rethink their personal behaviors.

Carter's Jeremiad begins in a nontraditional way, with a collection of quotations from those who participated in his Domestic Summit, along with other messages he received prior to delivering his address. A common theme to those quotations, at least in his initial selection, is to critique Carter's leadership, generally observing that he has failed to meet the challenge of his era: "Mr. President," he reads, "you are not leading this nation—you're just managing the government." Carter then selects other quotes that connect the failings of his presidency to the grim circumstances afflicting the nation. "Mr. President, we are confronted with a moral and a spiritual crisis." The problem, Carter emphasizes, is epitomized by the energy crisis, but it is hardly limited to that plight. America, Carter states, faces a "crisis of confidence," a threat to the American secular religion: the faith that life will steadily improve from past to future. "We've always believed in something called progress," Carter says, "We've always had a faith that the days of our children would be better than our own." The American ruin, in this argument, is caused by American selfishness:

> In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-knit communities, and our faith in God, too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns. But we've discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning. We've learned that piling up material goods cannot fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose. The symptoms of this crisis of the American spirit are all around us. For the first time in the history of our country a majority of our people believe that the next five years will be worse than the past five years. Two-thirds of our people do not even vote. The productivity of American workers is actually dropping, and the willingness of Americans to save for the future has fallen below that of all other people in the Western world. As you know, there is a growing disrespect for government and for churches and for schools, the news media, and other institutions. This is not a message of happiness or reassurance, but it is the truth and it is a warning.

Responding to this crisis, Carter recalls a phrase from an April 18, 1977, speech, his assertion that America's response to its energy crisis requires nothing less than the "Moral Equivalent of War." As James Reston (April 20, 1977) wrote in *The New York Times*, comparing Carter's "latest fireless-side chat" less than favorably to Roosevelt's brand of oratory, Carter was borrowing from William James who, while decrying military conflict wondered why humankind could not use martial means to solve the problems of peacetime. In his "Crisis of Confidence" address, Carter would use that

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

phrase once more, this time to castigate his own lack of progress: "When we enter the moral equivalent of war," one of his critics tells him, "don't issue us BB guns." The president would advocate for warlike response to the energy crisis, referring to the "battlefield of energy," comparing his proposed energy security corporation and his proposed energy mobilization board to the sorts of entities that helped secure victory in World War II. Buoyed by that example, Carter affirms: "I firmly believe that we have the national will to win this war."

This national will, borrowing so much from the Second World War, drafts his audience to conduct a personal inventory and to change their ways. The "self-indulgence" decried by Roosevelt is not, Carter emphasizes, simply a matter of "money changers"; these sins are committed by all of his listeners, certainly those who seek meaning in consumption rather than conservation, avoid the responsibilities of their franchise, and disrespect their national institutions. To these people, Carter calls for a personal ethic of sacrifice:

> I'm asking you for your good and for your nation's security to take no unnecessary trips, to use carpools or public transportation whenever you can, to park your car one extra day per week, to obey the speed limit, and to set your thermostats to save fuel. Every act of energy conservation like this is more than just common sense; I tell you it is an act of patriotism.

Carter's address, bolstered by dour vocalism and dramatic fist-pounding, which was largely dismissed as "artificial" (Hahn, 1984, p. 279), diverges from Roosevelt's Jeremiad, imagining an America of individuals, not an army of soldiers, a nation defined by personal decisions and suffering the consequences of personal pleasures.

The public, at first, responded favorably to the speech. After observing that an estimated audience of 100 million watched the speech and subsequently registered increased support in the Carter presidency, Adam Clymer, writing in *The New York Times* (July 18, 1979) concluded, "[p]lainly, the public accepted Mr. Carter's stress on a 'crisis of confidence'" (p. A1). Writing in Canada's *Globe and Mail*, Lawrence Martin (July 18, 1979) cited administration officials' conclusions that the speech marked a "turning point" for the Carter administration. Carter himself would term it one of his best (Mattson, 2010). Yet his call for American sacrifice amid diminished capacities would eventually sour in the American judgment. And both Ted Kennedy and Ronald Reagan would compare their campaigns to Carter's malaise, promising that they and not the incumbent could realize the eternal nature of American optimism. Carter would suffer a crushing defeat in 1980, and so would presidential appeals to sacrifice for the greater good. The American ruin, two

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

generations later, would serve as staging ground for a return to a people, not defined by individual responsibilities but by collective action.

Trump's Inaugural Address

We turn now to a more recent example of political discourse that demonstrates the power of ruin. The overarching purpose of this effort, one hopefully can confirm to this point, is not to advance a partisan argument or polemic but more simply to continue an analytical transference from polemical media portrayals to more practical applications. We therefore begin with his January 20, 2017, inauguration, a moment steeped in tension. When Trump took to the podium to address the nation, he understood his obligation to suture himself into the American narrative, having failed to secure the popular vote and representing to a swath of the public a threat to democracy. Thus he reminded his audience of the ritual of this moment, this "orderly and peaceful transfer of power," affirming its comfortingly regular occurrence. Neither he nor his listeners could foresee the disorder that would engulf the United States toward the end of his term: a pandemic that, for some people, would pit apparently public health against individual liberty, and social upheaval sparked by police actions that appeared more like murder than dispassionate application of the law. Audience members shivering in the drizzle that morning in 2017 could hardly conceive the assaults to come. But the speaker was prepared for struggle.

An essential component of that struggle lay primarily in the clash that his presidency came to mean: a clash of values between "the elites" and "the people." While a full exploration of this conflict resides beyond the scope of our present analysis, one may reasonably observe its perpetual presence within those democratic societies that praise, at least in a ritualistic manner, the rights of the common person to possess and protect wisdom traditions that ought not be dismantled by so-called experts. This is an ancient conflict: between philosophers and sophists, between oracles and audiences, between clergy and parishioners, between specialists and amateurs. Susman (1980) illustrates one manifestation of this dichotomy in 1939 and 1940 seasons of the New York World's Fair that marked a clash between the "planners" and the "people." The planners, government officials, corporate boosters, and urban planning experts laid out a framework for the World of Tomorrow, a road built in what David Gelernter (1995) would label an age of authority. In a related manner, we see a divide in the political narratives of Franklin Roosevelt and Donald Trump.

While Roosevelt, from his first Inaugural onward, asserted the power of government and its association with the public interest to advance the public

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

good, Trump advanced the Reaganesque rejoinder that government, at least the kind caricatured by American elites, is the cause, not the solution, to American problems. The newly inaugurated president would state:

> For too long, a small group in our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished, but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered, but the jobs left, and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country. Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs; and while they celebrated in our nation's Capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land. That all changes, starting right here, and right now, because this moment is your moment: it belongs to you.

In some ways this argument illustrates an odd appropriation of radical discourse: a Conservative politician employing the raised fist, a display once associated with the Black Power movement, and attacking the so-called Establishment. But the deeper point here is an assessment of Trump's choice to rally ruin as an appeal not to government intervention but to populist revolution.

Trump's speech would subsequently earn the informal sobriquet "American Carnage." It was, perhaps more purely than any preceding inaugural, a Jeremiad. To Mattson (2017) Trump's inaugural suggested the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch (para. 3). To Landler (2017), the speech suggested a "Mad Max-like dystopia" (p. A15) that was, in Rowland's (2019) terms "wildly at odds with the actual state of the nation" (p. 368). We see this technique most obviously in the oft-cited section that follows an assertion of goals shared by the "forgotten men and women of our country," folks who want "great schools," "safe neighborhoods," and "good jobs." Following this modest proposal, Trump releases a fusillade of doom:

> These are just and reasonable demands of righteous people and a righteous public. But for too many of our citizens a different reality exists: Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an education system flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of all knowledge; and the crime and the gangs and the drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential. This American carnage stops right here and stops right now.

Trump's image of factories, corroded and in disrepair, littering the national landscape, serves as both memorial and monument to a moribund economy.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Here we survey the "rusted out factory" as a "tombstone" of American industry. As a memorial, the factory provides an opportunity to remember. It is proof against oblivion, an entreaty that worthy people, causes, and events shall not be lost to time. As monument, the factory works to remind. It works to admonish against error and to inspire toward action. A material epideictic, the tombstone factory conveys a populist agency that shifts power from a person to "the people." As such, the ruined factory illustrates what landscape and cultural historian J. B. Jackson (1980) described as an American shift from hortatory structures and performances that evoke a particular person or event to prescribe a specific attitude or behavior, as epitomized by Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, toward more vernacular mementos, such as the Gettysburg battlefield (and now, Gettysburg National Park).

This latter site, undoubtedly impressive and meaningful in its way, does not possess the instructive power of the traditional site; it does not point to heroic figures set apart for their remarkable achievements and sacrifices. It rather indexes an assemblage of ordinary people, their names less important than their broadly accessible transmission of viewers toward a populist golden age, "the chronicle of everyday existence" (Jackson, 1980, p. 95). So too the factory does not serve to memorialize a particular person, or even a people; it works instead as a monument read by the present audience: a reminder and a warning that they must return to an older era, that they must, in Trump's terms (and Reagan's, and to a certain extent, all Jeremiahs), "Make America Great Again."

To explain this phenomenon, Jackson differentiates a *covenant* approach toward history, one in which the production of order and meaning appears with the formation of a contract between deity and humankind, and an *evolutionary* approach through which cosmic order emerges from the beginning of time, not as an imposition but instead as an unchanging reality that has somehow been forgotten. Jackson proposes that the nineteenth century marked an American shift from covenant to evolution (correlated at least somewhat with some acceptance of evolutionary thinking in science). Yet that evolution is not a process of gradual progression; it is a series of ruptures that, by their breakages between present and past, rouse the return to the golden age. In this way, ruins "provide the incentive for restoration, and for a return to originals" (p. 102). Pointing not to a specific history but instead to a simpler time, ruins become the sites through which humankind participates in the godly act of redemption.

The redemption of American industry promised by the president requires that his audience be inclined, or persuaded, to look beyond present circumstances, such as the period of economic growth that had begun following the 2007–2009 Great Recession. The speaker in this case, then, required the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

ruins of Detroit and Gary and Scranton and all of the other Rust Belt cities that linger as rusting tombstones to the narrative of U.S. industrial might. As signs not of particular persons but as "a people," these sites enable a different form of enthymematic reasoning that demonstrated by the Morning [again] in America spot. They are present, vividly so, in the American imagination. But they are not marked with particular identities. Their lack of demographic peculiarities allow all audience members to place themselves amongst the ruins, to project themselves against that decline, and to see themselves as co-producers of a new age.

Our analysis suggests the emergence of a variety of populist Jeremiad that animates an authoritarian dimension of the American character. This claim, naturally, requires a certain degree of unpacking. First, we may fairly propose that American rhetoric attempts a convergence of seemingly opposing values, the Oceangoing Puritan and the Frontier Pioneer. The Puritan crosses the treacherous waves of the Atlantic on an "errand into the wilderness" (Miller, 1956). Sailing aboard a small craft amid a fractious community, the Puritan accepts the command that they should be joined together as one body. The blood that moves that body, being a peculiar convergence of love and wealth, justifies an American order built upon a vision that all, despite their separate stations, will survive or perish on the same boat. The frontier pioneer, on the other hand, departs the shore in small groups, sometimes alone, heading west toward the rapidly closing frontier portrayed by Frederick Jackson Turner (1921). This portion of the American mind suggests an urge, a demand, that the self be freed from communal cares and civilized constraints. Yet the crashing of the waves echoes in the ear of the Pioneer, just as the promise of the open frontier fills the heart of the Puritan. Departing European Jeremiads, whose eternal circularities revealed no hope for new formation from reformation, conveys a uniquely American mode of populism.

Such American populism tacks between the mandates of self and society, of push and pull that, like the material and mythical locomotive, enables an ironic mode of control. This technique turns away from the formal Jeremiad illustrated by Murphy (1990) who describes Robert Kennedy's response to the assassination of Martin Luther King less as a call for national transformation and more as a demand for personal accountability. In such a Jeremiad, the audience is refocused "away from possible flaws in the covenant itself, such as institutionalized racism, and toward the failure of individuals to live out the appropriate values" (p. 409). In that Jeremiad, each audience member must look within their hearts to seek out and dismantle their own personal sin. The populist Jeremiad, however, calls for no particular person to repair the vernacular ruin. Borrowing from Kenneth Burke, the "people" instead, freed from individual guilt, may act more easily and more speedily to conduct

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

the labor of repair. This "people" is freed from individual agency and filled with collective purpose. The wreckage they will restore to earlier greatness, whether Roosevelt's "withered leaves of industrial enterprise" or Trump's "factories scattered like tombstones," becomes a field of possibility, a field of dreams, engineered by an organic machine.

Such a device produces an authoritarianism that lacks the uniformity of its European predecessors, while not necessarily eschewing its capacity for violence. This locomotive would be cast out from the original garden, as it was when U.S. founders declared independence from British rule. Slowly, hidden for a time, gradually apparent, the machine erects itself among those Arcadian hills. It is justified not by hope but by fear as those ruins, those wreckages of military misadventure, economic turmoil, political intrigue, and social decay, pile themselves up. Seemingly all at once, the rhetoric of American Carnage demands a collectivity that looks like populism but is in fact impossible to distinguish from fascism. This device does not turn with the locomotive wheel or the dynamo battery; it is a device constructed by individual choices to abandon the hope of agency, to submit to common purpose whose authorship becomes a mirror of the mass.

Conclusion

With this chapter we conclude part I of *A Rhetoric of Ruins*, already charting a course away from those Disneyesque Great Big Beautiful Worlds of Tomorrow, and from those apocalyptic remnants of yesterday's burnt out cities as well. Already we have seen a practical deployment of rhetorical ruins on left and right wings of the American political scene. A tendency on both poles is for the threat of wreckage to transform peoples into armies: the means through which individual leaders may fade into the background, leaving machines alone to march toward the future. This, despite the most dire justifications and best intentions, is nothing less than the ruin of democracy. But that does not constrain the subject of this book. Along with those considerations, we also hope to understand the strange and beguiling pleasures of abandoned values now transformed into places. To explore these environs, both as tourists and as readers of the touristic impulse, we will concentrate first on three economic ghost towns in the United States before turning to international destinations of despair.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

NOTE

1. This paragraph is taken nearly verbatim from online lecture notes I composed for students in my COMM 149: Rhetoric and Public Life course.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

4

Bodie's Ghostly Gaze

For a ghost town, Bodie boasts a swell souvenir shop. Stepping into the Miner's Union Hall, tourists can select from books, videos, t-shirts, postcards and other trinkets to commemorate their visits to a largely abandoned gold mining town now transformed into a heritage site by the state of California.[1] Tourists can also purchase a license plate frame that reads, "Good bye God!

Figure 4.1. Western View of Bodie on Green Street. Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

I'm going to Bodie." The phrase recalls an oft-cited story of a girl who supposedly uttered a variation of that epitaph in the 1870s after learning that her family was departing the relative comfort of their home for the wind-swept, sin-soaked mining town. After Western newspapers reported the girl's pitiable story, Bodie's town boosters (and a few wags) suggested that her words

Figure 4.2. Arrested Decay at Bodie. Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

had been unfaithfully transcribed. According to one account, the girl actually said, "Good, by God! I'm going to Bodie" (Russell, 1927, p. 89). It's a humorous anecdote, which is almost surely hokum (DeLyser, 1998, p. 2). Still, journalists, scholars, park rangers, and more than a few of the estimated 200,000 tourists who visit Bodie State Historic Park each year retell the story to describe Bodie's reputation for hard labor, brutal weather, and unremitting violence.

Located northeast of Yosemite National Park near the California border with Nevada, Bodie is named after W. S. Bodey (sometimes spelled "Body" in period newspapers), a tin-manufacturer-turned-prospector lured West by fantastic stories of the California gold rush.[2] While Bodey did not live to see the town that would take a variation of his name, other prospectors arrived to carve out a rough settlement. The first veins played out quickly, leaving many to depart for better prospects in nearby Aurora and Virginia City. But an accidental discovery of gold and silver ore in 1876 reenergized the region, yielding the clang of pickaxes and wallop of stamp mills that echoed through the hills. The find transmuted Bodie's tattered tents into a boomtown, which attracted a population of an estimated 10,000 people at the height of the bonanza. Then, almost as quickly as it arose, the boom went bust and Bodie became a ghost town. Only an estimated 5 percent of the original buildings stand today.

Now maintained by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Bodie's properties reside in a state of "Arrested Decay," in which caretakers do not seek to revitalize the structures but rather work to keep them upright. Anders (2006) explains: "Scraps of 19th-century tin cans, beaten flat until they closely resemble miners' original metal shingles, stop leaks in roofs. Broken windows make way for hand-poured glass from Germany, which provides the wavy, bubbly look of Bodie's original panes" (p. 1). The leftover presence of furniture, decorations, utensils, advertisements, and other artifacts are meant to be unchanged, not from Bodie's boomtown days but rather from when California purchased the town in 1962. Tourists gaze upon these mementos for a range of motives, some searching for sanctuary in what Browne (1999) terms "the enclaves of history" (p. 186) but most seeking connections between past and present. "Where did the inhabitants go?" many tourists ask. "Why did they leave so quickly?"[3] These questions, never fully resolved, provide some insight into the transformation of this ghost town into a tourist site.

In this chapter, I invite the inclusion of Bodie as a locale that contributes to an already fruitful conversation about the communicative power of memorials, monuments, and museums: sites of public memory that call upon performances of the past to comment upon, and potentially transform, visitors'

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

perceptions of the present. To better understand this potential, I visited Bodie on three occasions, in 2010, 2012, and 2018, collecting interviews, photographs, and field notes. In 2019, I followed up on these visits by convening an online focus group with members of the "Friends of Bodie" Facebook community. From those travels and conversations, I found myself drawn to a hauntological perspective that interprets the ruins of Bodie as a site reified more by absence than by presence. This approach allows me to complicate typical notions of authenticity through an articulation of two touristic practices: overlapping temporality and recursive gaze. The analysis that follows unfolds in two stages. First I explore Bodie's affirmation of authenticity through its visitors' personal encounters with the mortality of the town's missing inhabitants. The materiality of these encounters, more than the traditional symbolicity found in most other museal environments, signals a sense of verisimilitude, the promise that Bodie is indeed a "real" ghost town. Thereafter I complicate Bodie's brand of authenticity by identifying how its curators' efforts to rouse the ghosts of the past actually work to destabilize the ontological security of its present viewers. While this complication may at first appear to be unsettling, I ultimately hold that tourists transform the town's ontological instability into a performance of recursive gaze whose pleasures enable a perceptual management of overlapping temporalities, particularly as visitors project themselves among the ghosts of Bodie. I will investigate this process in due course. But first, we should uncover the theoretical framework that animates this chapter in more specific detail.

Approaching Bodie/Bodies: Summoning the Ghosts of the Present

We begin with a basis of unsettled authenticity by first noting a tendency of many tourists (and at least a few academics) to affirm the validity of truth-claims that are couched within the appearance of institutional or professional apparatuses. Entering authorized spaces of public memory, we evince consent to the disciplinary knowledge of experts, to the pedigrees of their training and the tidiness of their taxonomies (Murphy, 2005, p. 71). How else shall we know for certain that "George Washington Slept Here?" A sign may say so, but so what? More troubling, though, is another question: How much do we really care? A guilty truth of the touristic impulse, particularly in the Age of Instagram, is that many of us do not peer too deeply past the placard to share the legitimacy of our discovery. When collecting our souvenirs and posting our photos, many of us find it sufficient to trust the historian, the curator, and the professional, even the person at the register, to confirm that *this* is indeed the place, "that this particular past really happened" (Dickinson, Ott, & Aoki, 2005, p. 90). Such ontological certainty, a belief in the fixed nature of things,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

allows us to divide truth from falsehood and to place ourselves among the ranks of those who know.

This value (and possibility) of authenticity, I hasten to add, has long been unsettled in academic discourse. Boorstin (1992, p. 79) famously inveighed against the artificiality of most tourist practices, dismissing pseudo-events and pseudo-places. In response MacCannell (1973) proposed that tourists are not as easily fooled as their critics might hypothesize: "None of the accounts in my collection support Boorstin's contention that tourists want superficial, contrived experiences. Rather, tourists demand [at least a perceived sense of] authenticity, just as Boorstin does" (p. 600). Within the field of communication studies, though, one observes a tendency to distrust assertions of authenticity, or at least an effort to unpack the means of its construction.[4] King (2006) emphasizes that authenticity, for all its presumption toward some philosophical form of truth, is "a rhetorical practice" (p. 248). Here we may grasp authenticity as a struggle to define the reality of our physical and social environments, not as objective reality, but rather as productions and performances that are subject to the vagaries of human will.

The fraught nature of authenticity becomes even more pronounced when we come to associate this value less with textual accuracy and more with corporeal consequence. Such a move first emerges from a broader transformation in the field of communication studies: the shift in our reading of rhetoric from symbolic to material. To illustrate the principle of rhetoric-as-symbolic, we might recall Foss's (1986) reading of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a site whose fundamental symbolicity enabled a potentially efficacious mode of ambiguity. Flexible denotation could potentially avoid questions of authenticity altogether. Despite the germinal quality of Foss's analysis, this approach drew critique from Blair and colleagues. Initially their critique held that, contrary to Foss's claim, the Memorial does indeed advance a political standpoint (Blair, Jeppeson, & Pucci Jr., 1991, p. 275). Certainly we ought not interpret this move as an effort to assign a singularly valid interpretation upon public memory sites, only that some truths, particularly when regarding the pains of others, ought not be blurred. Materiality, not symbolicity, provides the key to this move. Reading the Memorial as a material structure, Blair (1999) would eventually find that "[t]he heuristic of symbolicity falls short of grasping rhetoric's characteristic of potential *consequence*" (p. 20, emphasis added). From this standpoint we find context for assertions, some preceding Blair's account, that authenticity must acquire more than the abstract value of truth, that it must possess the validity of material effect. Trujillo (1993), for example, analyzed touristic and commemorative practices at Dealey Plaza, observing how the layers of narration, reproduction, and simulation thwart efforts to achieve an "authentic"

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

understanding of the Kennedy assassination (p. 458). Mandziuk (2003) would later find that even material commemorations, such as those dedicated to Sojourner Truth, suffer "the gradual erasure of complex details," threatening to place Truth (and truth) at the mercy of "abstract representations" (p. 289). Ott, Aoki, and Dickinson (2011) read the Cody Firearms Museum as a site where memory has been "sanitized, cleansed of any trace of brutality, bloodshed, and butchery" (p. 223), while Gorsevski, Schuck, and Lin (2012) critique *Bodies: The Exhibition* as a commodification of displaced people, noting, "[j]ust as the Chinese bodies were meticulously drained of blood and flesh by the time they appear in foreign museums for display, they were also drained of Chinese culture" (p. 329). In these arguments, authenticity requires something more than alignment with abstract, symbolic truth. It calls for a genuine appreciation of corporeal reality.

The material turn would appear to reassert the possibility of an authentic vision of history, a respect for persons and their bodies, and an obligation to reveal their hidden placement. What happens, though, when not just the *value* of authenticity but its *possibility* is called to question? As a corollary to this query, we might also ask: How might ruins reveal a fundamentally unstable ontology to extant assertions of truth? To address this challenge, I find it useful to employ Jacques Derrida's hauntological perspective. As a "critique of ontology" (Powell & Shaffer, 2009, p. 1), hauntology reverses and ultimately collapses the certainty of knowledge claims. An initial reading of the term suggests a fascination with, and often mourning for, a past, or multiple pasts, whose absences haunt "the presence of the material now" (Kuftinec, 1998, p. 83). The hauntological perspective, less a theory and more a framework for seeing, invites us to read efforts to fix, define, and authorize as the past a paradoxical proposition, arising from an inherently unstable foundation. After all, the surety of our terms—a "monument," for example, as compared to a "wasteland"—hardly speaks to the reality of the past but is instead representative of the present definition of things. When we adopt a hauntological perspective, we come to recognize the ghostly nature of the present in our efforts to confirm some material reality of the past. We wander the shadowlands that seemingly apportion "the intrinsic and extrinsic, the historical and the subjective, the external and internal" (Gunn, 2004, p. 94). Needless to say, hauntology arouses all manner of spirits. Some specters float with little regard for their surroundings; others seem moored firmly to their artifacts. But, and this is a critical move, all manifestations of the hauntological imagination reveal *us* to be (despite the presumed inclination "not to be") ghosts. This is to say that the confidence of our pronouncements becomes less sure the more we accept the linguistic slippage of origins. Adopting a hauntological perspective, we admit the futility to exhume one or

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

several pasts. As Kuftinec (1998) suggests, the trace points both ways (as do all "tracers"). History from this framework cannot be projected as a magic lantern to illuminate the path that brought us here; it is shot through with the present place upon which we stand. The past is, in other words, "an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets" (Derrida, 1994, p. 51). The ghosts that haunt "all our yesterdays" call us to inhabit the ruins of the past, reminding us that, regardless of appearances, *we already do*. For it is in their shimmering mockery of substance, of narrative continuity, or utopian eschatology, that we come closest to the hauntological perspective. As Kuftinec (1998) reminds us, hauntology is uniquely suited for the study of ruins; it is their nature to superimpose visions of past and present in a manner that both reinforces and deconstructs each other.

My point is to argue that an inquiry into ruins, more than the well-trod memorials, monuments, and museums that are typically the focus of public memory studies, challenges us to rethink our practices and expectations of authenticity. In ruins we are confronted with hauntological sites that undermine our assumptions about the nature of place and time. In previous work (Wood, 2009, pp. 201-203), I have proposed a role of ruins as sites to navigate the transitory nature of modern life. Thereafter, I studied the touristic ruins of Route 66 as locales rebuilt upon the debris of earlier incarnations, often as simulations, whereupon the Mother Road "becomes a sanitized version of itself, its ruins transformed into photo opportunities" (Wood, 2010, p. 78). In both cases, the authenticity of place gives way to something more ephemeral, more unsettling. In a similar manner, Tell (2017) illustrates the calculated erection of ruins by examining how family members in a rural Mississippi town secured state funding to refurbish a gas station located near the grocery store where Emmett Till allegedly whistled at a white woman in 1955, setting off a chain of events culminating in the young man's torture and execution. While the family now owns both properties, the grocery store and the gas station, Tell explains that they have opted to focus their initial restoration efforts on the gas station into a tranquil exhibit of Southern heritage, despite that site having nothing to do with Till's murder. Ironically, then, the station attracts tourists while the actual site of the infamous (and disputed) whistle falls further into disrepair: "Judging by the ever-increasing number of visitors to the site, the structural integrity of Bryant's Grocery seems to stand in an inverse relationship to its symbolic value: the greater the ruin the more potent the memory site" (Tell, 2017, p. 55). Today the grocery store crumbles in a state of ruin. Burch (2019) notes the existence of tentative ambitions, though no specific plan, to build a *replica* of the site across the street from the original on state land, suggesting that a duplicate of reality may, at least for some people, be even better than the real thing. In this manner, we find

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

further affirmation of the increasingly unstable rhetoric of authenticity that seeks to fix the reality of a site and to justify the positioning of its figures—places, people, and, yes, even the "ghosts" of the past—in a manner that serves the exigencies of the present.

How then shall we perceive and understand the ruins of modernity, of authenticity itself? Here I propose a practice of seeing that confounds the unifying rhetoric of authenticity through a mode of ocular layering that shifts inward and outward through multiple temporalities: *a recursive gaze*.[5] This notion of gaze derives, however imperfectly, from an ongoing conversation concerning the ways in which looking contributes to our senses of self and our relationships with others. This framework is limited, of course, by its concentration upon a physical capacity that is not universally shared or practiced. A further limitation to this perspective is its inevitable association with Jacques Lacan's notion of "Mirror Stage." In Lacan's earlier writings, the Mirror Stage purported to explain the formation of identity through one's childhood momentary (and material) engagement with the reflected self-as-other. Later, Lacan would posit a more symbolic and ongoing notion of the imaginary through which one's identity shifts between the authentic subject and the world outside the self. Laura Mulvey (1975) would adapt (in her words, would "appropriate") psychoanalytic theory to reveal a masculine gaze whose power to scrutinize the feminized Other works to reintegrate an idealized subject that is cut off from itself. Later, Mulvey would confront and address a range of critiques concerning the limitations of her original argument, a conversation that extends beyond this project. For our purposes, we shall examine a form of looking that invites multiple planes of perception without adhering to a strictly psychoanalytical approach: a framework that welcomes many standpoints while also acknowledging the essential correlation between looking and power. It is this notion of recursive gaze that now draws our attention.

To better understand the recursive gaze, we begin with a reasonably prosaic notion: The act of looking hails, always, more than the singular frame. To illustrate this point, when Pierre Nora (1989) states, "all *lieux de mémoire* are objects *mises en abîme,*" he refers to the visual technique of seemingly infinite recursion: images within images, stories within stories, each a copy of the larger one (p. 20).[6] The eye is drawn toward deeper reservoirs of understanding, though not always by its own accord. We appreciate efforts by the curators of traditional memory sites to deploy technologies arranged to guide the gaze of onlookers. Selecting, positioning, beckoning, describing (and often obscuring) vantage points, the curated gaze requires a mechanism of distance that evokes a sense of significance. Consider the use of glass within the museal environment. Initially we cannot help but respect

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

the utility of detachment produced by the glass that separates the viewer from the viewed so that objects become "invested with new significance… infused with new force, with 'representativeness'" (Biesecker, 2002, p. 404). Nonetheless, the symbolic force of such representation emerges not from the presence of an object but rather from some deeper perception of absence, "the discourse of the Other and its concealed desires" (Ott, Aoki, & Dickinson, 2011, p. 228). The remoteness of aura, the "appearance of a distance" described by Walter Benjamin (2004, [M16a,4] p. 447), bares the reality of alternative temporality: "another history [accessible to visitors] even as they are standing outside of it" (Zagacki & Gallagher, 2009, p. 180). The overlap of times makes possible that gaze that leaves "no trace," a means for visitors to "inhabit and possess the moment through an act of personal expression" (Conley & Mullen, 2008, p. 168). But who and what are actually being possessed?

Learning to perform recursive gaze, we see that we are no longer the singular and stable viewers of place and time than we might have heretofore considered. The ghostly gaze, that Derridean koan, reveals the uncertainty of our subject-positions:

> The perspective has to be reversed, once again: ghost or *revenant*, sensuous-non-sensuous, visible-invisible, the specter first of all sees *us*. From the other side of the eye, *visor effect*, it looks at us even before we see *it* or even before we see period. (Derrida, 1994, p. 101, emphasis in original)

To look is to be seen and potentially made vulnerable (McAlister, 2013, p. 17). Most obviously at a commemorative site such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, we are called to identify our own roles in tragedy that bridges past to present: "As we read the names inscribed in the granite, *we can see ourselves* reflected in it" (Foss, 1986, p. 335, emphasis added). And even in seemingly (but never entirely) less fraught environments, such as museums, we see more than objects behind the glass: "They are belongings, but they do not belong to us. They were made to be possessed, but we cannot possess them" (McAlister, 2013, p. 16). Instead, "[t]he author gazes upon [themselves] through the specter of [their] rear-view reflection" (Trudeau, 2011, p. 164). Eventually we learn to practice the recursive gaze, a species of *détournement* that shifts inward and outward across various temporal layers. Doing so, we will see how recursive gaze is both a consequence of the unfixing of temporalities and also a tactic for the management of the tensions that arise from that instability. But first we shall return to the initial challenge, to reveal ways in which the curators of Bodie's ruins enact a rhetoric and performance of authenticity: a peculiar constellation of presence and absence.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Authenticating Bodie: Overlapping Histories of Violence

As we embark on this analysis, we are reminded that Bodie appears to garner high regard for its sense of authenticity. Pesek (2010) notes Bodie's reputation as "[p]erhaps the most authentic ghost town in California" (p. K2). Summarizing a top-ten list of American ghost towns for *USA Today*, Bleiberg (2017) quotes *Ghost Towns of the West* co-author Philip Varney as confirming, "Bodie is the real thing. It's the best ghost town that I've seen, and I've seen over 600" (¶2). Yet as I have already proposed, Bodie's rhetoric of authenticity rests upon an unstable foundation. We see this first in the presence of overlapping temporalities. There were, after all, more than one set of "old days," in Bodie, good, bad, or ugly. The *Bodie State Historic Park* (2017) booklet explains this phenomenon:

> When you visit Bodie today, you experience slices from the town's different time periods. You'll see houses that were built in the 1870s, the Standard Mill from the late 1890s, gas pumps from the 1920s, and a schoolhouse that was used until 1942. (p. 3)

Yes, the presence of a 1927 Dodge Graham truck makes an odd addition to a nineteenth-century mining town. Yet Bodie appears, at first, to make little

Figure 4.3. Overlapping Temporalities at Bodie. Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

effort to submerge its temporalities into a singular moment. Beyond the basic dichotomy of present and past, for example, visitors are invited to trace four specific moments when entering the Miller House. There, a framed collection of photos taken from Standard Hill contrast a Bodie from 1879 boomtown through its 1931 decline, its 1932 disaster from fire, and a 1974 photograph of the town in something close to its present state—complete with a translation from Heraclitus, the Pre-Socratic cosmologist: "Nothing endures but change." This ironic notion of permanence evokes a related sense of completion, an assumption that all narratives are contained in this site.

Even so, the potential of multiple temporalities does not prove the presence of all narratives. Quite the contrary. In fact, touring Bodie we witness the valorization of a progress narrative through which various populations are arranged, and sometimes displaced, within a unifying trajectory of U.S. American mythology. By way of illustration, I analyze the conclusion of *Bodie: Ghost Town Frozen in Time*, the orientation film projected for park visitors:

> Like the old dead skin of creatures that have gone on to better things, Bodie's buildings sit: architectural remnants of distant dreams now dead. The hopes and fears of Bodie's pioneers may have long since passed away, but these remains testify to the collective efforts of past lives now evolved to present-day America. And though Bodie today may be like old discarded skin America has left behind, people the world over return to visit it in ever increasing numbers. It is our heritage, part of the reason why we are what we are. For nowhere else in America can a person journey back in time so perfectly to a Wild West mining camp as in the true ghost town of Bodie.

DeLyser (1999) provides essential context to read this text by noting how Bodie's authenticity, manifesting both the patina of age and the performance of danger, works to naturalize an American narrative that narrows the constitution of a heterogeneously peopled past toward a homogenized present. The reference to "distant dreams now dead" enacts a complex rhetoric of ghostly absence first by rousing a possibility of their personal peril before, as we shall see presently, working to affirm a notion of progress that necessitates a constant state of violence.

Initially we remember how the perception of peril must be carefully, but not *too* carefully, modulated in a touristic environment. In this way we envisage the ironic role of risk within the evocation of authenticity. At Bodie, we find the evocation of danger constitutes a strategy not typically found in memorials, monuments, and museums, an implication that a threat to life and limb, experienced by the town's ghosts and those seeking to be haunted, both justifies the reality of an otherwise touristic practice and, more importantly,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

conveys the need for an American myth of evolution away from historical dangers through the dislocation of Othered populations. We first observe this process through a reading of a map/pamphlet and separate sixteen-page booklet produced to familiarize tourists with the park's layout and amenities. The current booklet updates the park's first tourist guide, *A Walk in Old Bodie* (n.d.), affording a tool for visitors who are encouraged to independently navigate the town while being reminded of the risk they accept in their pioneering efforts. Reviewing their maps and pamphlets, visitors are warned not to stray beyond park rules and safe spaces: "Watch out. *This is a real ghost town*; splinters, nails, and broken glass are everywhere" (*Bodie State Historic Park*, 2017, p. 16, emphasis added). *A Walk in Old Bodie* (n.d.) confirms the town's legitimacy in a similar manner to the current booklet: "*It is the genuine article*, just as the miners, fires, and time have left it" (n.p., emphasis added). In these warnings and explanations, one perceives that the authenticity of this site lies somewhat in the perception of risk. A "real" ghost town, one comes to discover, requires the foreboding threat of injury, of material destruction, to justify itself.

A "real" ghost town also requires some *ghosts*. One may therefore appreciate the enhanced authenticity borrowed by tourists brave enough to visit a place whose dangers surpass modern cuts and scrapes, a place once known as a "Shooters' Town." Writing after the town's boom years but well before it assumed its current iteration as a state park, Russell (1927) recalls Bodie's bloodstained history with palpable zeal (if some degree of excess):

> Twelve thousand active citizens centered their hopes upon the mining bustle on Bodie Bluff, twelve thousand men and woman lived the unrestrained existence of the almost lawless camp, hundreds of men met violent deaths, and human character was there disclosed at its worst and best. (p. 90)

The tourist need not wear the accouterments of a gunslinger to picture their potential to occupy some heroic (or anti-heroic) role while wandering Bodie's boulevards. The map/pamphlet is enough to prove that these dusty streets were once washed with blood. This place, visitors are assured, "was once known as the most lawless, wild, and tough mining camp in the West" (*Bodie State Historic Park*, 2016, n.p.). *A Walk in Old Bodie* (n.d.) offers an even more poetic description of the town's bloody reputation:

> Circumstance and choice decreed that many would spend eternity in these hills. The boards and stones that mark their last resting place are in truth a monument to a people that were tough enough to build a town full of work, adventure, business, love, humor, culture, and violent death. (n.p.)

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

In this park, the more recent booklet explains, a miscreant named Joseph DeRoche was arrested, managed to escape, and was then recaptured by a posse for shooting the husband of a woman with whom he had danced. Thereafter, lest DeRoche escape justice, the "601" vigilante group (supposedly, and debatably, named for putting their quarry six feet under with zero trials and one rope) strung him up for a public execution. Reading this text, tourists might feel that their feet rustle the same dust where Bad Men once trod: "The majority of the population was the best of the mining-camp types, others the wildest and most desperate characters that ever infested a mining region" (*A Walk in Old Bodie*, n.d., n.p.). Such is the performance of Bodie's dangerous reputation.

In truth the town's violent reputation had always been hyped beyond the actual numbers of dead and wounded. It is true: the "Bad Man from Bodie" was a genuine national trope in the nineteenth century, evoking the hotheaded gunslinger who, fortified with booze and bravado, dispensed death with a hair-trigger. Yet no infamous dualists hailed from the town. Instead, Bodie inspired the development of "grassroots gunfighters" who settled their own scores rather than rely on professional law enforcement (Brown, 1991, p. 63). Accordingly one almost senses a need to *convince* visitors of Bodie's blood-drenched past when a booklet acknowledges: "The town jail looks small in proportion to tales of lawlessness during Bodie's boom years" (*Bodie State Historic Park*, 2017, p. 11). *A Walk in Old Bodie* (n.d.) adds, "it was never much of a jail but it had its day" (n.p.). That proviso aside, modern tourists take some satisfaction in imagining how things have changed from those bad old days. The absence of gunslingers affirms a rhetoric of progress through the presence of their ghosts.

Another component of that rhetoric, in contrast, is a much more substantial difficulty to distinguish the presence of non-Anglo settlers and laborers. To a certain extent, contemporary guides acknowledge the presence of some native peoples, along with Chinese laborers, noting their locations beyond the center of town. In contrast with the detailed placement of Anglo settlers, however, the existence of non-Anglo populations appears on the guides' maps as empty planes. *A Walk in Old Bodie* (n.d.) justified such absence as a matter of choice: "The Chinese [sic] were content to live alone and carry on their native customs and traditions" (n.p.).[7] However this notion of an agreeable enclave fails to reflect the means, legal and extra-legal, by which Anglo Bodieites excluded Chinese and native laborers, along with other migrants, from many aspects of town life. Analyzing the placement and invisibility of these communities, DeLyser (2003) notes, "in Bodie's landscape and map/brochure, the middle-class values of patriarchal Anglo-American society appear to have triumphed" (p. 95). Once more we see how exclusion becomes

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

justified through an appeal toward the "Western sublime" (Dickinson, Ott, & Aoki, 2013, p. 31), a regime animated here by a rhetoric of progress.

Returning our focus to *Bodie: Ghost Town Frozen in Time*, we now better understand a shift from natural and necessary decay, the "dead skin" of an ostensibly inchoate and random array of individual animals clawing their ways toward an artificial and continually tenuous line of "heritage" that confirms a narrow vision of public life. Following this trace, audience members, alone in the relative darkness of the cinematic apparatus, may "evolve" toward "better things." And what constitutes the better nature of those angels (and more than a few gun-toting bad men)? Their adaptability for inclusion in the grand narrative, rather than their idiosyncratic ambitions, provides a key. One finds in *Bodie: Ghost Town Frozen in Time* an appeal to "increasing numbers," contributing toward "collective efforts." Pioneers, those possessing the talent to peer beyond their years, earn placement in this Americanized history when they are fitted into the nation's homogenizing tapestry. One finds a sense of inevitability in this passage, even while individual pathways lead frequently to solitary outcomes or exoticized enclosure. From this analysis we read Bodie's authenticity as violence, both of existential threat and social exclusion, the "purposefully forgotten oppressions and rejections of the 'Other'" (Dickinson, Ott, & Aoki, 2005, p. 102), being overcome by a homogenizing mode of modernity.

Recursing Bodie: Gazing Upon the Apparitional Tourist

So far we have read Bodie as a memory site striving to assert its authenticity through the evocation of violence overcome by a progress narrative that hides the "bodies" of missing Others. This touristic frame is enhanced by the freedom provided to visitors to make sense of the town and its mysteries largely on their own terms. Bodie organizers and maintainers have long advocated that visitors should rely on a bare minimum of formal guidance to the site, that their interpretations should depend less on placards and ranger talks (well delivered, though they are) and more from strolling and looking. Though describing a dissimilar site, Dickinson (1997) explains how these environments, "evoke a whole range of emotion-laden memories while providing the possibility for *bodily* participation in the evocation of the memory" (p. 4, emphasis in original; see also Blair, 2001). Strazdes (2013) would seem to agree, explaining that, "the ruined town is full of visual fragments that *visitors are invited to piece together*, and it is that very process that creates genuineness in what the viewer sees" (p. 239, emphasis added). With few exceptions, park buildings are generally closed to unguided tours; visitors therefore walk from place to place without the kinds of overt guidance found

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 4.4. Window Shopping through History at Bodie. Photograph by Author

in typical museal environments. This focus on movement that enables both the excursion of sites and the curation of sights is evidenced by the performance of folks staring into windows.

We now adopt a practice of recursive gaze—that is to say, a mode of looking-as-process, necessarily personal and idiosyncratic, through which a viewer gazes upon a site, peering through a window in the case of Bodie, in a manner that layers multiple meanings upon that frame. These layers may beckon overlapping temporalities, reveal ironic contrasts, or hasten the appearance of other hidden meanings. This point of view can be transformative; it may even be transgressive. Yet its practice is not strictly a reproach of any dominant narrative. Recursive gaze is simply a method of superimposing more than one frame of interpretation upon a seemingly flat plane, producing a personal axis of movement forward and backward, and often around, through an otherwise static point of view. It can be, I hasten to add, an effective response to the otherwise unsettling encounter with overlapping temporality: a performance of personalized order[ing]. In the description that follows, I provide an example of recursive gaze emerging from my own travels through Bodie. While this reading can hardly claim to demonstrate a form of autoethnography, this framework is nonetheless time-bound, place-bound, and personal. Even so, I am not the only person to peer through the windows

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 4.5. Practicing Recursive Gaze at Bodie. Photograph by Author

of Bodie from this viewpoint. In forthcoming analysis, I will call upon other voices to share their own practices of recursive gaze. But for now, drawing from my experiences in Bodie, let us review what one may see.

Visitors opting to practice recursive gaze at a Bodie locale are wise to begin at a place almost ideally designed to evoke an unexpected contemplation of vision: The Dechambeau Hotel and adjacent Independent Order of Odd Fellows Lodge. While Bodie's collage of buildings, houses, and other vestiges are never too far from view, we find an almost perfectly introverted quality to this pair. These two structures, with the wooden I.O.O.F. slumping under the weight of years, present a solitary massing on Main Street. Peering through the glass of the hotel, one may detect an ocular shift across at least four planes of vision, with each layer containing its own narratives, its own sediments, and its own temporalities. At the Dechambeau, looking through the tall arched window on the right-hand side, one might focus first upon the bullet-shaped mail sorter whose sooty slats dance with wispy cobwebs, its supporting posts now leaning beside the wooden cylinder. A visitor may wonder who dragged it to this location, reading perhaps from a pamphlet that

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

the post office occupied this space first in 1879. Soon enough the viewer will likely shift their glance to the glass itself, considering its materiality. In other places, the tourist might ignore the glass that apportions inside from out, unless it restricts their vision. But in this locale the glass becomes its own narrative. While it does not slosh like liquid over the expanse of time, the window possesses an amorphous quality that allows for multiple temporalities to reside simultaneously. Thus one may notice the smudges of thumbs (and the occasional sweaty forehead), *latent prints* from other tourists marking the glass by their presence. At places like this, and certainly at the nearby morgue on the corner of Green and Main streets, time extends like a dusty accordion forward and backward.

Visitors might then shift focus to their own visages, darkened by contrast to both the interior and exterior of the building. In this third optical frame, training one's sensibility from surface to substance and back again, the tourist comes to discern the presence of their reflection and, if holding a camera, the device meant to capture this scene. Photographers might evaluate their choices of technology in this moment. I recall such a moment during a recent visit, thinking about a small group of folks who had set up large-format cameras nearby, hiding their heads under pieces of dark cloth to inspect upside down images. An uncanny sense emanates from that esoteric mode of production. What secrets hide beneath those magical curtains? What ghosts haunt this scene? This mode of inquiry conjures a convergence of several scenes, the real and the ideal, the absent and the present. Finally the visitor might stare at the reflection of the clouds over the hills behind them, lit maybe by a silvery sun. Some days offer darker horizons, with less distinct contrast. One may appreciate the virtue of an overcast outing. A ghost town, we recall, *should* dwell under gray skies. But imagine a day in which blue skies are enchanted with fat, white clouds. On such a day, puffs floating over the valley cast all those who gaze through the glass into comparative darkness, allowing onlookers (*in-lookers*, we might say) to envision themselves as outsiders to this scene, as observers cast in obscurity. On my recent visit, I contrived myself as a character acting as some sort of detective in a Raymond Chandler novel, surveying the scene of a crime. What is a ghost town, at long last, without a missing body whose spectral presence summons one's own secret psychogeography?

So the viewer stares with the eyes of one who subtracts the knowable from what cannot be known. Presence and absence become a matter of "life and death," forces unified through their Heraclitian division. There may be many people nearby, tourists with their cameras, but there is nobody here, only the detritus of the past, and that familiar question: *Where did they go?* Practicing the art of recursive gaze, each visitor becomes the detective. Each in-looker

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

also becomes the ghost, an apparition to be distributed as digital footprints of distant travels. So one may observe each layer with renewed purpose, wondering at the motive to come to this place. That is part of the indulgence of the ghost town, despite its claims of credibility—the freedom to author one's own solitary performance, along with the obligation to ask: What is missing?

Having articulated and demonstrated a practice of recursive gaze, I acknowledge an obligation to forgo reliance upon a simultaneously theoretical and personal standpoint, to study more directly the manner and extent to which *other* Bodie visitors seek this station. As Aden et al. (2009) note, effective efforts to understand "places of memory may involve ethnographic observations and/or interviews with visitors to the site" (p. 321). Elsewhere, Aden (2012) has affirmed that we *should* do so (p. 76). Inspired by that recommendation, I posed a question to members of a Facebook community called *Friends of Bodie*, inviting them to reflect on their methods of looking through windows at this site. This query generated a fruitful conversation about the use of recursive gaze (though not using that specific term), typically through the intentional inclusion of their glass-reflected bodies within frames they chose to photograph. Participant A stated, "I like taking the photos with reflections at Bodie, it creates a ghostly feel to them. Makes you part of the town." Participant B added a comment on the potential of recursive gaze to demonstrate the passage of time:

> Seeing some of the work done by other photographers, I found it interesting if a small piece of their reflection [ended up] being a part of the photograph taken. It's always been interesting to me to see the "human progress" in every sense of the phrase, especially the stark contrast between today and Bodie's time era.

Other participants noted photographic efforts to suggest the presence of "ghosts" in the scene. Participant C, for example, whose works often earn praise among members of the *Friends of Bodie* community, described techniques (and occasional accidental inclusions of passing strangers) to make use of the space for artistic purposes: "mirrors and windows and their reflections are very suitable for pics like that. Add the character of the scenery at Bodie and you have a perfect setting for 'ghost pics.'" Offering a summary of the conversation, Participant D confirmed, "Reading the other comments [in this thread] has shown me how similar we are when viewing and photographing Bodie. We are examining it, trying to unlock its past[,] and frequently we are inserting ourselves into its tableaux via the panes of glass." I would hardly propose that all tourists practice a monolithic mode of recursive gaze. Indeed, Participant C emphasized that they do not necessarily prefer to include their reflections in Bodie photos. Still, aided by the preliminary conversation summarized here, we may concur that part of the pleasure of Bodie tourism is the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

ability to place one's self in the scene, almost as a ghost from the future who haunts the remains of the past.

Conclusion

Inspired by Zelizer's (1995) call "to open up new spaces from which to think about the past" (p. 235), this chapter has proposed a deeper and more sustained investigation of ruins than this book has thus far attempted, selecting the Bodie ghost town as an exemplar. Initially I have proposed that ruins enable the celebration and critique of modernity. Among the myriad *lieux de mémoire*, ruins endure as the "ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it" (Nora, 1989, p. 12). Placing these sites among locales of public memory, this chapter has proposed a hauntological perspective to unpack a rhetoric of authenticity founded on violence and absence. The chapter then demonstrated a mode of recursive gaze to reveal a practice of touristic looking by which one may layer alternative and deeply personal narratives amid and among the surfaces of arrested decay. As a ghost town, Bodie provides an ideal site for this mode of analysis. Yet we are reminded that *all* sorts of urban environments, even those now populated, contain ruins. Sites marred by violence, economic collapse, environmental degradation, and other kinds of discontent, hail the realization that the modern project fails, in the words of Voltaire's *Candide* (1977), to offer "the best of all possible worlds" (p. 230). In our search for ruins, we correctly eschew formal distinctions of vibrancy and decay, recognizing instead the many manners of their intersectionality.

When exploring the ruins of Bodie, we also come to understand how its ghosts haunt contemporary landscapes. We therefore turn to Hostetter (2011) who, inspired by J.B. Jackson's (1980) call to focus on banal landscapes, aligns nineteenth-century gold and silver bonanzas with contemporary boomtowns. Hostetter notes that these sites, typically suburbs, are produced by a mortgage industry that does not respond to material needs but rather reflects a bubble mentality built upon cheap debt. Hostetter finds useful commonality between images of rapid abandonment in these two boom-eras: "There are parallel stories from natural resource boomtowns where residents and business-owners literally walked out the door, leaving furniture, unwashed dishes, and inventory on the shelves" (p. 73). These parallels call us not only to peer through the windows of past windfalls but also to stare past the glittering promises of late modernity to excavate its equally shaky foundations.

Departing Bodie, then, we find ourselves contemplating the fate of that girl who purportedly hurled a prayer to the heavens after being fated to such

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 4.6. Vista of Bodie Ghost Town. Photograph by Author

a dreary place. From our relatively secure vantage point as tourists (vacationing, academic, or both), we may be forgiven for failing to understand her plight. We can evidently enter and leave this scene with ease, viewing it is a flat scene of surfaces over which we need not delay our gaze. Such is a touristic privilege that demands further analysis. Still, those surfaces float upon deep layers of reflection. Reading places like Bodie, we come to reread the rhetoric of authenticity as a means of justifying the power of ruins to confirm and contest the modern project. Rather than searching for a history that hides beyond personal interpretation, we extend our own gaze in places like this, crafting private performances that enable a kind of personalized inspection that transforms us from "mere" tourists into detectives in search of the missing and the dead. This, at last, is the meaning of arrested decay at Bodie: a temporary and necessarily precarious mode of being that invites us to contemplate the permanence of change in the places we occupy, and in the lives we perform.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

NOTES

1. "Haunting Ruins in a Western Ghost Town: Authentic Violence and Recursive Gaze at Bodie, California" (Wood, 2020) reprinted by permission of the Western States Communication Association, www.westcomm.org.

2. Newspapers of the era recall many spellings and variants of Bodey's name (Piatt, 2003, p. 22). DeLyser (1998), for example, notes three options for his first name: William, Wakeman, and Waterman.

3. The answer is that they didn't leave that quickly, at least not all at once. While many residents departed after fires and economic collapse, the totality of departures occurred over a period of decades.

4. See also Bergman (2003, p. 430), Bowman (2010, pp. 194, 212), Conley and Mullen (2008, pp. 181–182), Dickinson (1997, pp. 8, 12), Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki (2005, pp. 89–90, 101), and Zagacki and Gallagher (2009, p. 186).

5. I am hardly the first person to use the phrase "recursive gaze." For another application, see Clark (1995, p. 115). I also acknowledge my debt to similar frameworks such as "double articulation" (Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, 2006, p, 28), "reflexive double meaning" (Strazdes, 2013, p. 239), and "reflexive layering" (Schmitt, 2015). See also Dickinson's (1997) notion of "pedestrian gaze."

6. Nora's work has generated "varying attitudes of approbation and opprobrium" (Blair, Dickinson, & Ott, 2010, p. 8), earning critique for a tendency toward "magical enclaves" (Katriel, 1994, p. 17), dichotomization (Murphy, 2005, p. 74), nostalgia (Sturken, 1997, p. 5), myopia (Zelizer, 1999, p. 204), and neoliberalism (Henning, 2006, p. 138).

7. The current booklet offers no such rationale.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

5

Detroit's Guilty Pleasures

Detroit. November 2017. Photoshopped images stack themselves in a folder marked "raw." Ghosts of composition, filtering, fragmenting, framing. One shot, a puddle-pocked pathway, IMG_2488.jpg, converted into "andy-in-detroit." Saturated, sharpened, too much so. It's almost as if real life fails to compete with high definition. Experience awaits the digital souvenir. I'm

Figure 5.1. Detroit (2017). Photograph by Jenny Wood

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

walking down the alley behind Saad Wholesale Meats under bulging gray clouds, jacket pulled tight, passing damp murals. Flowers and dragons. I step over spray-painted wood, an abandoned pallet that partially fills a section of broken pavement. A *Blade Runner* amble, looking for signs amid the passages. One hand in pocket, the other gripping a camera. Detecting. My partner sets up her shot, tolerating my multiple attempts to project cool discernment. She is bemused. I practice and rehearse a performance of studied detachment. Walking past the scene, occupying it as a fleeting incursion. It's easy enough to delete failed attempts to produce this effect: an expression that looks too intense, an unflattering angle. I store the pix on the cloud. Months later I will traipse through that scene digitally, advancing backward and forward through twenty-two frames before selecting the one that seems right. Well, acceptable. Shooting myself in Detroit, I catch sight of the real target in this tableau: a tourist far from home in search of an easily consumable, recognizable, transferrable experience—a nearly invisible apparition. Each photo is detached, like a deck of nudie-cards projected through a Kinetoscope.

Detroit. March 2011. My memories are fragments: vapor plumes rising from steam vents, downtown traffic lights switched to a permanent rhythm of blinking amber, and a tense moment with a guy determined to break into my car near the GAR building. I cruise a quiet city, Steely Dan on CD. "I crawl like a viper / through these suburban streets." I've taken a long detour from my original purpose. The day before, I'd spent a dreary overcast afternoon

Figure 5.2. Scott and Grandy (2011). Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

in West Virginia, six hours south, clearing a dense patch of brush hiding my grandfather's grave. Preston Frazier died of a heart attack in 1976 after completing a career in the Navy and a subsequent job as an electronics technician. He helped to raise a family, acquired a few friends, and drank himself into oblivion. Less than four decades after his demise, Granddaddy's marker was lost in a thicket of West Virginia weeds. So I flew to Washington, D.C., rented a car, and navigated my way to Scott Depot, where my ancestors on my mother's side had settled in the eighteenth century. I made my search, found his location, and clawed at the weeds. It didn't take long for a lonely stone to appear:

"PRESTON A FRAZIER / ATC US NAVY / WORLD WAR II / KOREA / 1914 † 1976."

Completing my task, I drove north to Detroit for no particular reason. And on the next day I found myself on the corner of Smith and Grandy in what was once a neighborhood, trying to photograph what was no longer there. Some of the walkways are covered in grass, leaving gray squares near a fireplug topped in yellow: another solitary monument. Later that afternoon, I stepped out of my car to photograph a collapsing home. Something about the shadows and ragged curtains and broken pavement fit an image in my memory. I guess I find myself thinking of a postwar ranch style domesticity in Dunedin, Florida, where I grew up, a place where my grandparents spent their nights downing highballs. Amid my reveries, an elderly African American man approaches me and asks my business, snapping me back to the here and now.

"Just taking pictures," I explain with a smile.

He does not smile in return.

Taking Pictures and the Psychogeographic Intervention

In many ways, that snatch of conversation (even the word "snatch" calls forth memories of seizure) compels us to witness the unique emplacement of Detroit in the American heart. And this *is* an American story. But it is more deeply a narrative of a painfully racialized urbanity. Detroit, particularly its post–1967 iteration, after that Long Hot Summer, speaks the anger of communities who confront generations of housing discrimination, the boot and the baton of militarized police, and the financial and cultural implications of the White Flight that followed. Detroit, then, summons its share of doubt and self-recrimination for me as a writer, as evidenced by the reminder by one early reader that I ought to rethink my use of words like "we" and "us" in

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

this chapter. That practice, a generally innocuous effort to produce a sense of communion between writer and reader, risks obscuring the real differences between my encounters with the city—enclosed, detached, touristic—and does not convey much more than artifacts of my own security and privilege. Frankly, of my whiteness. This is a fair critique and a cutting reminder. It is a reminder that our experiences of Detroit's past, present, and future cannot hide the elemental reality that I write these words as an able-bodied, middle-aged, middle-classed man. Right now, this moment, the invisible tendrils of economic wealth pump tiny packets of security into my accounts. I possess a quiet safety that surely will not last, but is for now mine. From this position, I occupy a decidedly different place than many of my readers. A different time too. In a persuasive accounting of Afrofuturist cinema, Felipe Espinoza Garrido (2020) explains that sort of "experiential parallelism" in which "Black awareness of the apocalypse's past tense collides with a white, majoritarian misrecognition of the present" (p. 316). The man who challenged my presence in Detroit did not need to read Garrido's prose to know the time. My time, then and now, here and there, is therefore a solitary moment that provides no honest accounting of anything other than my own safe passages through Detroit. Yes, I will continue to expand the sphere of my words to include you, to produce an "us." It is a privilege to do so, but a duty as well. I undertake that plan, knowing (though dreading) that I will earn many such reminders from readers that my words are not their words. That, I must offer as a final confession, is yet another consequence of reading Detroit as a collection of images, still and moving.

And of course Detroit ought not be confused with the many photographs taken as proof of its ruined state. Surely one may visit to search for signs of industrial decay, economic decline, racial division, municipal failure, and environmental degradation. But one invariably visits places and people best not treated as synecdoches. Once the fourth-largest city in America, housing about 1.85 million people in the 1950s, the Detroit population has now dropped to about 670,000 residents in 2019.[1] Even so, the Motor City is more than a grid of vacant lots and broken tooth neighborhoods. There is also plenty of start-up spirit, a new confidence working to reconfigure Detroit into a center of U.S. post-industrialization. Volunteers are working to clean up and improve their neighborhoods. Entrepreneurs and artists are streaming in, taking advantage of dirt-cheap housing and a hunger for new ideas. And though grass grows through the cracks of crumbling boulevards, many old once-abandoned city blocks are finding new use as places for agriculture and guerrilla gardening. Tourists stream to the city, though, often oblivious to its contemporary pangs of rebirth. They come to see the city of their dystopian dreams.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Films, songs, and advertisements prime them, and us, for that descent. Detroit appears as a ghost of its mid-twentieth century autopian design, such that even its ambitions of renovation require proof of ruin. By way of example, cast your memory back to the "Imported From Detroit" campaign, which was anchored by the 2011 Super Bowl "Born in Fire" spot. The commercial for the Chrysler 200, running a full two minutes (a remarkable investment when one calculates the cost of a typical Super Bowl ad buy), depicts steam vents, smoke stacks, and skeleton buildings while the voiceover intones: "What does this city know about luxury? What does a town that's been to hell and back know about the finer things in life? Well, I'll tell ya. More than most." The spot offers a compelling interpretation of wealth and privilege, aligning those qualities with struggle and sacrifice, illustrating "how Detroit comports itself through hard work and an underdog's tenacity to succeed" (Crowley, 2013, p. 146). The voiceover states, "It's the hottest fires that make the hardest steel." And Detroit, more than most, is indeed a city forged by flame.

"Born in Fire" then transitions from urban wreckage to industrial determination by way of *The Fist*, Robert Graham's bronze monument to Boxer Joe Louis. Marback (1998) describes how that monument "graphically materializes the contemporary urban conditions within which rhetorical agency is constructed and contested" (p. 78). The Black *Fist*, hanging from its pyramidal enclosure, provides a backdrop to a white spokesperson for the city. Eminem, driving the Chrysler 200, takes the foreground while the narrator ridicules those journalistic and academic tourists, "folks who have never even been here and don't know what we're capable of," who use the city for their own selfish pleasures. In this spot, Detroit enacts a rhetoric of regionalism noted for, not despite, the hard times it has overcome. "Now, we're from America. But this isn't New York City or the Windy City or Sin City. And we're certainly no one's Emerald City. . ." An African-American choir lowers their song to a hum as Eminem points his finger into the camera: "This is the Motor City. And this is what we do."

"Born in Fire" is an undeniably powerful spot; it won awards and inspired a 2012 Super Bowl sequel of sorts, this time featuring Clint Eastwood. That follow-up, "Halftime in America"—clearly an homage to the 1984 Reagan reelection campaign's "Morning in America" spot—expands beyond the Chrysler 200 to include a wider range of Chrysler automobiles. Detroit, once the symbol for regional struggle and renewal, also recedes somewhat amid a graver set of problems facing America. Images of the city's decay are crosscut with scenes of economic and social plight affecting big cities and small towns across the United States. In this spot, Detroit appears to have overcome its challenges and now shows the way for the rest of the country:

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> People are out of work and they're hurting. And they're all wondering what they're going to do to make a comeback. And we're all scared, because this isn't a game. The people of Detroit know a little something about this. They almost lost everything. But we all pulled together. Now Motor City is fighting again.

Stalwart Americans, not urban monuments, symbolize better days to come: Families, firefighters, and eventually (inevitably) folks and their Rams, Dodges, Jeeps, and Chryslers. "This country can't be knocked out with one punch," Eastwood growls. "We get right back up again. And when we do, the world is going to hear the roar of our engines." That line, broadcast in 2012, calls forth memories of another ruin, the most shattering moment of American confidence in living memory: the wreckage of the World Trade Center in New York City.

Recalling the rhetoric of American Carnage introduced in chapter 3 we recognize how that ruin mustered a militarized collectivity, epitomized by President George W. Bush's unexpectedly deft response to the horror steaming beneath his feet. Standing amid a crowd of workers, his arm upon the shoulders of a firefighter, Bush broke from his remarks to respond when someone exclaimed that he could not be heard. "I can hear you," he said. "I can hear you. The rest of the world hears you. . . and the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon." In these words we may find some utility in the recognition of a common theme: the constitution of a public (and generally an antagonistic counter-public) response to trauma.

Here we may better understand the corporate militarism "Halftime in America." This jingoistic appeal scored well with most audiences, though earning some scorn too, most notably among some conservative critics for its implied support for federal bailouts of private industry. *Saturday Night Live* also found reason to lampoon the spot, selecting Bill Hader to mock Eastwood's overwrought performance of grim determination. Before long, though, the campaign faded from view, as did the car that started it all. The Chrysler 200 was a short-lived model, evolving across two generations from 2011 to 2017 before being discontinued; U.S. motorists were trading their sedans for safer SUVs and trucks. Italian carmaker Fiat bought the Chrysler nameplate in 2014 and, at the time of this writing, another European conglomerate was set to acquire the merged company. All the while, Detroit continues to struggle. The familiar story, an abandoned town rebuilt and reinvigorated, no longer plays. And still people like me, academic and journalistic tourists of American ruin, fly to DTW, rent a car, plot a course, and snap photos of urban blight, despite the clear frustration that many local folks have of their community being transformed into a backdrop for the same tired images of decay that feeds hopeless narratives of a dying city.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

And that is point. Despite grand visions of renovated wreckage, ruins are *always* personal. This is where Nazi architect Albert Speer erred in his notion of Ruin Value, the Romanticist call to integrate future remains into contemporary designs as a showcase of eternal values harkening back to the traces of Roman greatness. Certainly we may survey the epic ruins of a collapsed civilization and feel that we glean some sort of wisdom. The moment is a simulacrum, however, a trace that leads not to an original but rather to a mediated expectation of our own design. This also is where photographer Camilo Vergara stumbled, at least somewhat, in his proposal to transfer Detroit's Grand Circus Park into a monumental set piece for grand musing:

> I propose that as a tonic for our imagination. . . as a call for renewal, as a place within our national memory, a dozen city blocks of pre-Depression skyscrapers be stabilized and left standing as ruins: an American Acropolis. We could transform the nearly 100 troubled buildings into a grand national historic park of play and wonder. (cited in Bennet, 1995, p. 22)

Think of it, and allow your eyes to drift over those craggy monoliths of iron and stone: a section of Detroit set apart as a theme park, at least of sorts, for the exotic imaginary. Vergara certainly intended for this proposal to inspire profound moments of introspection. And it would be churlish to dismiss his vision out of hand. Critics of this scheme nonetheless made it clear that the rarified and privileged perspective of the architect, the planner, even the photographer reading the city through a viewfinder, often occupying a gods-eye view from some lofty perch, can hardly hope to express much more than their own power. In *his* "Rhetoric of Ruins" essay, which appears in his book *Rhetorical Exposures*, Christopher Carter (2015) offers a compelling reminder that even the most apparently laudable ambitions succumb to a sort of touristic fertilization: "As Vergara aligns his visual rhetoric with Walter Benjamin's study of phantasmagoria, he observes with near despair the American tendency to dismiss, ignore, or disparage 'the debris of history' that clutters the path of neoliberal development" (p. 110). And Detroit is an ideal example of neoliberal consequence.

At this point, some clarification of terminology may be appropriate, if only to reveal my biases and limitations in applying the concept. Though the term *neoliberalism* is often used to disparage any number of troubling trends—from Supreme Court rulings concerning the personhood of corporations to the growing infiltration of commercial influence in higher education—the practice repositions of the role of governmental and individual liberty in a manner that affirms the centrality of corporate power in public life. The concept emerges from an earlier term, liberalism, which in a classical sense seeks to extend governmental power and responsibility with the aim of

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

safeguarding human safety and dignity. From this ethos, government must be strong enough to aid human beings, but not so strong as to tyrannize them.

The “neo” in neoliberalism is an alteration of that vision of classical liberalism, replacing the object of government power from people to corporations. In other words, neoliberalism advocates that global corporations are generally a benefit to civilization, and that governmental policy and power should be deployed to expand its global reach. This principle reflects practices that increase state support for private enterprise, reduce state-mandated regulation and social services, and prioritize global free trade over local/national frameworks. Neoliberalism may be read as a continuation of the capitalist impulse toward expanded and ever more efficient flows of trade and commerce, which (not so incidentally) tend to accumulate wealth and power in few hands, often by defining the disruptions they produce, in industries and in lives, as creative destruction (Schumpeter, 1994). As such, neoliberalism appears as an ironic consequence of the modern project that converts an earlier utopian desire into a contemporary dystopian practice. Fraser (2018) reminds us of Detroit’s utility as a symbol of neoliberalist excess:

> In Detroit, for the last half century, the experience of place—of paths, of haunts, of street corners, of inside and outside, of stability and insecurity—has been defined by flows of capital—vacillating between excess and absence. The ‘always in transition’, ‘always becoming’ aspect of place has thus been largely grounded in a politics of accumulation and dereliction—mass production and mass decay. (p. 445)

How does one read neoliberal flow? How does one intervene? For me, this question arose in earlier efforts to explicate the growth and expansion of omnitopian tendrils into increasingly disparate nodes of public life (Wood, 2009). One answer, at first what would appear to be an idiosyncratic option, is to navigate urban life using a trajectory that cuts across its broad boulevards.

I choose to read the ruins of Detroit from a psychogeographical perspective. Situationist theorist Guy Debord coined this term as a Marxian tactic of resistance against the enclosed, totalizing fantasies of modern urbanity. “Psychogeography,” he writes, “sets for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals” (p. 23). After citing Georges-Eugène Haussmann’s Second Empire experiments in urban renovation, revealing the need to pursue alternate pathways to the ones projected either by commanders of arms or captains of industry, Debord (2008) writes in a manner that could just as easily refer to modern day Detroit: “Present-day urbanism’s main problem is ensuring the smooth circulation of a rapidly increasing number of motor vehicles. A future urbanism will

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

undoubtedly apply itself to no less utilitarian projects, but in the rather different context of psychogeographical possibilities" (p. 24). Morten, Stone, and Jarratt (2018) emphasize that this approach, even accounting for its Parisian pub crawl roots, offers a useful way to reframe, indeed to unframe, the picturesque generalization.

Psychogeography, we find, is a process of adding new layers, often deeply personal ones, upon the existing layout of a place. It can be whimsical, such as Debord's illustration of a friend who assiduously traveled Germany's Harz region using a London map. Or it can be more intentionally transgressive, such as when one adds an augmented-reality layer upon a downtown map, producing a ping at each location whose owners fail to pay their workers a living wage. Goh (2011) helps to justify this move with an articulation of the ways in which the city, wrenched from human experience, becomes abstract. In such an environment:

> [H]umans become transformed into the abstract units of work that fuel and enable the city, and as statistics that boast of the vitality of a city's economy, but often without due consideration of the human scale in terms of transportation, accommodation, health, entertainment, and other needs. (Goh, 2011, p. 196)

The psychogeographic intervention often demands a form of *dérive*, a willingness to follow the unplanned, sometimes extra-legal, pathways of the *flâneur*. Jenks and Neves (2000) define this urban sense-making as a primitive cartography that "uncovers compulsive currents within the city along with unprescribed boundaries of exclusion and uncontested gateways of opportunity" (p. 8). The authors add that an appreciation for *détournement*, the "the re-cycling, repositioning, or re-employing of the existing elements of an art work, or works, into a new synthesis," calls for the psychogeographer to produce and project ironic juxtapositions of objects, artifacts, experiences, and perceptions when seeking to reveal and destabilize the modern narrative (p. 8). In contrast to the society of spectacle, composed of authorized, prescribed vantage points, the photographs of wrecked and ruined places—which are expected to be empty spaces, badlands—may be lifted, at least somewhat, from their touristic anchorages. Yes, the art of poetic prose and its associated processes of reflexivity "has the potential to decay into narcissism" (Jenks & Neves, 2000, p. 14, citing Michael Keith). Admitting no small trepidation that this project illustrates that peril, I hold that Detroit and places like it should not be read according to overhead maps. They must be read via the *dérive* and *détournement* of experience. Borrowing once more from Debord (2008):

> The research that we are thus led to undertake on the arrangement of the elements of the urban setting, in close relation with the sensations they provoke,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> entails bold hypotheses that must be constantly corrected in the light of experience, by critique and self-critique. (pp. 25-26)

Critique, *especially* self-critique, is part of Detroit's rhetorical power. View, for example, a blue and white mural painted on an abandoned building along 6 Mile Road, across from the Inner Peace Baptist Church. The lettering compels at least a moment of self-analysis: "Do you not care that we are perishing?" This question recalls the narrative of Jesus crossing the Sea of Galilee with his disciples. As retold in Mark 4:38, a sudden storm erupts and threatens to overturn the boat and drown the men. Disciples awaken their master in a panic, demanding (according to some translations), "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" In that context, the disciples' complaint may be dismissed as evidence of their questionable faith. In the context of Detroit, the question takes on a different meaning. In this case, while the city drowns in debt, its saviors are absent.

I photograph this mural in 2017, at first pushing my camera past the barbed wire, angling away from an adjacent chain-link fence, to produce what I might term a clean shot. That phrase suggests some means of order: a plan to organize horizontal and vertical lines, like a Piet Mondrian composition. The metal, an interloper, cuts gangly diagonal pathways across the tableau, an

Figure 5.3. Do You Not Care (2017). Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

incision that would demand too much postproduction finesse. I fantasize of purer placement, a perfect square, something that could be reproduced for any number of purposes. This phrase, "Do you not care that we are perishing," is so easily lifted and turned from its original text, so conveniently transformed into an all-purpose Jeremiad. Picture a button, a bumper sticker, or even a glazed tile: an artifact selected from a display of "local artwork" sold at a Detroit museum. Such an object would surely be sold with a signature and a certificate, proof of provenance. Searching for the right frame, I think for a moment of that sort of production. I even wonder how I might profit from it. Eventually though, I pull the camera back, restoring the barrier and reestablishing my distance from the scene. While *I* am the interloper, the mural's challenge can be directed at someone else, *anyone* else. Once a tourist, now a photographer, I simply document at a distance. Admitting as much reasserts the divide between self and scene.

From Ruin Porn to RoboCop

As I contemplate that divide, I am drawn once more to a term that inevitably appears in most journalistic accounts of Detroit: Ruin Porn. The phrase suggests an odd ideography: the initial word *Ruin* descends underground, like a tree with roots stretching deep, straining for the remnants of rain. Diachronically the ruin reveals layers of sediment, foundations crushed by time, ruins of plans, of ambitions, of lives. Synchronically the roots ache outward in search of other connections. Initially the binding of ruin and porn would appear an odd choice—that is, until one studies the workings of the pornographic gaze. Here one might be reminded of Susan Sontag's observation that "the act of taking pictures is a semblance of appropriation, a semblance of rape" (p. 24). Augmenting this claim, Sontag describes Michael Powell's (1960) *Peeping Tom*, an early exemplar of the Slasher subgenre of horror films, in which a deranged man murders an assortment of young women with a spike built into the tripod leg of a motion picture camera. Adding to the horror, an affixed mirror allows his victim to watch as the spike pierces her neck. Drenched in its own symbolism, the film calls for its audience to critique their own pursuits of voyeuristic gratification, watching its assortment of grisly (though largely bloodless) scenes, which culminate with the murderer penetrating his own neck with the same device he used to stalk and murder his targets.

Contemporary critics savaged *Peeping Tom*, dismissing it as a ghastly spectacle of excess. More recent viewers have been more kind. Roger Ebert (1999) asked, "Why did critics and the public hate it so?" His reply demonstrates useful insight into the guilt that follows one's ability to look without consequence: "I think because it didn't allow the audience to lurk

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

anonymously in the dark, but implicated us in the voyeurism of the title character." The viciousness of distance, epitomized by the murderer's nearly comical pause to reveal his weapon seconds before dispatching his victim, is the consequence of the camera gaze. I would merely add one additional dimension to this analysis: the role of absence. While it is true that the consumption of pornography is not necessarily a solitary act, there is always at least one step of removal, some distance, even if only invented, between the object of the pornographic gaze and the one who procures its pleasures. The eyes of the person-turned-object may even affix themselves to the removed observer, but the act of forgetting that those eyes caress a camera, not upon the viewer, exceeds even the most determined commitment to engage the scene. The absence undergirding the pornographic fantasy musters the words of Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart. When asked about the definition of "hard-core pornography," Stewart offered no examples to support his arguments, but did confirm, "I know it when I see it." The object of sexualized gaze: invisible when inconvenient, dismissed when distasteful, roused when useful.

Focusing more directly on the present topic, we unpack the pornographic fantasy of Detroit. The city bristles with imagery; its vacant lots and waterlogged relics await the stalker, the infiltrator who seeks the solitary view and yet endlessly, almost inevitably, reproduces the same shots and the same needs that they carry. What is almost always found in these "money shots" is an intentional lack of people. Vultee (2013) explains how the photographical efforts to capture scenes of urban decay share with porn the violence that accompanies the absence of humanity:

> The harms perceived in ruin porn, thus, resemble harms attributed to porn itself. First, that people are enjoying themselves at the expense of someone else's pain; if the entity we see in an image was victimized in its creation, then viewing is not a victimless pleasure. (p. 143)

Mott and Roberts (2014) enhance this argument by emphasizing the alienation that accompanies the pornographic impulse:

> The label "porn" while it may be intended to be dismissive, does raise issues of the consumption of these photographs and of the images' deferral of deeper questions concerning exactly how and why it is that Detroit has so many ruins in the first place, similar to the way that consumers of porn do not generally concern themselves with questions of its production. (p. 231)

We may culminate this critique by unpacking the racialized role of erasure in Detroit —the efforts by many photographers seeking to frame urban wilderness shots as an deliberate removal of the racialized Other. To Millington

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

(2013), the picturesque imagination of roads and houses swallowed up by nature is faulty:

> Using the concept of naturalness as a way of explaining Detroit's decline pulls on a particular construction of nature—as either destructive or redemptive, but always separate—to neutralize the processes that are presently constructing Detroit's landscape, most notably virulent racism and industrial restructuring. (p. 287)

In these photographic efforts, the longing to produce aestheticized ruins, we place our fears in a manageable frame.

By way of illustration, let us spend a few moments at the corner of Franklin and Riopelle. This intersection may be found near the old Stone Soap building, which was once used to produce detergents for laundries and car washes but now awaits renovation as a site for condominiums and the Shakespeare in Detroit theatre.

This view is an offshoot of a better photograph I saw in a long-forgotten journalistic account of Detroit's ruins. I searched for hours during that initial visit, trying to chart the location of this shot. Combing the roads along the riverside in a quest for reproduction, I know that somewhere was a road that led from one mode of abandonment to another: Detroit's Renaissance Center. This enclosure, completed in 1981 and renovated a little more than two decades later, signifies the erection of corporate power amid human struggle. It was built as a sort of redoubt against the changes—political, economic,

Figure 5.4. Franklin and Riopelle (2011). Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

demographic—carving through the city. Corporate mavens and town boosters, after all, saw it coming, the decline of their city, even before stories of unblinking stoplights and food deserts and Devil's Nights began to appear in newspapers around the world. Some planners hoped they could replicate the apparent success of John C. Portman Jr.'s Atlanta Peachtree Center and various atrium hotels around the country, so they hired Portman to design their gleaming city-within-a-city.

> A cluster of four 39-story office buildings and a 73-story hotel with shops, restaurants and theaters was built in the 1970s to save a depressed city. But its gleaming towers on the Detroit River were as remote as a cloud-ringed Disneyland castle. Office workers, visitors and suburban shoppers could drive in and out without ever setting foot downtown. (McFadden, 2018, p. B4)

Just like Peachtree Center the Renaissance Center quickly earned scorn as a "fortress for whites to work in while the rest of the city goes to hell around them" (Darden et al., 1987, p. 50). The appeal of this enclosure, at least to populations that view urban environments as threatening, mirrors a still larger range of popular culture artifacts.

Recalling chapter 1's travels through yesterday's tomorrows we are drawn once more toward the utility of enclavic rhetoric. In Alexander Korda's (1936) *Things to Come*, we tunnel beneath the decaying graveyards of global war to build a "Great White World." That phrase brings to mind the White Cities of nineteenth- and twentieth-century world's fairs and amusement parks, the promise of order layered upon chaos. In Michael Anderson's (1976) *Logan's Run*, we peer past the flowing pastels of a '70s-era pleasure palace to confront deeper fears of social unrest and environmental collapse. And in Terry Gilliam's (1995) *Twelve Monkeys*, we run the length of the Greek Key to witness the future doubling back upon itself, sweeping us back with the current. To all these visions, we may add Paul Verhoeven's (1987) *RoboCop* and its imagination of Delta City, a new vision of urban order built "where Old Detroit now stands." That version of Detroit is the wilderness feared by the Puritans, it is human nature run amuck. This enclosure enhances the carceral strategies of its predecessors by wiping the past clean away, and by guarding the precincts of the new era with cyborg police. This version of Detroit becomes both a playground for ultraviolence and a justification for ever-present police power, justifying the production of a new generation of castle doctrines and stand-your-ground laws. And, yes, as of this writing, a Kickstarter-funded project to build a life-sized RoboCop statue will soon attract visitors hoping to photograph themselves next to "the future of law enforcement." This renaissance is not a rebirth of Detroit but of a militarized enclave that demands ruin to justify itself.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

As it turns out, I built my own version of Delta City back in that Dunedin ranch house, the one I shared with my single mother and two drunken grandparents. I gathered together bits of Lego, clusters of Lincoln Logs, and various other pieces of Bricolage to produce my own version of a Detroit Renaissance redoubt, my own personal safe space that offered a respite from the chaos outside my door. My childhood imagination could not anticipate something like *RoboCop*. It would be years later, during a hitch with the Navy, when a friend would pop a tape in the VCR and warn me, "My brother's a cop, and this movie really messed him up." In truth, my yearning for enclavic rhetoric was festooned with images of *Logan's Run*, dreaming of those plastic domes that promised safety from the wilderness outside. My family generally didn't see movies in the theater back then, so I depended on television trailers to project that future city into my consciousness, and then as an array of Peachtree-like structures that stretched across my bedroom. Either way, the gory violence of *RoboCop* and the comparatively bloodless police power of *Logan's Run* showcased the same principle—that a childhood hope for protection could be found within the safety of domes.

Back in 2011, I made my first pilgrimage to Detroit to photograph Michigan Central Station.[2] For most people, this site offers the quintessential view of the Motor City, mute testimony to the death of America's industrial might. During that first visit, I found that hanging around this place all but ensured conversation. Locals and out-of-towners are drawn to this Beaux Arts relic, eighteen stories high, dominating the skyline of Detroit's Corktown neighborhood. For a moment I flash back to something that Laura Grace Ford (2018) wrote about Los Angeles: "I'm breathing particles of the building, letting it settle on my skin" (p. 216). Visiting in mornings and evenings, seeking the right light for photos, I chat with folks who are attracted to this place. A number of visitors fancy themselves as urban explorers hoping to take illicit photos from inside the structure and in so doing, "discovering, infiltrating, and documenting little-seen parts of the built environment" (Fassi, 2010, p. 146). Most touristic photographers invent or borrow roles for themselves, some even augmenting the fantasy with carefully curated soundtracks, such as when one might listen to the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* score when hiking to Petra. As Atkinson and Rosati (2012) explain, "the Explorers [take] on Indiana Jones-like personas, in which they [brave] the dangers and hostile natives of the lost city to bring back relics in the form of photographs and narratives about the burned out edges and forgotten landmarks" (p. 58). Naturally those adventures demand some sense of threat to make the effort worthwhile.

For some urban infiltrators, police fill that role most conveniently. These cops are not searching for looters so much anymore; the opulent chandeliers that once hung in Michigan Central Station are long gone, and more practical

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 5.5. Michigan Central Station (2011). Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

stuff like copper has largely been stripped. Still, photographers and other would-be adventurers make regular appearances. The signs are everywhere, warning trespassers to beware the razor wire. Decaying floors and other dangers wait to snare the foolish. So I can hardly be surprised when an officer pulls up. Just the day before, he informs me, several college students were caught sneaking around inside. They got tickets for $175 each, while the professor who allegedly inspired the adventure paid no penalty. The instructor was back in Maryland. The cop lowers his voice with playful menace:

"You're not from Maryland, are you?"

Every once in a while someone mentions that dude who was found in the nearby Roosevelt Warehouse, a depository whose books and other school supplies rot away (a fire back in 1987 did not help matters). The story goes that a guy was spotted in an elevator shaft, frozen in ice. Only his feet were jutting out, like Popsicle sticks, folks tell me. Reporters came around and did their bit, and people still tell the tale. Even during my visit, the police officer recounts the particulars, but he focuses on my camera with particular interest.

"Are you *sure* you haven't been sneaking around the station? It's so easy to get in." He practically purrs those words.

No, I reply. I'm staying outside (and that is essentially true).

"But it's so easy to get in," he assures me.

Naturally we conclude at The Heidelberg Project [HP]: the inevitable termination to virtually any account of contemporary Detroit. HP is an outdoor art space in Detroit's McDougall-Hunt neighborhood where two blocks of blighted houses and empty lots were refashioned into colorful, disturbing, witty, and thought-provoking comments on the Motor City's state and fate. As you'd guess, Heidelberg is a street passing through the area, once a sign of dilapidation, now something livelier. Tyree Guyton launched the project in 1986 as a personal and politically charged response to the despair and decay of his neighborhood. No ethereal artiste, Guyton took wreckage as his media, determined to draw attention to the forces of racial discrimination and economic deprivation that helped wreck his hometown. Working with his grandfather, Sam Mackey, along with other local artists and neighborhood kids, Guyton painted polka dots, assembled discarded items, and composed jarring juxtapositions to challenge others to rethink the meaning of ruin. Naysayers, including two mayors, have called for the HP's demolition, and a number of Heidelberg houses have been razed in recent years. Even so, the Project draws photographers, activists, and curious onlookers from around the world. Tell a few folks that you're visiting Detroit and at least one person will insist that you add HP to your itinerary. Indeed a few local boosters have even begun (nervously) to add this place to their lists of touristic must-sees.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

During my first visit, on a blue-sky weekday, I see an empty information booth and a handful of tourists taking pictures from their cars, windows up. I am compelled to get out and walk. I spot a couple older guys sitting in a pickup and ask whether they think it'd be OK for me to take some pictures.

"Go ahead," one guy says.

"But don't sell 'em," the other one adds.

Unsurprisingly several neighborhood signs warn that the entire place is copyrighted. Detroiters know a thing or two about exploitation. Since visiting HP I have wanted to learn more about this experiment in urban renewal. The official website offers plenty of information about one of this project's goals: "The inclusion of vacant lands into a networked system of art/play/garden spaces and the adoption of an 'art-as-life' philosophy into all components of the neighborhood infrastructure"—a worthy enterprise, especially given the alternatives in this part of town. As Yang (2019) explains, "Guyton's art disrupts dominant narratives by encouraging visitors to view the city as a site of artistic inspiration rather than as solely a testament to industrial decline" (p. 570). In many ways, project founder Tyree Guyton is a symbol of Detroit: a city composed of people determined to produce meanings beyond expedient narratives of ruin.

Conclusion

To produce images of Detroit is to remember the insights of William Gibson's (1988) Gernsback Continuum protagonist. The character, a photographer trapped in the consensual hallucination of a 1980s-that-wasn't, trips into that alternative sphere of public life after tiring of efforts to suffuse more banal topics with meaning. "It is possible to photograph what isn't there," he observes, "it's damned hard to do, and consequently a very marketable talent" (p. 4). The shooter would understand the oddity of an intersection like Scott and Grandy, with its acres of empty lots broken by the occasional solitary dwelling. The shooter would also appreciate the surrealism of Franklin and Riopelle, staring toward the horizon of a Renaissance that has not yet arrived. Counterpoints too, like Michigan Central Station and the Heidelberg Project, also signify something of Detroit that is missing. Searching for that absence may inspire pornographic pleasures of looking without consequence. But a far deeper reservoir of feeling arises. For many folks a visit Detroit is an act of conjuring. And the dead do come forth in that city. They are the memories of personal loss, fear, enclosure, and release. For me, they are the fragments of childhood miseries and the freedom to play amid their precincts, to navigate them, to reorient them, through a camera viewfinder. This is another way of saying that one's observation of any Detroit photography, despite

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

repetition of theme and form, is really—always—a tour of something missing in the artist. To dwell there, even if only for a little while, is to pierce the comforting continuum of contemporary life and to imagine, to confront, and to control the ghosts of all those terrors we carry with us.

NOTES

1. Here I refer to the city, not the broader metro area. Updated 2020 Census figures were not available at the time of publication.
2. Much of the material that follows first appeared in my blog, Woodland Shoppers Paradise.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

6

Centralia's Graffiti Highway

To walk a path marked for vehicular traffic is a performance of layering that invites unusual contemplation. Modern highways, after all, beckon automobiles, not human beings; solitary hikers stride at substantial risk when they chart a human corridor too close to those cars and trucks that barrel down the road. To illustrate this phenomenon, take a moment and visualize yourself walking alongside an interstate highway. Pretend that you're playing a game with a friend. Your pal offers to drop you off and then drive ahead, where they'll park out of site around the bend. You plan to walk two or three miles to embrace the unmediated experience of those concrete rivers flowing between cities. You're pretty sure that you'll spot your friend in a half hour or so, waiting in air-conditioned comfort, ready to open the door upon your arrival. Afterward you might get something cool to drink at a small-town drive-in. Sonic sells a pretty good blue slush, or maybe a shake. That's the idea of this highway sojourn: you, a tourist of sunburned isolation, treading the road. So there you are, walking alone, and you're now wondering why this plan seemed like such a good idea.

The shoulder near the road burns hot under your shoes as you navigate the rotting detritus. It rained overnight, you think, but the moisture has burned away; the day has begun to sizzle. You forge a forking path among festering piles. The organic stuff—crushed lizards, exploded armadillos, skeletal birds—stinks and festers. The inorganic stuff doesn't smell so bad, but it vents a sense of doom anyway: all those cigarette butts, glass shards, plastic bags, fast food wrappers, soda cans, the occasional strip of cast-off tire; it all awaits those folks in their orange vests and metal grabbers. Sailors distinguish between two types of debris, flotsam and jetsam, the accidental and the purposeful. On this highway you can hardly tell the difference. The flies can't either, and a few hop off their perches, drawn to your blood.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

The sun now scorches directly overhead, casting no shadows; the clouds are wispy, thin, split by pluming contrails; the horizon shimmers in distant haze. A cacophony of metal rises and falls with each whooshing vehicle. Each passage seems to pull you in, threatening to suck the air from your lungs before sending you reeling. You stagger, pause, and pick up the pace. Raptors wheel overhead as you try to remember the lyrics to "Ventura Highway," or "East Bound and Down." You wonder how Johnny Cash managed to memorize all those cities in "I've Been Everywhere." You step carefully but still manage to lose your footing on the fractured pavement. Horrifying images of roadkill storm your mind and you try to step further away, toward a jut covered with brown grass. Yet there is little safety away from the road. The nearby fields are fenced off. You don't belong here, and you know it. You confront such a place when you amble along an abandoned stretch of Pennsylvania State Road 61 and find yourself in a largely forgotten piece of Appalachian coal country: a site you are not supposed to visit, a place called Centralia.

This chapter offers a reading of Centralia that illustrates a modern ruin of urban planning and governmental response. Doing so, I provide a brief overview of the calamity for which the town is known, a well-intended cleanup effort that caused the near destruction of the borough. This overview will also include some assessment of scholarly and methodological considerations that inform the forthcoming analysis of Graffiti Highway, a stretch of road south of Centralia, that demonstrates a potential of touring and photography to disrupt corporate narratives and reassert natural processes within human structures. We then conclude with an unexpectedly appropriate transformation: an additional layer of material piled upon Graffiti Highway in 2020 that complicates—and further illustrates—this chapter's broader argument.

Framing Centralia

The Centralia disaster began in 1962 when volunteer firefighters ignited a controlled burn to clean up a landfill. They did so upon a site that sits atop the residues of a strip-mining cut (Nolter & Vice, 2004). To their surprise and dawning horror, the fire they lit followed traces of coal that traveled to depths of about 300 feet, kindling a complex network of tunnels stretching over 3,700 acres. Efforts to quench the blaze and impede release of toxic fumes proved fruitless. Even so, local and state officials held out hope that the fire could be extinguished. They only needed time and funding, they said. Even as home- and business owners noticed strange effects of the underground blaze, especially in places where snow would melt more quickly than normal, never seeming to accumulate, the regional population held onto their confidence that the fire would eventually be put out.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

The narrative changed, though, on Valentine's Day in 1981, when a twelve-year-old named Todd Domboski, exploring tendrils of smoke emitting near an ash tree, nearly died when a sinkhole erupted under his feet (DeKok, 2000, p. 152). The combination of heat and poisonous fumes nearly killed the boy. Only his quick decision to hang onto a tree root, and the timely assistance of his cousin who raced to save him, kept Domboski alive. That incident helped fashion a consensus that the fire could no longer be controlled. Subsequent efforts by religious leaders to help community members produce some spiritual cohesion to the disaster proved ineffective. As Kroll-Smith and Couch (1987) found, "[g]ases underground or invisible toxic substances do not provide a common focus for recovery or for the attribution of religious meaning" (p. 36). Though dubious about the intentions of government officials bearing solutions, locals began to accept buyout offers and fled, maybe staying long enough to watch the work of bulldozers razing their homes. The population plummeted from 1,400 in 1962, to ten in 2017. Nolter and Vice (2004) summarize the bitter outcome: "Centralia is an example of a worst-case scenario for the [effect] of a coal fire on a community" (p. 105), a scenario whose consequences will play out for the additional 250 years that some experts claim the fire will burn.

Centralia merits our attention, not only from its five-decade status as an urban ruin but also for its potential to convey useful insights into contemporary practices of dark tourism. Yet relatively little examination of the Centralia fire has appeared in communication scholarship, with two notable exceptions. In an unpublished master's thesis, Meghann McGuire applies Michael Calvin McGee's (1990) concept of rhetoric-as-fragments—with a gesture to Roger Aden et al.'s (2009) notion of "re-collection"—to read, among other sites, the town's Graffiti Highway according to two themes: traces of the fire and critiques of power structures that failed to address the coal seam disaster that wrecked the town. As noted in the introduction to this book, Patrick Santoro (2015) integrates vivid accounts of Centralia into a one-person performance, *At the Mercy of Ruin*, to produce a meditation on personal loss. These readings of Centralia have influenced my work, particularly Santoro's personal encounter with the borough. Even so, I generally do not enter this conversation from an autoethnographic approach. I prefer to employ a Foucauldian lens of heterochrony to read the multiple maps of meaning that layer and intersect within a place, augmenting formal emplacements with unseen, sometimes hidden, possibilities. But first we need to take a little trip.

Touring Centralia

To visit Centralia is first to seek its artifacts, its remainders, its remnants. You might as well start just north of the borough's center, at one of the few

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

structures that wasn't torn down. The administrative headquarters is a split-level structure that slopes downward along Locust Avenue. The site includes office and meeting space, along with firefighting equipment. Peer through a glass door and you'll spot a sign that says, "Keep Centralia on the map." But you won't find "Centralia" on the building. Only the ghostly outlines of that word exists under the words "Municipal Building," bolted onto a brown grid. Otherwise there is little to affirm your location. A resident in nearby Numidia describes the disappointment suffered by recent visitors in search of sometime, proof of place, such as those iconic burps of smoke from pipes leading underground, those licks of flame that once belched from the cracked pavement. Changes in the flow of the underground fire have slackened its obvious emissions. Urbexers still visit and write about the sulfur smell, the rising smoke. They make references to eerie, grim vistas, and to the *Silent Hill* franchise. But one generally must settle to perceive the unseen miasma of gasses that may float above the surface, which can be frustrating to the Centralia tourist. Invisible toxicity does not score Instagram attention.

Such a predicament reanimates the question: How do you photograph something that isn't there? Searching for an answer, you may be inclined to search further afield for a sense of the place, tracing cardinal paths away from the Centralia, driving quiet roads that carve through the hills where wind turbine blades paint languid shadows over the trees. Start your tour by driving west to the borough of Mt. Carmel and you enter what was once a logging town before miners began to dig for anthracite. Local historians note with pride how their borough was one of the first sites for Thomas Edison's Illuminating Companies, generating station began in the 1880s to demonstrate the potential for free standing power plants to light cities across the world. Today, Mt. Carmel boasts a grid of white clapboard houses whose downspouts stretch over cracked sidewalks beneath a web of dangling lines strung across the roads.

Return to Centralia and then head south toward Ashland ("Home of the Black Diamonds"). You'll know you've arrived when you pass the old Texaco station, now "Roy's Garage." The place still affirms the thrill of speed with those triple-green lines that once graced Texaco stations across the country. But much of the original lettering is gone, marked by oily drips. Prasine characters advertise MA   BRICATION, which recreates a nearly forgotten product of roadside maintenance, Marfak Lubrication ("[P]rotects your car from wear and friction for 1,000 miles and more"). Near the center of town, you can climb a bronze reproduction of Whistler's Mother erected by the Ashland Boys'Association in 1938. An advertisment at another gas station, across the street, pitches Sonoma cigerettes for about five bucks a pack ("Escape for less").

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Head back to your starting point and then turn east, taking a dogleg on Big Mine Run Road, and you'll drop into Girardville, which some locals term "Guntown." You're almost there when you pass a thin green house clad in honeycomb siding. The borough has suffered the same drought of jobs since so many of the mines have shut down. Drug sales dominate the local trade. A local news report describes a main street house whose widow's walk collapsed after a rainstorm, becoming a bird's nest (Senior, 2018). Signs for hometown heroes hang on light posts, as they do across the region, recalling other examples for kids to emulate.

From Centralia, take one last stop, heading north. Crusing past the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church that glows on a hillside in the setting sun, you quickly arrive in Aristes. The census-designated place is nearly adjascent to Centralia. The town is named after Athenian statesman Aristides. There are almost no businesses here, and only a few houses. Local kids ride their bikes in wavy circles on the street near the fire station. At this point on your cardinal journey, the sun may be setting. Heading back to Centralia, you might as well take the backroad that snakes near the church. Sometimes you'll hear shotgun blasts (hunters, you hope). The whole trip, painting paths west, south, east, and north, can be done in a day or in less than an hour, depending on your pace.

Only a handful of residents hang on to Centralia, occupying houses that stick up like teeth from a broken mouth among weed-choked lots and abandoned trash. Visitors often stop on Troutwine Street, across from a vacant lot, to photograph one of the borough's surviving houses. As of late 2019, the narrow dwelling is occupied and well-tended. Red brick forms the foundation of this place, upon which a small porch offers liminal space between exterior and interior. A porch swing would appear to invite a visit, maybe a glass of lemonade. But savvy travelers know the locals have long grown tired of journalists and tourists who bring nothing to the community, slowing down only long enough to take snapshots, soundbites, and souvenirs. White clapboard siding ascends toward a second floor topped with a steep pitched roof, ideal for snowy winters. Green paint washes a façade that marks a tentative boundary between domesticity and the encroachment of wilderness. Staying on the road, framing a photo, the visitor may meditate upon that empty plane stretching toward Centre Street. All that green space, dotted with trees, affords a great place to play catch, to host a barbeque, maybe to build a pool.

Gaze upon the lot from an overhead perspective, though, from the rarified vantage point afforded by Google satellite view, and the lonely grid of Centralia reveals something else. The house is alone among an array of roads that resemble a spreadsheet flipped onto its side. There's another dwelling on nearby Myers Street, but that's it. The neighborhood is otherwise abandoned,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

though not quite empty. You can walk the lots and spot stony vestiges of broken foundations, pieces of shattered glass, calcified corpses of dead animals, vestiges of burnt rubbish. It takes an act of will, of imagination (or of Photoshop editing) to superimpose all of those old houses, storefronts, gas stations, restaurants, and other proofs of human habitation upon these empty roads. There's that one church, but they do not welcome strangers. There's a large cemetery. But there are no official memorials or placards to what exhausted this place, no guided tours, no places to buy souvenirs. Centralia doesn't even have a ZIP code. It did once, back when it was a community with businesses and restaurants and schools and houses. But that was a long time ago. Centralia is now largely empty. Mostly we are left with allusions and rumors, horror movies and mining companies, and, needless to say, to that underground conflagration whose heat and toxicity ruined the lives of everyone who lived there.

Photographing Centralia

For most visitors to Centralia, there is only one destination: Graffiti Highway, a three-quarter mile segment of road that offers an odd hotspot for folks who dream of wandering freely upon a surface that once thrummed with auto traffic. Freely, that is, but not in complete safety. Visitors know that this region sits atop an inferno, and many folks search the cracked and broken spines of the road for hissing emissions of toxic gas, for photogenic bursts of heat and steam that will look good on their social media feeds. They find their way here after spotting a yellow and black traffic sign covered in spray paint that signifies the newer curve of State Road 61 that arcs away from the old road. Usually they'll find a few cars parked near a berm, close to a thicket of trees festooned with No Trespassing signs. Some wonder about the import of those warnings, fearing that their cars may get ticketed or towed. But, aside from the potential threat of citation, most visitors exit their cars to walk on the asphalt.

The Highway earns its moniker for the presence of spray-painted names, slogans, illustrations, and other ephemera coated upon the road by its visitors. The pavement is a riot of colors and shapes, with globs of paint seeping through the strata, collecting in deposits among the crevasses. The highway attracts impromptu taggers rather than dedicated stencilers or muralists; one will find no Banksy pieces here, no Shepard Fairey murals either. The messages are seldom substantial; most range from the merely pointless to the playfully absurd. A brief selection from three days of visits in October 2019 offers a cornucopia of oddities. "Trey" paints a red, white, and blue nametag that announces "Hello[,] I'm Trey": a greeting with no expectation

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

of connection, a message with no hope of conversation. Another visitor has painted the "Free Wifi" symbol, signaling both the desire for connection and the difficulty of its occurrence in a region with so little population. One artist leaves an elongated depiction of Homer Simpson, eyes rendered bloodshot and middle fingers deployed in mockery; a later visitor alters the depiction by affixing an oversized penis [Penises, I should add, represent a common theme of Graffiti Highway artwork]. Still another visitor paints the names *Westworld*, *The Terminator*, and *I, Robot* upon three blue strips; another leaves a dire warning, "Beware the River Penguins." And then there's a rock alongside the road, spray-painted gold and marked with a single word: "Poop."

Any artwork affixed to the surface is liable to be painted over within days, sometimes within hours. This is part of the pleasure of any amble along the highway, the confidence that one will see something new on each visit. Eagle-eyed tourists are likely to find semi-filled spray cans among jumbles of empties, enabling them to produce their own coatings of artwork that bleed into the pavement. The roadbed is therefore a palimpsest of traces, layers upon layers of signs. Often the newer tag effaces the older one, eradicating its meaning. To be sure, one hardly comes to this place with the expectation of witnessing a monument fixed as a chemically produced photograph, crafted never to fade. As McGuire (2015) explains, "[t]he markings are not permanent, and fluctuate in vibrancy as time and rain work to erase their

Figure 6.1. "Fuck Cops" as Simple Layering. Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

existence" (p. 68). In this way, Graffiti Highway works to conjure up a form of Derridean haunting.

As we will see, the road can sometimes evoke an unsettling reminder of the passing of things, which recalls *mono no aware*. This production often emerges through the intentional layering of messages. In the analysis that follows, we will begin with a simple description of such layering, affixing one message atop another. Thereafter we will study two more complex messages, employing tactics of Michel Foucault's (2008) notion of heterochrony—"slices of time" (p. 20)—that we may term Temporal Enclave and Temporal Projection. Finally we will study material manifestations of what Schönle (2006) labels the "rhetoric of rupture" (p. 653). This latter turn reveals Graffiti Highway as an object-reminder of the evanescent nature of human order.

We start with the most basic process of layering, affixing one message upon another. As in any site of public life where street artists congregate, visitors comment upon their predecessors, often in disagreement. Consider one example viewed in October 2019. At the top of the frame is a painting of the "Thin Blue Line" flag: a United States emblem in which a stripe is replaced with a blue band, symbolizing the sacrifices made by police officers who safeguard the lives of citizens. Below that flag, a slightly wider rectangle, painted white and edged with a darker blue, encloses the phrase, "In valor there is hope." Thereafter, one or more visitors offer their own editorial suggestions to this pro-police argument. The word "hope" is covered by a new message in black paint: "hoes."

The words "Fuck Cops" are imposed upon the flag in orange and white lettering. Not a conversation so much as an antagonistic set of interventions, these phrases indicate a clash of cultures unlikely to see prompt resolution. In fact, upon close inspection, a third message is imposed upon the previous ones: thin white lines, apparently formed by chalk, cross through the insult. Other messages nearby denote a similarly wide range of viewpoints. One visitor tops a pink coffin with, "Smash Capitalism." Further down the road, another visitor paints the word "Mexico" upon a storm drain, adding arrows pointing downward to reveal odious attitudes toward the U.S.'s southern border. As one may anticipate, political statements rather than personal affirmations are most likely to reap spray-paint rebuke. Not too far from these markings, for another example, a visitor has painted "Biden 2020" in yellow, only to have that message replaced with another marking in black. "Bernie" replaces "Biden," at least for the moment.

The temporary natures of these statements, the reality that even the most vitriolic disputes are quickly bypassed by newer arguments, signals some sensibility to the choices made by many visitors to the road. Some opt for simple messages of presence, hastily affixing their names (and sometimes

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

the names of lovers, real or imagined) onto the pavement. Taggers spray their names for any number of reasons not easily subject to academic analysis. Yet as Somerville (2011) explains, "[a]t its most basic level, graffiti is an affirmation of our own being; it is an announcement that 'I was here'" (p. 105). One is hardly surprised to find that sentiment painted at various locations near Centralia. One such marking, spotted on the same 2019 visit, is not notable for its artistic qualities; it is simply the imposition of lettering in bright orange upon multiple layers of older tags painted atop a narrow divider strip.

Here we gain some sense of the unique quality of Centralia's Graffiti Highway: its power to complicate the apparently endless flow of modern life through the production of Temporal Enclaves. We may read these "I was here" statements as messages denoting presence, connoting little more. And initially we are wise not to read too deeply into etchings left on the pavement, less we find only ourselves, and the baggage we pack, along the way. Yet something important materializes from that constellation of the historical "I" upon a place built for movement rather than stasis.

By way of comparison we might perform an alternative, something like, "I *am* here." Who would make such a boast? What possible import could that pronouncement have? Such a self-evident proposition apparently makes little sense "here" and "now." Of course one may articulate other places and times in which this statement would prove to be essential, as when sixties-era civil rights activists wore signs and hoisted posters that exclaimed, "I *Am* A

Figure 6.2. "I Was Here" as Temporal Enclave. Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Man" (emphasis in original). This statement, drawing from the 1787 Wedgwood anti-slavery appeal, "Am I not a man and a brother," while also being reminiscent of Sojourner Truth's challenge, "Ain't I a Woman?," does not produce but rather *recognizes* an audience. A material variation of the Cartesian *cogito*, this exclamation reveals the absurdity of presumed absence. "I *am* here" after all. However you define me, you cannot doubt what you see.

In contrast, the assertion "I *was* here" stems from a sense of absence rather than an affirmation of presence. It is a need to layer the past onto the present. The sentiment, this sediment, does not arise from a precarity of pride but from an even more fraught position of imminent destruction. The etching of a phrase like "I was here" almost always hails an audience that will soon be impossible to reach. We see a similar a conundrum in Steven Spielberg's 2001 *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* when the "Mecha" character Gigolo Joe asserts his value while being hoisted away from his artificial friend David. "I am," he states, before calling more loudly into the winds, "I *was*!" Responding to a distressing *deus ex machina*, Joe seeks to escape his pending ruination by locating himself in the past. He has no hope to thwart the movement of events that drag him toward his likely demise; he merely seeks to survive annihilation through the invocation of memory. We witness an earlier hope toward this end in a 1969 episode of *Star Trek* titled "All Our Yesterdays." In that episode, "librarians" on a planet threatened by a supernova use a device called the *Atavachron* (a fanciful combination of the Latin "ancestor" and the Greek "time") to send inhabitants into the past where they can live out their lives. Once again, the present will soon give way to a ruinous future. Temporal Enclave, in response, affords the potential to endure.

Such a response is not solely the subject of science fiction and fantasy. It expresses a modern fear of perpetual change that sweeps vulnerable people and populations away from any hope for respite, along with the neoliberalist neurasthenia produced by the smoothing of urban life into frictionless flow (Garrett, 2014, p. 6). We witness these transmissions most vividly in the "'always in transition', 'always becoming' aspect of place [that is] largely grounded in a politics of accumulation and dereliction—mass production and mass decay" (Fraser, 2018, p. 445). In such an environment, one can hardly hope to be "here" for too long. The ability to "go with the flow," to move, to twist, to stretch, to contort, and always to accept an endless array of supposedly efficacious reforms constitutes the necessary attribute of survival. In such a state of becoming and unbecoming, it makes little sense to assert, "I am here," because neither "I" nor "here" will endure for long. The former residents of Centralia understand this phenomenon all too well, having abandoned their faith in those governmental assurances that pledged the safety of

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 6.3. "Road Work Ahead" as Temporal Projection. Photograph by Author

their property and lives, only to find their homes bulldozed and their potential rights to anthracite wealth seemingly stolen away.

We now turn toward another tactic of heterochrony, what we may define as Temporal Projection. From this point we observe the artistic comment upon the present through the invocation of some form of future, often one that is ironically idealized:

> In the ruin, time is made visible through space. The past is invading the present and the future, always taking us out of the now, casting us backwards or forwards in time, as a catastrophe that has already happened or will happen: the past as ruinous present, the present as anticipated cataclysmic future. (Arnold-de Simine, 2015, p. 95)

One example of this "anticipated cataclysmic future" resides within a diamond-shaped orange safety sign that announces "Road Work Ahead" on Graffiti Highway. The sign reminds viewers of the obvious state of the highway, a warped, fractured road that leads nowhere. Yet in another sense, the sign bears a message, transient and inchoate, about the future of Centralia, Pennsylvania, the United States, and the still broader state of labor within the globalized economy. For one must acquire authority to mark this locale as a site of labor, to announce and to command that work shall take place here. But the artist possesses no such power. They spray paint, quickly and with

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

tenuous sway, for rumors of police roundups are never too far from the minds of touristic taggers.

This example of street art serves to mock the failure of the road, and its future, for there will be no improvement of the thoroughfare. "Road Work Ahead" refers both to space and time, "ahead," indicating not only the cessation of motion but also the failure of progress rhetoric that makes no sense in a region of declining industry and collapsing population. The artist in a place like this reminds us of Theotocopulos in Alexander Korda's (1936) *Things to Come*—that once and future rebel striking out against "machines and marvels," that critic of engineers and planners with their visions of a Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow The sign ahead, here on Graffiti Highway, points backward to Marxian alienation, to bureaucratic incompetence, to political deception, and hails to viewer not to race ahead but to stop the wheels.

Having studied examples of Temporal Enclave and Temporal Projection, we shall examine one final attribute of Graffiti Highway: the material layering of photographers upon the scenes they seek to capture with their cameras. Remember, sharing photos is as much about affirmation of the photographer's presence as of the subject of their gaze. Yet even without intending to do so, the photographer becomes affixed upon the surface, a part of the scene, depending on the shadows cast by sunlight. Often this is accidental; it may even be viewed as a flaw of composition. Still, the image attests to

Figure 6.4. "A Rhetoric of Rupture." Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

human presence in an embodied manner. This is a unique quality of this place. Whereas other sites of street art are in fact not on the street at all but are placed upon walls or other structures *beside* the street, standing upon this road becomes a form of immersion into the artwork.

Beyond the human intervention upon Graffiti Highway are natural layers laid upon and digging within the roadbed. Initially we observe how shadows and light produce their own layers upon this place, rendering colors sharp or muted depending on the time of day, the weather, and other environmental factors. But other influences dig deeper. As DeSilvey and Edensor (2013) describe, "[i]n the ruin, decay strips away layers of time and exposes others, revealing hidden strata and obscured material memories" (p. 471). Thus the traveler is drawn to places where the road breaks, confronting memories of bursting vents, of uncontrolled flame and toxicity, now home to unexpected flora and fauna.

Walking along the highway, the visitor stops to ruminate upon these ruptures. Sometimes the tourist kneels, sliding fingers along within the cragged slices that resemble the results of a fearsome animal whose talons tear through flesh. This is the rhetoric of rupture, the site where visitors observe a material manifestation of Foucauldian heterochrony, first as nature, then as civilization, thereafter as nature renewed: wild, dangerous, sublime. DeSilvey (2006) points our attention to this more fluid relationship between temporality and meaning: "Cultural remembering proceeds not through reflection on a static memorial remnant, but on the process that slowly pulls the remnant into other ecologies and expressions of value" (p. 328). It takes little prodding for this place to intersect with disparate continuums of possibility, other worlds whose spectral presences/presents compel us to rethink the assurances of our own positions.

Conclusion

In our analysis of Centralia, we briefly examined the background of the disaster that transformed the borough into a symbol of American industrial decay. Afterward we focused our attention upon various tactics of layering at nearby Graffiti Highway. These moves range from simple applications of overlapping messages to more sophisticated techniques of Temporal Enclave and Temporal Projection. We completed our analysis with an assessment of the power of material rupture to reveal the transient nature of human order. In so doing, we may be reminded of insights offered by Jennifer Peeples, whose notion of "toxic sublime" augments a well-established conversation about the impact of place upon human sense-making that stretches back to the writings of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. Contributing to this dialogue, Peeples

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

(2011) defines the toxic sublime "as the tensions that arise from recognizing the toxicity of a place, object or situation, while simultaneously appreciating its mystery, magnificence and ability to inspire awe" (p. 375, emphasis removed from original). I will return to these themes in the forthcoming analysis of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone.

In the meantime, though, let us take the road out of town. On the way, past those abandoned residues, those vacant lots, and those slow whirling windmills, we might stop awhile to flip through our photos. We hoped to catch wisps of smoke, crackles of flame. But the signs of tragedy are hidden underground. As a site of disaster tourism, Centralia and the towns that surround it requires more imagination than we might prefer to exert. There are few souvenirs, aside from some books and other mementos available at historical centers and mining museums. And most folks in this region are frankly tired of tourists, academics, and reporters. Visitors come to take pictures but, as is the case in places like Detroit, seldom leave much in return—other than the risk of liability. Can one of those quad-cyclists roaring over the ruts and cracks spill themselves over the pavement? Will a tourist stumble into a smoldering fissure and get charbroiled? For a time, tourists, police, and corporate risk managers tolerated a tacit understanding. Graffiti Highway was never without risk, but most visitors packed enough common sense to merit some accommodation.

It was bound to happen eventually, though: Pagnotti Enterprises, owner of the land upon which the tattooed roadbed charted its course, ordered that the road be covered, presumably in response to liability issues raised by visitors traipsing across private land. It took three days in April 2020 for dump trucks to finish the job, pouring "pyramids of dirt" onto the pavement. That phrase, which appears in Julie Knutson's (2020) evocative *Atlas Obscura* article about the apparently final ruin of Graffiti Highway, calls to mind ancient relics and a mystical vision.

I refer to Walter Benjamin's influential (though idiosyncratic) interpretation of Paul Klee's 1920 *Angelus Novus*. Here it is worth recalling that Benjamin purchased the piece in 1921 and referred to it frequently in his writings until his death by suicide in 1940. It is one of those artifacts one finds in the office or apartment of an intellectual that one admires, filled with inscrutability. Upon first glance, one regards the image and knows, or at least assumes, that its mysteries contain the seeds of understanding—as if one is almost able to glimpse the mind of its owner. Returning to that room, spotting the totem on the same wall after months or years, the object and the surrounding space may appear to have shrunk in size and significance. With few exceptions, this is the nature of hero-worship, a sort of ruin best contemplated beyond the narrow precincts of this project. I offer this detour as a way to imagine the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

responses of Benjamin's friends and supporters to the man's odd obsession with Klee's artwork. One could glance upon the drawing (a monoprint: an object of aura that literally could not be reproduced in perfect accuracy) and then scrutinize its owner, wondering in awe. Glancing, gazing, staring, what did Benjamin see?

We may rehearse the typical description: A yellowish brown frame, dotted and smudged, surrounded by billowing ash; an angel composed of spindly lines, wavy locks, bulging eyes, jug ears, mushroom nose, and buck teeth; the face of a beer mug covered with froth, a time capsule packed with scrolls. A rectangle neck joins the body in a severe geometry of shrinking fractals, something summoned in a dream or an opium den. Wings folded like origami, topped with fingers, smokestacks, cannons. Stubby feet split into toes that resemble sausages, or phalluses. The figure strides forward; the eyes are drawn backward. The wings convey tumult, a gull slammed onward by a hurricane. Benjamin (1968) explains, "This is how one pictures the angel of history" (p. 257). One may glimpse, at least through some fantasy time travel, the room where the print once hung, the sullen metronome of a clock, the damp aroma of pipe smoke, the ding of a distant tram. You cast your eyes closer upon the image, falling into those brown lines and yellow planes. You want to see the angel of history.

But Walter Benjamin is not in his office; he is buried on a borderland, near where he took a fatal overdose of morphine, fearing that he would be swept back into France by Spanish fascists. And you are standing on the dirt-covered burial site of a forlorn highway in Pennsylvania coal country. Like Klee's angel, like Benjamin's dawning doom, you stand gazing ahead. All roads lead forward. Yet your face is drawn toward the past. Those muddy pyramids climb in pathetic piles that careen toward the horizon. Looking backward, though, you understand what the angel sees: "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet." Like the angel, you are pushed forward, though you wish you could stay. What is this storm that rages? Benjamin supposes that the storm explodes from a domain called "Paradise." This is the promise of change, of transformation, of a heavenly pathway. But, like all utopias, Paradise is a dashboard light, the illumination of a lie. Like those construction signs that accompany the drag of metal through earth, the promise of highways and horizons, of skyscrapers, the tempest erupts from a singular force, despite its multiple manifestations: "The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress" (p. 258). This, then, is something of the secret of those "Pardon our Progress" signs that mar the countryside, signifying the machine's lurching advance. We seek pardon for inconvenience,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

protection from liability, assurance of perfection. But in places like Centralia, we yearn eventually to dismantle and forget the road we built and the holes we dug, lest we excavate the fires that we ourselves lit.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

7

Chernobyl's Exclusion Zone

A woman wearing a housedress stares past a window, watching the world burn. Just a moment ago, Lyudmilla looked upon her husband Vasily's body, sprawled upon the bed they share. Soon, she imagines, it will be time to convey the news of her pregnancy. For now, she is comforted by his quiet presence and her secret knowledge. She steps into the drab kitchen to make some tea. We are left to stare outward upon a strange vista: a living room window that frames a distant building, some sort of power plant. We hear the clatter of dishware, the clink of a spoon, the sounds of nighttime domesticity. Then the structure bursts into flame. There is no sound, only an angry yellow finger of fire. The woman walks past, unknowingly, just as the shockwave arrives. She gasps in panic and Vasily stumbles from the bedroom. They step in soundless terror closer to the window. Dogs bark outside, the power plant is aglow, and a strange blue light rises toward the sky.

For many readers, the story of Lyudmilla and Vasily Ignatenko was first introduced in the HBO-Sky UK miniseries *Chernobyl*, which is among the highest-rated television shows of all time. The five-part dramatization of historical events, though undeniably a triumph of direction, cinematography, and drama, has inspired no small amount of debate about its veracity. How accurate was this portrayal of the 1986 meltdown and explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant? To many observers, the miniseries demonstrated an impressive attention to detail, such that "[o]ne could almost smell the cabbage soup and the stale tobacco smoke" (Braithwaite, 2019, p. 154). Certainly the writers and producers took substantial creative license, most notably by condensing large groups of historical persons into fictional composites. Yet one gathers a general consensus that *Chernobyl* succeeds in portraying historical events "in the larger system of Soviet society, scientific infrastructure, and politics, in a way that has compelled viewers around the world" (Schmid,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 7.1. CEZ Sarcophagus. Photograph by Author

2020, p. 1156). Nonetheless, efforts to explain the disaster, to make it comprehendible to non-scientists, inevitably confront the limitations of fiction. We could do far worse than to start with Maria Kuznetsova's (2014) elegant summary: "A team of technicians botched a safety test," she writes, "and a nuclear reaction spun out of control" (p. 122). And the shockwave spread by this accident rolls onward and outward. While residents of the nearby city of Pripyat would feel the most immediate impact, the disaster spread plumes of deadly radiation across Europe, hastening the demise of the Soviet Union and producing a death toll that even now is difficult to calculate.

An additional outcome of the incident was the creation of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (CEZ), which ranges across approximately 1,000 square kilometers, an area slightly smaller than Yosemite National Park in the United States. Established after the meltdown to protect surrounding regions from radiological dangers, the Zone has unexpectedly become a tourist hot spot, attracting visitors determined to wander ruins, seeking to snap selfies on the site of the world's worst nuclear accident. Motivations to tour this desolate place are as varied as the numbers of travelers who journey there. Nonetheless, having visited Chernobyl in 2015 and 2018, I propose a central rationale of CEZ tourism: a longing for corporeal experience not generally found in modern life. In this chapter I augment the heterotopian framework proposed by Michel Foucault to reconnoiter this motivation. But first I provide some background on the disaster that continues to attract swarms of dark tourists

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

to the encroaching wilderness, abandoned towers, and leaking dangers of Chernobyl.

Background of the Disaster

How could this catastrophe happen? Ironically the incident began with a safety test. On the evening of April 25, 1986, managers at the Vladimir Ilyich Lenin Power Plant decided to confirm their ability to maintain power for safety devices during a shutdown. Their experiment necessitated that automated safety devices be switched off. But managers were confident in this procedure. The RBMK-1000-type reactor they operated was promised to be so foolproof that odds of meltdown were estimated to be "one in 10,000 years" (Rylsky & Nesvitenko, 1986, p. 8).[1] Designers were so sure of the reactor's safety that they opted not to construct a containment system around the core (Wilson, 1987, p. 1369). This proved to be a dreadful mistake.

The accident began when operators set the turbine speed too low. One might imagine that slow turbine speed would ensure safe production. But peculiarities of the RBMK-1000 design meant that insufficient speed could produce excess steam. Responding to this problem, operators withdrew most of the reactor's control rods and frantically adjusted the flow of coolant, a solution that exacerbated the increase of pressure. At 1:23 on the morning of April 26, two explosions occurred in rapid succession, first breaching the reactor core and then destroying part of the building's outer walls. As flames swept the facility, lethal forms of radiation spewed into the atmosphere. Once managers saw that the core had been ruptured, they pressed a growing number of personnel into service. Local firefighters extinguished much of the blaze by sunrise, but hunks of graphite from the reactor core continued to pump ionizing radiation into the air. First responders, sometimes called "bio-robots" in typically grim Soviet humor, took turns scooping up radioactive debris from the wrecked building and nearby roof of Reactor 3, but the damage was too severe for quick repair. The scope of the disaster was slowly dawning on managers, operators, and personnel.[2]

That morning the 44,000 residents of Pripyat awoke with no clue of the crisis developing three kilometers away. They lived in a town established in 1970 to house managers, employees, soldiers, and other personnel, along with their families: a showcase serving as "a shining example of Soviet urban design" (Rush-Cooper, 2013, p. 9). Two months prior to the explosion, an unsigned *Soviet Life* article called "Born of the Atom" (1986) lauded Pripyat's bucolic splendor: "The streets abound in flowers. The blocks of apartments stand in pine groves. Each residential area has a school, a library, shops, sports facilities and playgrounds close by" (p. 13). As the sun

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

rose and graphite fires smoldered, city-life progressed with prosaic rituals, "with mothers hanging laundry out to dry, going to market for groceries, or watching their children spend most of Saturday, April 26, playing outdoors" (Young & Launer, 1991, p. 105). Readings of radiation seemed manageable at first, but localized spikes convinced administrators to remove the population in the afternoon of Sunday, April 27.[3] Though residents were assured that their departure would be temporary, the evacuation proved to be permanent.[4]

The next day, Monday, April 28, Swedish detectors picked up particles from the plume of radioactive material spewing from Reactor 4.[5] Only at this point did the rest of the world acknowledge that a crisis was unfolding in the USSR. That evening, Soviet media made a benign announcement:

> An accident has occurred at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and one of the reactors has been damaged. Measures are being taken to deal with the consequences of the accident. Aid is being given to those affected; a government commission has been created. (Schmid, 2011, p. 20)[6]

Determined that they could control the spiraling crisis, most administrators described the disaster as a tragic but manageable industrial accident. Though some early reports appearing in Western media speculated that thousands of people had died (Geist, 2015, p. 120), the Chernobyl Forum (2006) states that twenty-eight operators and emergency personnel perished from acute radiation syndrome, adding an additional three deaths caused by other factors (p. 14). Soviet experts presumed that the expanded risk of exposure was relatively low. Children marched in Kiev May Day celebrations "in the Soviet regime's efforts to maintain an air of normalcy" (Phillips, 2002, p. 28; see also Phillips, 2004, p. 161). Adding to the delay, distributions of iodine prophylaxis and warnings to avoid milk from local animals would not come for days (Steinhauser, Brandl, & Johnson, 2014, p. 811; see also Petryna, 2004, p. 252). Estimating the number of people who would subsequently suffer diseases caused by the release of so much ionizing radiation would prove to be difficult.

Counting the number of affected people begins with the estimated 600,000 "liquidators" drafted from across the Soviet Union to gather and bury the radioactive debris that had been hurled from the reactor.[7] Among the liquidators, helicopter pilots flew multiple sorties to dump tons of sand, clay, lead, and other materials directly over the burning core in a valiant but futile effort to seal the breach (Petryna, 2004, p. 252). These liquidators would contribute to the construction of a "sarcophagus" intended to contain the continued release of ionizing radiation (Petryna, 1995).[8] Many of these people received doses and subsequently reported harmful effects of radiological exposure. These immediate impacts would be followed by the calamity of radioactive

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

particles seeping into food and water supplies used by the millions of people living in nearby regions of modern-day Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia.

Efforts to estimate the incidences of cancer and other disease among this population have produced a wide range of assessments. The Chernobyl Forum (2006), acknowledging an increase in incidences of thyroid cancer among children, nonetheless asserted that, "[i]t is impossible to assess reliably, with any precision, numbers of fatal cancers caused by radiation exposure due to Chernobyl accident" (p. 15; see also Abbott, Wallace, & Beck, 2006, p. 106). In contrast, a review of research gathered by Yablokov et al. (2009) included a number of potential cancers ranging from 4,000 to a theoretical limit of 1,786,657 (p. 208). Both summaries have received their share of criticism, the Chernobyl Forum for its ties to the nuclear industry and Yablokov et al. for methodological errors that, according to Balonov (2012), removed their findings from the domain of "science to the realm of science fiction" (p. 186; see also Jargin, 2010; and Morris-Suzuki, 2014, p. 341). Still, there is little dispute that generations will pass before the long-term consequences of the disaster, physical, mental, and otherwise, will be revealed (Petryna, 2011, p. 31). To this point we have reexamined the background of the Chernobyl disaster. The next step is to investigate a framework for understanding the rationale for the tens of thousands of tourists who visit the site every year.

Figure 7.2. View of Pripyat. Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Introducing Foucault's Heterotopian Framework

I employ Michel Foucault's heterotopian framework to read various practices of Chernobyl tourism. But in a larger sense I argue that the tensions, contradictions, and divergences evoked by this locale extend the essential dichotomy with the modern project: on one side, an Enlightenment-era confidence in the power of orderly planning to produce ordered lives; on the other, a concomitant projection of unyielding anxiety. "[A]s writers from Marx onwards have shown, modern capitalist societies operate through the creation of uncertainty and ambivalence, and no state has ever been able to fully remove this" (Hetherington, 1997, p. 64). Freud further affirms the role of uncanny places, industrial ruins undoubtedly included, "as the urban subconscious, [as] the city's forgotten side, the other, often unacknowledged face of the city" (Akkerman, 2009, p. 207). Contrary, then, to Edensor's (2005) proposal that industrial ruins, "badlands" or otherwise, erupt through some manner of "inadvertent production" (p. 62), I borrow from Silicon Valley-speak to read them not as "bugs" but rather as "features" of contemporary life. And I hold that they are usefully understood as heterotopias. At this point, maybe we need not unpack that term too strenuously. If only such were the case. In fact, heterotopian analysis is so enduringly idiosyncratic, so delightfully extensive in its varied applications, which range from the austere to the positively baroque, that attendance to its origins, definitions, principles, and potentials warrants careful consideration.[9]

First we must assess some of the limitations of heterotopia, accepting that our forthcoming efforts to fix this framework, as concept or image, as form or substance, will ultimately prove to be less than pristine. Our analysis will eventually thrive amid this struggle. Yet we must acknowledge that Foucault's musings are far too pliable, and too generally applied, both in his work and in subsequent adaptions, to suffer the prison of facile definition. For that reason, we should account for the frequency at which the heterotopian framework has been derided for being theoretically impure. Its proponents always seem to navigate its perimeters with the touristic guilt of a dabbler, a mere surface-rider atop the sloshing currents of deep theory, possessing "something of the sightseer's enchanted breathlessness" (Faubion, 2008, p. 31). And these appraisals are not entirely unfair. Heterotopia earns its rebuke as "much used but little theorized" (Hetherington (1997, p. 40); "[m]ore of a philosophical ramble than a codified concept" (Morten, Stone, & Jarratt, 2018, p. 236); "briefly sketched, provisional and at times confusing" (Johnson, 2006, p. 81); "frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, incoherent" (Soja, 1996, p. 162); "and at times totally baffling" (Johnson, 2013, p. 793). Surveying the multitudes of "uncritical applications of the term," noting how easily heterotopia bends and twists to accommodate its many applications,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Genocchio (1995) usefully asks, "what *cannot* be designated a heterotopia" (p. 39, emphasis added)? Invoking the playfully incoherent categories of Borges's Chinese encyclopedia, Knight (2017) resolves that, "one might be forgiven for concluding that this [concept] is nothing more than a practical joke on Foucault's part" (p. 144). Clearly, then, when adapting our eyes to the Foucauldian spectacle, tracing our ways through its convolutes, we are wise to wear thick soles and anticipate the crunching of broken glass. This is another way to say that heterotopia may provide an *ideal* framework to wander the ruined terrain of Chernobyl.

We'll get there soon enough. First, we should dwell awhile with some discussion of origins and definitions. The word *heterotopia* arises from the collision of the Greek *heteros* ("another," "different," "other") with *topos* ("place"). It appears first in medical literature "to describe a phenomenon occurring in an unusual place," though Foucault makes no allusion to that connection in his own writing (Sohn, 2008, p. 41; see also Hetherington, 1997, p. 42). Locating heterotopia within the larger study of "heterotopology," Foucault (2008) proposes, "the study, analysis, description, and 'reading'. . . of these different spaces. . . as a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live" (p. 17).[10] Foucault compares these "other spaces" to utopias, which he describes as "*emplacements* with no real place. . . fundamentally unreal spaces" (p. 17, emphasis added). Through the ontological status of the concept remains subject to debate, Foucault asserts that heterotopias are, in contrast to utopias, "absolutely real, connected with all the space that [surrounds them]" (p. 17). He adds that heterotopia and utopia, though oppositional, are also *co-constituted*, as is illustrated by the experience of gazing into a mirror. As an object and a site, the mirror, Foucault explains, "*does really exist* … [and is] absolutely real" (p. 17, emphasis added). At the same time, the mirror affords a gaze upon a virtual presence, a self "over there," a not-place, a utopia.

From this viewpoint, we may understand heterotopias as real places that enable the projection of self beyond social realities. These emplacements exist as individual sites "that cannot be equated or in any way superimposed" (Foucault, 2008, p. 16), even as they exist simultaneously through their connections to other sites.[11] This is to propose a non-hyperspatial materialism, a study of discrete objects, that nonetheless enacts a field of correlations through which each site derives meaning from a constellation of structures, utterances, and performances. Within this matrix of practices, we enter a complex range of purposes. To Morten, Stone, and Jarratt (2018), "heterotopias inject a sense of alterity into the sameness [of modern life], where change enters the familiar and difference is inserted into the commonplace" (p. 236). Johnson (2006) adds to this sense of otherness an even more fundamental quality of

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

disruption: "heterotopias are fundamentally *disturbing places* [that]. . . alter to different degrees what might be described as everyday existence" (p. 84, emphasis added). Heterotopias "mirror and at the same time *distort, unsettle or invert* other spaces" (Johnson, 2013, pp. 790–791, emphasis added). In this mirroring, they "confirm, mutate, or resist the sensibilities of a culture" (Saindon, 2012, p. 26). De Cauter and Dehaene (2008) emphasize that while heterotopias constitute an "eruption, an apparition, an *absolute discontinuity*" (p. 92, emphasis added), they also afford "a refuge, a safe haven, a protected space" (p. 97), as illustrated by Plato's *Academy* set beyond the walls of Athens. Bolstering the medical analogy, Sohn (2008) terms this injection "the *antidote* against the erasure of difference" (p. 47, emphasis added). To Hetherington (1997), though, heterotopias both "rupture the order of things" and produce a "different mode of ordering (p. 46). As such, heterotopias do not fall easily into the categories of "discipline" or "resistance"; they reveal both faces of the mirror. Perhaps most usefully, at least for my purposes, Faubion (2008) defines heterotopias as "rhetorical machines" (p. 33). They work in real places and produce measurable effects, even as they induce those outcomes through that most flimsy of material, the imagination.

Tracing the contours of his framework, Foucault proposes six principles of heterotopia: (1) They function in all societies, (2) they change over time, (3) they arrange multiple spaces, (4) they arrange multiple temporalities, (5), they manage entrances and exclusions, and (6) they expose real spaces. Here I should add some justification concerning the need to unpack these principles. Summaries of this framework, albeit with frequently significant variations in language, are common enough in heterotopian scholarship that one might question the need for yet another explication. In fact, I would recommend Soja's (1995) taxonomy, notable for its influence on many other readings, as an especially laudable explanation of the concept. At the same time, reviewing a number of applications of the heterotopian framework, I have found that too many of these classification-schemes are ordered around Foucault's specific terms, which are themselves often subject to differing interpretations (and translations), leaving the author's broader ideas underdeveloped. Joining this conversation, I offer my own summary of heterotopian principles, if only to demark the limitations and admit the biases of my own work on this topic. To begin, I will outline and explain each of these principles. Thereafter I will delineate a preliminary application of the heterotopian framework to Chernobyl before proposing the addition of an axis and function of heterotopia that has not yet been articulated. We begin with the argument of heterotopian universality.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Heterotopias Function in All Societies

All cultures, past and present, produce places that, to borrow a well-worn phrase, enact a *social safety valve*, whether in Africa, Australasia and the Pacific Islands, Eurasia, or the Americas. In all global regions, in all periods of human history, heterotopias provide the means to discharge, though ultimately to manage, the tensions of public life. Even those heterotopias that afford apparently radical vistas of freedom, from arcadian idylls to modern amusement parks, endure through various mechanisms of control, sometimes subtle, sometimes extreme. Foucault emphasizes the universal nature of these regimes even while distinguishing between heterotopias of *crisis* and heterotopias of *deviation*. Sites of crisis, which are marked as "turning points" wherein a person undergoes some form of change, are generally found in premodern societies. Foucault provides the puberty hut as an example of a site where excess production, unmanaged by patriarchal society, the threatening seepages of blood and other fluids, the implicit menace of unrestrained sexual maturity must be othered, set apart, monitored, and scrutinized, before being reintegrated into normality. Sites of deviation, he adds, disclose a modern production of aberrant behavior that makes up for the supposed displacement of physical crisis. As biological imperatives become increasingly manageable, abstracted, and euphemized through the apparatus of medical and clinical intervention, modern societies require, and to a certain degree *produce*, the counterbalance of deviant behavior through the production of "other spaces." This deviation provides a safety valve to manage the pressures of societies in which physical processes becomes increasingly abstract. By way of illustration, Foucault proposes the entirely artificial "honeymoon trip" (p. 18)—or, I might add, the famed Japanese "love hotel"—as a heterotopia where crisis and deviance begin to merge through untrammeled sexual expression and release. These sites, unlike the static and ceremonial site like the puberty hut, rouse various modes of transportation that connect "other spaces" to reinforce the performative distance of sexual gratification from the normality of domestic life. Once more, this is not a purely modern or Western phenomenon. Whether working to manage crisis or deviation, heterotopia is a function of ordering for all human societies.

Heterotopias Change Over Time

Emplacements of otherness serve purposes that change and evolve, adapting to new biological, technological, and social regimes. This insight, despite its apparently evident nature, is in fact essential to our understanding of Foucault's argument. The elasticity of heterotopias, like the suppleness of their theoretical applications, enables them to shift in design, purpose, and

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

location. The capacity of heterotopias to change their functions over time may indicate an emergence of new understanding, such as the changing deployment of death. Foucault offers the cemetery as an exemplar, chiefly because of its suspension of overlapping narratives and embodiments, the living and the dead. Yet modern urbanity has largely removed cemeteries from city centers, placing them in distant locales, not only due to fluctuating land values but even more from evolving assumptions about the dubious purity of bodies, their ability to seep into and contaminate various substrates, material and otherwise. Shifting from center to periphery, the religious symbolism and cult value of the cemetery gives way, at least somewhat, to a more democratically distributed mode of commemoration, such that, "from the nineteenth century onwards … everyone has had a right to his own little box for his own little personal decomposition" (Foucault, 2008, p. 19). The change of heterotopias over time, evidenced by the evolving placement of decay and contamination, provides an essential component in the analysis of modernity.

Heterotopias Arrange Multiple Spaces

Allowing for their discrete location as "other spaces," these emplacements exist across and beyond Euclidian geometries; they contain multitudes. As Foucault explains, heterotopias "juxtapose. . . several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible" (p. 19). By way of illustration, he describes the heterotopian garden, a site whose various types of flora may be transplanted from distant parts of the world to converge upon a singular locale. Once more we are reminded of Foucault's citation of that "certain" encyclopedia: an ostensibly impossible table of categories whose odd divergences and ludicrous correspondences are placed, somehow, together. There is pleasure in this performance of cross-pollination. There is possibility too, particularly when we come to understand the "entanglement of multiple places with each other" (Terry, 2010, p. 353). In such a paradoxical geography, we trace the mobilities of otherness that enable oppositional narratives to meet. This preservation of alterity may constitute a site of play. One may visit a site such as Las Vegas to traipse across otherwise impossible oppositions, to traipse among versions of "Paris" and "New York" from a singular vantage point—and to cut across all sorts of other legal, ethical, sexual, and other oppositions (Wood, 2005). Yet the juxtaposition of alternatives generally serves to *manage* anxiety, not to eliminate it. For that reason I am drawn to Marschall's (2015) recounting of the ways in which visitors to homelands that have been altered, erased, or otherwise displaced, possess a potential to superimpose, to imprint, their own memories upon an "urban fabric" [that] has been destroyed

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

or changed" (p. 342). Such juxtaposition is meaningful, regardless of its potential to directly challenge material conditions.

Heterotopias Arrange Multiple Temporalities

As a complement and counterbalance to the gathering of multiple spaces, emplacements of otherness enact an alternative to the smooth, unstriated flow of time, either by accumulating or breaking its flow. Foucault illustrates this phenomenon first by recalling his example of the cemetery. There, he argues, one does not only abide near the overlapping houses of the living and the dead; one also experiences the *memento mori*—reminder of one's own mortality. Not just "there," but necessarily "then," one *stops* to recall that passage of days as a temporary abode that floats within eternity. In this locale, one must stop in order to believe, to *know*, that life is fleeting. We might compare the cemetery with the mobile heterotopia of the calendar, whether as an object on one's desk or an app on one's mobile device. In this latter object, we find that pages, physical or virtual, turn with variable speed. And yet each turn invokes the reminder of *Ecclesiastes* that while we will find joy and sorrow in their turns, we are all of dust "and all turn to dust again." In either case we find a common utility, not a choice to fix ourselves in yesterday or tomorrow, from dust to dust, but to bridge the gulfs of human existence.

Foucault proposes two strategies toward this end. On one pole, we may accumulate time in the form of the museum or library or archive: "heterotopias in which time never ceases to pile up, heaping up on top of its own summit" (p. 20). Each layer of sediment, each node of constellation, gathers through its assemblage of artifacts, books, and files, the impossibly wide assortment of temporalities. The antipode of this heterotopia is one that does not produce a heap of temporal accretion but rather promises its temporary abolition: a place where time "stands still." In this cul-de-sac from which one cycles before departure, we experience the festival, the vacation, the reprieve from everyday labor. Reading this now, you might recall happy days of travel when you forgot your calendar and could not remember the day of the week. Now, unexpectedly, you might be thinking less of these words than of your next vacation. Either way, the multiple temporalities of heterotopia, with their various possibilities of accretion and pause, work not so much to collect or freeze the flow of time but, instead, to make its passage more manageable.

Heterotopias Manage Entrances and Exclusions

Marked as sites of alterity, "other spaces" require particular and often peculiar processes that facilitate the transfer from outside to inside. Unlike the endless

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

flow of mobilities that marks the modern milieu, heterotopian sites require those who enter their protectorates to manifest an insiders' knowledge through the display of signs, symbols, and other ritualized gestures. One must know the code, speak the words, don the garb, and execute other performances from a panoply of options, from the most ordinary to the most occult, to penetrate these spaces. The penalty for failure to master this knowledge is exclusion, regulated all too often by the threat of violence. Davis (1999) reminds us that members of subaltern communities, regardless of their geographic location, are placed beyond the comfortable edges of the modern procession of commoditized exchange; and they know these exclusionary apparatuses only all too well. This scheme of segregation is not solely a practice of modern life. Foucault describes the rooms left open for travelers at South American farms that allow rest in an outer vestibule but not access to the family interior, noting the method through which entrances, even for authorized inhabitants, may "conceal curious exclusions" (p. 22). These doorways, inviting but illusory, open only to other exteriors. Even so, the mechanisms of modern exclusion may reasonably be said to be even more potent.

To negotiate that barrier, some people join the armed forces, becoming instruments of the violence that supposedly stabilizes the borders of the modern nation-state. When they do, entering a camp of expertly practiced "otherness," they undergo the ritual of being shorn, both of hair and other accouterments of regularity, to assume the regulation of membership. By way of more specific illustration, those who complete the requirements of boot camp and become sailors, (as I did) subsequently learn, among many other rites, the words and performances necessary to board a vessel. They learn, with even more vigor, the corresponding rituals necessary to gain liberty from their ship—an object that Foucault labels, incidentally, "the heterotopia par excellence" (p. 22). As will become apparent later, while Foucault does not attend as carefully to the process of departure, this passage is at least as important as the procedure of entrance. In either case, the process almost invariably summons the sacrament of purification, to be an authorized service member, a sanctioned agent of violence, or in the argot of the U.S. Navy, a "squared away sailor." Foucault (2008) adds that, there are even heterotopias that are *entirely consecrated* to these activities of purification," proposing the bathhouse and the sauna as exemplars (p. 21, emphasis added). Again, I will return to this topic later on, proposing a heretofore under-theorized dimension of as a counterpoint to Foucault's heterotopia of purification. For now we need merely remember that the entrances, exits, and exclusions of these emplacements provide a means to enable a strategic mode of otherness, performances of freedom and discipline whose poles co-construct one another.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Heterotopias Expose Real Space

The enclosures we have examined possess one additional quality, an "othering" effect that exposes the limitations of the world outside of its various heterotopias. This is to say that the protected borders of these emplacement—puberty huts and love hotels, church graveyards and suburban cemeteries, gardens of innocence and machines of commerce, archives of expansion and festivals of novelty, camps of violence and alcoves of welcome—function also to reveal the porous and permeable borders of the imagination. Foucault points to one node of this process, the space of *illusion*, such as the brothel, whose performances of excess reveal the frenzied eruptions of desire and associated anxieties of impotence. In this emplacement, epitomized also by the mythical American motel, which was notorious as the mid-century public imagination for all manners of sexual transgressions, the "real spaces" of home are revealed to be just as illusory, their mores and monitions just as jumbled. In opposition to the space of illusion is the space of *compensation*, the site arranged according to qualities of enclosure, moderation, and order. In emplacements such as the Puritan settlements of New England and the Jesuit colonies of Paraguay (featured, one may recall, in Voltaire's *Candide*), one finds counter-sites "as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is disorderly, ill construed and sketchy" (Foucault, 2008, p. 21). In both cases, the impossibilities of perfection, perfectly disordered or perfectly ordered, reveal the limitations of the world. Importantly, though, the sites in which these imperfections are exposed are *not* utopias, which ultimately serve as modes of critique. They are instead heterotopias that do not unmake social order but rather serve to *sustain* that order. In visiting these "other spaces," whether they are sites of excess release or sites of excess bondage, we recover the means to maintain ourselves in the imperfect terrains of everyday life.

Through its relative lack of development, this final component of Foucault's framework reveals an opportunity to read heterotopia as a set of intersecting axes whose poles constitute a constellation of expanding, contracting, and mutating arrangments that house the necessarily varied and variable spaces for the ordering of social practices. Commenting upon their translation of Foucault's (2008) essay, De Cauter and Dehaene explain that these axes "place heterotopias at the cross-section of several qualifications" (p. 27, endnote 30). They situate crisis and deviation as antipodes upon an *anthropological* axis. They situate accretion and pause as antipodes upon a *temporal* axis. And they situate illusion and compensation as antipodes upon an *imaginary* axis. The translators add, "there are potentially more [axes than have been discussed thus far], pointing to other dialectical tensions at work in the world of heterotopia" (p. 27, endnote 30). I will pursue that project shortly. But first we will employ Foucault's framework to produce a preliminary reading

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 7.3. Touristic Fantasies of Chernobyl Radiation. Photograph by Author

of the CEZ, allowing that the brevity of the forthcoming analysis provides a foundation for the more specific application that follows.

Preliminary Heterotopian Analysis

Mine is hardly the first heterotopian reading of Chernobyl. Stone (2013) employs Foucault's framework to investigate the site as a ruin of Soviet utopianism whose overlapping matrices of time and space suggest a commoditized form of psychogeography (p. 80). Morten, Stone, and Jarratt (2018) extend this analysis to propose a contrast (though not a strict dichotomy) between Foucauldian dark tourism and Debordian dark tourism, the former being relatively unchanged by touristic agency and the latter being more individualized and less easily packaged (p. 250). These interpretations provide useful context.[12] Yet I resist the proposal of a "conceptual cylinder of heterotopian space" found in both of their interpretations (Stone, 2013, p. 90; Morten, Stone, & Jarratt, 2018, p. 239). As the originator of this model, Stone disavows any effort to perceive a linear progression of steps in his model. Yet his adaption of Foucault's framework nonetheless posits each principle as a singular component whose dialectic tensions are submerged. The push and pull of heterotopian poles demand more exact explication.

Already we have studied an array of critiques of Foucault's principles as being a "little theorized" "philosophical ramble" that is "confusing,"

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

"incoherent," and "totally baffling." We might hope to drown out this clamor by refining our axioms and principles with increased precision, even as we ensure that our terms are not so strictly defined as to restrict their application. So when we search for crisis or deviation, for example, we ought not be too surprised when we find one or the other (or both!) in our investigations. In so doing, we discover that heterotopia magically fulfills our expectations, that its highest end is the affirmation of applicability. We need not condemn that goal too harshly. As we wander into the thickets, away from the groves of discipline and the fields of distinction, we wisely search for a path, a map of milestones to trace our way back home. Straightening the meanders and bounding the vistas of heterotopia is, consequently, an act of ordering. Foucault would surely appreciate that arrangement. But the framework is not a pattern to be filled; it is a grammar to be used. And all grammars, living ones at least, must grow and change to enable novel usage.

Let us advance, then, with a relatively modest application: a reading of the CEZ through the generic heterotopian framework. Starting with the first principle (heterotopias function in all societies), we articulate this emplacement as a Ukrainian site that signals the collapse of the political-technocratic compact, most obviously with the former Soviet Union but more generally with the modern promise of electricity "too cheap to meter."[13] As an "other space," bounded and set apart from the flows of both regimes, the CEZ might theoretically function as an emplacement of crisis, an exemplar of excess that demands all manner of machinations of enclosure. Yet I choose not to adopt that reading, and not only because of Foucault's proposal that crisis-heterotopias may be found in premodern milieus. Beyond such an admittedly superficial rationale, I hold that the CEZ, at least when experienced from a touristic standpoint, is an emplacement of deviation because its visitors knowingly and intentionally transgress touristic norms. They enter a zone of danger and disorder, and in so doing perform a carefully calculated deviation from the typical flows of life outsize the CEZ. Rather than throngs of happy, well-fed inhabitants, Chernobyl offers silent vistas over abandoned ruins. Rather than the promise of well-ordered itineraries, Chernobyl affords the potential for tactical illegalities, where even the most vigilant guides are expected to say some variation of the phrase, "We are not supposed to go inside. We will go inside."

I recall when the guide to my 2015 CEZ excursion made this statement prior to allowing entrance to the Duga radar-tracking array (known in the West as the "Russian Woodpecker" because of the sounds of interference it produced on radio and television receivers around the world). Rather than offer mere observation or instruction, the guide's utterance seems more like an ironic performance of nonconformity, a statement that resists, even mocks,

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

the speaker's apparent intention. Here is the rule, the guide appears to say, a restriction policed by the presence of mostly unseen but surely present guards amid the even more material threat of harm. Having established the significance of the rule, we shall break it knowingly and without obfuscation. Traversing this threshold, despite the consequences of doing so, one cannot help but laugh. Chernobyl visitors may offer any number of answers to the inevitable query of why one would pay to enter an irradiated zone. Still I suggest that deviation from social norms, if only to reaffirm those rules during and through departure, constitutes a central characteristic of CEZ tourism.

Staying within a generic application of the Foucauldian framework, we turn to a brief assessment of change before attending in more detail to overlaps of spatiality and temporality, albeit in a revised order. When reviewing the second principle (heterotopias change over time) we need little convincing to accept the drastic evolution of Chernobyl and Pripyat, once a showcase for Soviet scientific innovation and urban design, now a graveyard for both. We also observe the way in which the CEZ signifies the shifting status of this territory and its peoples, first as citizens of the USSR, contributing to its electrical and agricultural bounty—later as victims of mismanagement, desertion, and subsequent aggression by Russia. The purpose of the Chernobyl/Pripyat heterotopia was once to rally the technological sublime; now it warns against its consequences.

Here I recommend that we should switch the order of the third and fourth principles to more carefully distinguish between Foucault's notions of time. The CEZ does not only alter its functions along a timeline stretching from the 1986 explosion, the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the present day. As Foucault's temporal principle (heterotopias arrange multiple temporalities) affirms, the Zone also expands along an axis of accretion and pause through which multiple points of that continuum exist simultaneously. From this perspective Chernobyl and its hodgepodge of dusty, moldy artifacts enacts an expanding archive of multiple times, as evidenced by the quintessential Pripyat snapshot of a visitor or guide who holds up a photograph of a building as it appeared prior to the city's abandonment, superimposing past glory upon a current state of decrepitude. In a similar manner, visitors photograph the literal stacks of portraits painted to commemorate Soviet-era apparatchiks in the "Energetik" Palace of Culture, not to appreciate their aesthetic qualities but instead to transpose the layers of modernity assembled in this site. The grim amusements of the CEZ do not require in the abolition of temporality but rather the suspension of alternatives in ironic contrast.

Shifting from temporality, we examine Chernobyl from a spatial principle (heterotopias arrange multiple spaces). We begin with the reminder that all modern designs contain heterotopian emplacements. While these spaces

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

are physically or symbolically set apart from the flows that surround them, they are nonetheless bounded into webs of connection. Locales of labor, for example, overlap with spaces of play. We see this in educational environments, with their classrooms and climbing walls; casinos, with their grinders and dilettantes; and in other more banal "third spaces." The blurring of functional divisions in these social safety valves assists in the management of contemporary tensions. Yet in Chernobyl/Pripyat, we find an even more potent convergence of oppositional spaces.

In the Zone, the structures of urbanity and the wilds of nature collapse upon one another. From the top of a Soviet-era apartment block in Pripyat's Lesya Ukrainka Street, a site that demands a sweaty assent of stairs to the sixteenth floor, tourists look upon the unsettling tableau of forest encroaching upon abandoned buildings, of weeds cracking through broken pavement, of pooling liquids working slowly but inexorably to dismantle solid surfaces. Closer to the center of town, visitors gather to photograph a Ferris wheel built behind the Palace of Culture. The wheel was erected as part of a larger amusement zone, a site for May Day celebrations that would never take place. Photographing the apparatuses of the amusement zone, tourists may superimpose their own images upon this scene of playful innocence, perhaps dragging memories of videogames like *S.T.A.L.K.E.R* or installments from the *Call of Duty* franchise, both of which feature the wheel amid their blood-soaked reveries.[14] In these ways, and in others, the CEZ marks a conflation of impossible geographies.

Along with this multiplicity of spaces, the blurring of urban boundaries, the visitor ponders the even more threatening disintegration of the bounds that divide their bodies from the outside world, most obviously through the transgression of unseen and potentially deadly vectors of ionizing radiation. Here we revisit Foucault's fifth principle (heterotopias manage entrances and exclusions), considering the role of checkpoints in the practical and performative maintenance of the Chernobyl enclosure. One cannot enter the Zone without guides authorized by the Ukrainian government. Yet even with those guides, one must present a passport to traverse the border of the CEZ. At this moment, when uniformed guards inspect paperwork and compare documents to rosters, cheerful conversations stop, glances become more focused, and most visitors wonder if they may have traveled a great distance only to be turned back. Thereafter at various checkpoints, visitors are subjected to renewed scrutiny (though sometimes waiting for a guard on the outskirts of Pripyat to wake and yawn, drag from a cigarette, and lift the security gate). So far the processes of entrance and transition through the Zone are perfunctory.

Exiting the CEZ presents a much more fraught proposition. True, the regions likely to be visited by authorized tourists are not necessarily lethal, at

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

least when visitors follow their guides' instructions to avoid hotspots. Even those spaces closest to dangerous radiation, such as the $1.7 billion New Safe Confinement that was placed over the decomposing Reactor 4 Sarcophagus in 2016 (Walsh, 2018), may be photographed so long as visitors restrict their stays to a few minutes. That brief period, though, affords an opportunity to become contaminated with dust, liquids, or particles that carry the decaying, potentially deadly forms of radiation that must not be taken beyond the CEZ. Visitors perform the ritual reading (if not cleansing) of corpus via full-body dosimeter at various stages of departure. At these junctures, guides often affirm that authorities would rather see an unlucky tourist exit the Zone barefoot rather than carry even one hot particle on their shoes. Recalling Foucault's (2008) appraisal of instruments used to mark, measure, and manifest the cleanliness of those who traverse the emplacement threshold, we might fittingly assume that passage through the CEZ, not sailing on a ship, constitutes "the heterotopia par excellence" (p. 22). Yet as we shall see in due course, the ambiguous nature of purity assured by even the most scrutinized departure constitutes a quality of heterotopia that has not yet been adequately addressed.

We should conclude this preliminary analysis with some attention to Foucault's sixth principle (heterotopias expose real spaces). Doing so we face two possibilities of interpretation. To begin, we might consider the clarity of CEZ regulation as a mode of compensation for all of the messiness in the world outside of the Zone, in Ukraine most obviously but also in the wider expanse of modernity itself. We might recall the West German Green slogan that emerged after the explosion, *Tschernobyl ist Überall* ("Chernobyl is everywhere"), the realization of how the emission of images, like the fallout of radionuclides, mocks the sanctity of national borders (Luke, 1987, p. 352). As an unexpected means of compensation, Chernobyl/Pripyat represents the radiation of order that intensifies from outer gate to interior checkpoint, ultimately to the sublime core, the Safe Confinement. The ironic order of the ruin encloses the maintenance of control, the arrest of decay.

Yet I am drawn toward the opposite pole of this imaginary axis. Not a site of compensation, the CEZ is instead a heterotopia of illusion that, like the American motel, enacts an excess of disorder, a guilty frisson of unregulated release. This possibility, though, reveals a limitation to the existing heterotopian framework. For if we add Chernobyl/Pripyat to that collection of emplacements whose leakages, transgressions, and disorders reveal the false security of regulation, how do we account for Foucault's notion of purification? As I will shortly confirm, one must endure all sorts of sanitizing rituals to enter and exit the CEZ. Yet purification is not the point of Chernobyl. Rather, it is an opposing tendency that attracts its tourists. This proposal

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 7.4. Reactor 5 Cooling Tower Mural by Guido van Helten. Photograph by Author

inspires me to propose an augmentation to Foucault's framework. I think we should offer a counterintuitive reading of the CEZ, not as a heterotopia of decontamination through which visitors seek to rid themselves of the radiated threat of pollution, disease, and corruption but rather as a *heterotopia of contamination* through which tourists *seek rather than repel* material threat to bodily thresholds.

Where might such a heterotopia find its most useful function within the existing framework? To address that query, I suggest that we review the axes of heterotopia. Drawing once again from De Cauter and Dehaene's (2008) taxonomy, we read heterotopia as a constellation of poles intersecting across three dimensions. The anthropological axis houses the functions of crisis or deviation. The temporal axis enables the accretion or pausing of time. The imaginary axis stages the qualities of excess or compensation. Differentiated

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

through their dialectical tensions, these dimensions stretch to fit (and mutate to address) the exigencies of public life. As I have sought to demonstrate, they provide a means to producing a reasonably useful reading of the CEZ. At the same time, we should not presume such an axiomatic role of "purification" in Foucault's framework, at least not to the degree that we forgo deeper inquiry into role of contamination as a heterotopian function. Just as radiation works invisibly to produce its effects so too does contamination traverse our bodies without our knowing. Whether visible or invisible, the impact of such contamination is incontestable. We might as well render it visible.

Toward that end, I propose that we add a fourth dimension to the ones we have already examined: a *clinical axis* that is bounded by the antipodes of purity and contamination, an array that crosses through the origin where anthropological, temporal, and imaginary arrays intersect. This axis augments the existing heterotopian framework by drawing our attention more fully to the nature of *bodies* that inhabit the emplacement, subjects marked as clean or polluted, healthy or diseased, integrated or corrupted.[15] In this way we might suture the medical roots of heterotopia that Sohn (2008) so aptly excavates to more traditional readings of spaces and places. In this section that follows, I hope to more fully unpack this notion of a heterotopia of contamination, not by rehearsing the generic application of Foucault's framework but by

Figure 7.5. Staged Gas Masks. Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

articulating a more rigorous intersection of two axes—the imaginary and clinical arrays—to produce an interpretive plane (or "slice," drawing from Foucault's articulation of heterochronism) that orients us to the emplacement of bodies within the radioactive imagination.[16]

Imaginary-Clinical Analysis

In this final section, I read published accounts of Chernobyl tourism.[17] Employing an imaginary-clinical framework, a plane of analysis that is heretofore under-theorized, I hope to better understand perceptions and experiences that might be obscured through typical application of the heterotopian framework. In particular, I seek to reveal a peculiar rationale for Chernobyl tourism: a seemingly counterintuitive longing for leakage, transgression, and disorder [the illusion pole of the imaginary axis], through the willful encounter with pollution, disease, and corruption [the contamination pole of the clinical axis]. Along the way, I also hope to more fully understand the appearance of contradictory assertions found in these narratives: the imaginary compensation of order and the clinical assurance of purity. Yes, appeals to order and purity appear in the forthcoming analysis; they provide essential context. Yet the argument here is to demonstrate a more nuanced understanding of the CEZ, not as a general heterotopia but rather as a specific kind of emplacement that works to manifest the peculiar satisfaction of contamination.

At first we must observe a certain tendency toward compensation within Chernobyl tourism: a fetishization of strategies designed to enclose, the moderate, to invoke order. This is, after all, a place where deadly radiation was first entombed in a "Sarcophagus" before even that protection was sealed in what is euphemistically termed "New Safe Confinement." Certainly one expects, and to a certain degree, *requires* protection in a place like this. In his book *The Dark Tourist*, Dom Joly (2010) describes the meticulous scrutiny that visitors must endure before passing into the CEZ: "At the roadblock we had our passports checked very thoroughly. Each of our photos was held up against our faces by fierce-looking solders with AK47s [sic] slung over their shoulders" (p. 152). I also recall that soldiers were armed during my visits. Yet it was their demeanor, more than their hardware, which seemed to cow visitors into submission. Touristic quiescence is, one should add, well established prior to the appearance of automatic weapons. Writing in *The Australian*, Rob Lyons (2011) outlines the preparatory rituals of regulation:

> Before we begin the tour, we have to agree to abide by the rules: no shorts, skirts or sandals; don't touch anything, particularly not the vegetation; no eating or smoking outside. (On this last point, no one seems to have told the staff, who puff away merrily by the front door.) We also need to sign a disclaimer that the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> government will not be "liable for possible further deterioration" of our health after our visit to the exclusion zone. In other words, it's safe, but don't blame us if you get cancer. (p. 3)

The genuine excess of threat, which parallels the potential excess of touristic behavior, must be subject to the moderation and order of unambiguous instruction. It is Lyons's parenthetical note, though—the reminder that staff obviously, and sometimes necessarily, break the rules—where a more coherent explication on Chernobyl tourism takes root. No matter how well protected the place, no matter how fearsome the guards, the CEZ is defined not by its compensations of enclosure, moderation, and order but instead through its illusions (and frequently genuine *practices*) of leakage, transgression, and disorder.

Here we may anticipate the delight expressed by some visitors in moments when the structures of human behavior become contravened. Joly (2010) sets the scene with a length exegesis of rule-breaking behavior in Kiev, the city from which he began his Chernobyl excursion. Summarizing advice garnered from a guidebook, the author observes that Ukrainian drivers generally ignore red lights. Joly writes: "I think that the phrase 'stopping at red lights is considered optional' was maybe as good a definition of the kind of place that I loved as I'd ever read" (p. 135). In this passage, the author demonstrates the presumed satisfaction that accompanies the power to flout the rules, implying an ability to transgress all manner of red lines that differentiate between safe and unsafe action. Such is the true objective of the "dark tourist." And this author is hardly alone in seeking that goal. Writing in *Condé Nast Traveler*, Cynthia Drescher (2017) affirms the thrill of crossing into a Zone where once concrete regulation seem to vanish: "There are no safety barriers or marked routes for the tours, which is part of the appeal. We are at liberty to explore, cautiously peering around corners and venturing down dark hallways" (n.p.). The *National Geographic*'s George Johnson (2014) offers a similar affirmation of the indulgences of danger at Chernobyl/Pripyat:

> The metal handrails had been stripped away for salvage. Jimmied doors opened onto gaping elevator shafts. I kept thinking how unlikely a tour like this would be in the United States. It was refreshing really. We were not even wearing hard hats. (n.p.)

Along the axis of imagination, we find that the CEZ may be charted much closer to the pole of illusion than of compensation. Entering the Zone, one is reminded of the necessity of regulation, and the illegality of entrance into homes and buildings. One quickly comes to understand that rotting wood

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

and crumbling cement can lead to injury or death. For that reason, guides are instructed to stop visitors from entering of CEZ structures, at least while police are nearby. Failure to maintain order threatens their tenuous access to the Zone. But Chernobyl tourism rests upon a largely unspoken arrangement, a tolerance for tourists to trespass into some houses and buildings, briefly, as long as police are not present. This is the point of Chernobyl tourism, an opportunity to dwell where substances leak beyond their walls, where visitors (and, to an extent, guides) transgress the rules of safety, and where disorder rather than regulation reins.

So far we have surveyed the imaginary axis of the CEZ, focusing largely on places and actions. This insight enables us to study touristic tales of external influences: rules, regulations, and restrictions. Yet entering the Zone is also predicated on the possibility that one will be subject to radioactive materials that possess powers to transgress the distinction between of outside and inside. Chernobyl tourism is essentially a corporeal event, one that demands the articulation of a clinical axis of heterotopian inquiry. On one side of this continuum is purity, with its associated qualities of cleanliness, health, and integrity. And an appeal to corporeal purity is undeniably present in descriptions of this place. In *Dark Tourist*, Joly (2010) illustrates the delicate nature of bodily purity in the post-Soviet world. He recalls taking a drink of homemade vodka in St. Petersburg, Russia: "[I]t was almost pure alcohol with no added chemicals. I could still remember the test of a good Samagon—you put a flame to it. Clear blue flame meant good. A yellow flame or oily smoke indicated that it might kill you" (p. 137). In such an instance, and in many others, the edge that divides integrity and corruption must be maintained. Nonetheless, Chernobyl tourism is filled with stories that bolster an opposing virtue of contamination.

Listen, for example, to the radiometer whose clicks constitute the soundtrack of Chernobyl tourism. In almost each story, guides navigate CEZ spaces with the aid of handheld detectors that squawk to announce the presence of particles. Despite the control of these devices in the hands of experienced guides, some visitors avail themselves of the opportunity (and added expense) to rent their own radiometers, devices that are typically encased in cheap plastic and likely not calibrated sufficiently to provide meaningful readings. The apparent purpose of these detectors is to avoid irradiated zones. And what rational person wants to ingest a dose of a substance that could kill them? At the same time, videos, narratives, and certainly my own recollection of visits to the Zone affirm that guides habitually gather tourists around at least one hot spot that produces a sputtering of warning from each detector. The purpose of this performance is to demonstrate the variable nature of radiological dispersal. Guides remind visitors that the

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

unpredictability of wind, the discrepancies of cleanup, and, yes, the caprices of chance ensure that the bounds that divide safety from danger are porous. This is practical advice. At the same time, tourists *flock* to the zones of hazard, particularly those closest to Reactor 4, what Bürkner (2014) terms the "dramaturgical peak" of the site (p. 26). Photographing the high numbers displayed on their rented radiometers to prove how close they came to the incontestable lethality of this place. The curious nature of this performance leads me to conclude that contamination, not purification, is the main attraction of the Zone.

Professional accounts of Chernobyl tourism are replete with instances of touristic determination to document their proximity to death, an experience described by *VICE* author Ava Kofman (2015) as "having all of the innocuous thrills of a haunted house and all of the invisible danger of a deeply irradiated environment stripped of everyday human life forms" (n.p.). Writing for the *Washington Post*, Cheryl L. Reed (2017) notes how "[t]ourists stick their Geiger counters against tatters of clothing in the hospital lobby and watch their machines shoot up to shockingly high levels" (p. F01). They search for hot spots amid the decay of Pripyat, they snap photos of gargantuan catfish near the abandoned cooling towers, and they await the sublime moment of reverie with Reactor 4, sometimes impatiently so. In *Spiegel* Benjamin Bidder (2011) recalls a group stopping to measure spiking radiation near Pripyat: "A blonde Ukrainian woman looks at her meter and says there is 'very little' radiation here. She sounds disappointed. She explains that the radioactivity in some Kiev neighborhoods was even higher" (n.p.). In a similar manner, Joly (2010) tells the story of South Korean tourist who complains incessantly about the interstitial stops on their way to the Sarcophagus: "'When do we see reactor?' he asked petulantly. 'Don't worry [the guide replied], you will soon receive the promised dose of lethal radiation'" (pp. 153-154). These narratives lead inexorably to the moment of proof, when visitors get what they traveled so far to accomplish:

> The tour guide smiled as he repeated a gesture he had made many times before. Surrounded by a busload of tourists, he pulled out a cellphone-sized radiation reader. . . In the guide's hand, the device's numbers spiraled up. Tourists snapped photographs, with the digital screen positioned low in their frames. The numbers, approaching 400, formed a subtitle for the building. (Lehren, 2012, p. TR4)

Tourists begin their journeys by walking carefully, cautiously, fearful that they might kick up too much dust, might attract a miniscule particle. As *National Geographic* reporter George Johnson illustrates, though, it doesn't take long for confidence to kick in:

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

> By the next morning we were becoming almost cavalier about the exposure risk. Standing beneath the remains of a cooling tower, our guide, hurrying us along, exclaimed, "Oh, over here is a high-radiation spot! Let's go see!" as casually as if she were pointing us toward a new exhibit in a wax museum. She pulled up a board covering the hot spot, and we stooped down holding our meters—they were frantically beeping—in a friendly competition to see who could detect the highest amount. (Johnson, 2014, n.p.)

In this way we may chart the intersection of the imaginary axis with its clinical complement. Tourists come to the CEZ to place themselves within rhetorical, performative, and material conditions that transgress the precincts of safe and unsafe action. They travel, often at great expense and difficulty, to a place where the rules appear to be pliable. Foucault would encourage us to read these behaviors, and the emplacements that that authorize them, as a means to manage the tensions of modern life: a social safety valve. Yet Chernobyl is manifestly unsafe, or at least it is advertised as such.

No doubt, the purifying rituals of entrance and exit, the security theatre of the full-body scan, serve practical purposes. The guards and inspectors are at least somewhat adept at their tasks, and clearly no reasonable person wants to transport hot particles to their homes and loved ones. Still, reading Chernobyl tourism as more than an imaginary transgression of rules and regulations but also as a corporeal encounter with contamination, we may better comprehend a rationale for visiting modern ruins that has not yet been attempted in even the most laudable analyses of "toxic tourism" (Pezzullo, 2007). In places like Chernobyl/Pripyat, we become more acutely aware of what Peeples (2011) describes as the "toxic sublime," a modern aesthetic of decay in which the viewer becomes less certain of, and more sensitized to, the boundaries between environments and bodies. From this position, the viewer of toxicity cannot know "how dangerous it is, how long it has been there or how long it will stay, how deep it goes, or how far its contaminants have spread" (p. 384). I merely add that we must transcend ocular perception, especially when trying to understand tourists who allow, willfully if playfully, transgression and defilement of their bodies in contaminated places. By employing heterotopia's clinical dimension, we may better appreciate the craving of some visitors to plunge themselves into invisible streams of harmful radiation. Chernobyl tourism affords a rare opportunity to make real and visible the edges that shape us. Outside of the Zone, many of us enact our lives almost solely through symbolic pursuits. Inside, though, we are made real by an acute embrace of material risk. Naturally we might compare such danger to the rush of a bungee jump, the thrill of a sky dive. These too are remarkable, death-defying activities. But the CEZ offers something more salient: a chance not only to destroy our bodies but an opportunity to *define* them.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Conclusion

Radiation is no respecter of bodies. We may approach the topic as a symbol, and to a certain degree I have done so. Yet we cannot ignore the material properties or radiation. Whether in short bursts that fail to penetrate paper and last for mere moments or lengthy cascades that burrow through steel and endure across millennia, radiation reminds us of the fragility of the frontier. This is one reason why so many tourists make the journey to Chernobyl: to play within (and with) the barriers that mark the typical touristic pursuit. Inspired by popular culture, laden with maps and guidebooks, and led by guides, they enter in search of some unique experience. What they take with them, though, along with a small but growing number of souvenirs that may be purchased in the Zone, is a sense of ambiguity. I wrote on this theme after my first visit in 2015:

> To depart the Exclusion Zone you pass through a minimum of two radiation detectors. The process is strangely perfunctory. You stand in an upright machine, your head resting against a gadget and your arms raised to either side. You place your hands into reading devices and wait for barely a second, wondering if the Russian word for "clean" will glow its faintly friendly affirmation. It does, but you're not sure if you can proceed, even as you feel the metal door unclick beside your waist. Later you learn that only a shrieking alarm will signal that you've carried some radioactive particle on your shoes. Otherwise you are clean. The machine says so. Still, you will always wonder.

My recollection of this place is no more thoughtful or insightful than any of the other blog posts one may read; my prose is no less to cinematic hyperbole found in other stories. Nonetheless the goal of this passage was to convey an essential quality of Chernobyl, its capacity to render more real the materiality and consequentiality of our bodies. I would add here that while efforts to produce some kind of parallel structure might inspire me to add a pairing of safety and danger, the relationship is reversed in the CEZ. Risk resides *inside* the Zone; *outside* is supposedly safe. Mario Petrucci reminds us, though, that the barrier is not so clear. In *Heavy Water: A Poem of Chernobyl*, Petrucci (2004) mocks the absurdity of a glass pane that could somehow mark the safety of a world that doesn't require filtration units, where children need not fear cancers that chew through their cells. Petrucci proposes one way to confront a world that is not so safe, a willful act of ignorance: "You must forget / that soil is like skin. / Or interlocking scales / on a dragon" (p. 27). Chernobyl tourists, in contrast, do not visit to forget the dangers of a radioactive wasteland. They come to dwell within a place defined by its capacity to destroy.

In such a site, we find a way to more clearly recognize the relics of modernity. We have reviewed an admittedly abbreviated history of the Chernobyl

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 7.6. Departing the CEZ. Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

disaster, reaching back to an accident borne at least partially from excess confidence in human abilities to manage awesome natural forces. As our memories pierce the confinement of Reactor 4, as the burst of radiation explodes the promise of the future, we follow the shockwave that wrapped around the world in 1986. Decades later we stare, somewhat scornfully, somewhat awestruck, at the site of tourists crunching through the debris of the CEZ, wondering at the capacity of this place to inspire something more than fascination. Seeking a lens of understanding have studied and adapted Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia, all the while admitting fissures in his framework. We have found that, yes, Chernobyl works as an emplacement bounded by anthropological function, temporal situation, and imaginary response. Yet through the addition of a clinical deliberation about purification and contamination, we have come to more fully identify the motivation for many travelers who cross the treacherous thresholds of this place. In so doing, we have pondered a touristic destination that sits near but not quite within the precincts of more traditional sites of memory. Unlike Greenblatt's (1996) notion of the historical monument, a site that both manifests the fantasy of renewal while expressing the "dream of containment," where "the dead will be given a proper place and kept in this place" (p. 36), we may conclude our visit to Chernobyl, Pripyat, and similar ruins with a deeper appreciation for the places where the dead do not lay still, and where the living may more clearly contemplate our own ghostly natures.

NOTES

1. The *Reaktor Bolshoy Moshchnosti Kanalnyy* ("High Power Channel-Type Reactor") was a relatively inexpensive vessel that could maintain functionality while refueling, and it was said to possess a capacity to produce extra plutonium for weapons production (Schmid, 2011, p. 27, endnote 11).
2. Immediate investigation into the cause of the disaster laid most blame on plant operators. A Harvard professor of physics who visited the plant in 1987, for example, concluded, "These incidents would not have occurred if the operators had understood. . . elementary reactor physics" (Wilson, 1987, p. 1369). Subsequent investigations have suggested that, though operators did make critical mistakes, their efforts were hampered by problems in reactor design, with one researcher stating, "These operators were neither under-qualified, nor irresponsible; they simply made a bad call at a critical time" (Schmid, 2011, p. 26).
3. Officials managed the evacuation in stages, beginning with Pripyat and expanding the scope of forced departure until approximately 350,000 people were removed from the region surrounding the plant (Beresford et al., 2016, p. 78). While some Western observers, and no small number of Ukrainians, have debated the wisdom of waiting to evacuate Pripyat until about thirty-six hours after the explosion, Wilson

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

(1987) recalls that the population was deemed to be safer indoors, even as administrators raced to arrange a fleet of buses to move them away from the contaminated area.

4. Hryhorczuk (2013) recalls the announcement that read in part, "*Tovarishchs* ['Comrades'] leaving your residences temporarily please make sure you have turned off the lights, electrical equipment, water, and shut the windows. Please keep calm and orderly in the process of this short-term evacuation" (p. 12).

5. See Chernobyl Forum (2006), Higginbotham (2011), and Wilson (1987) for specific analyses of particles, their half-lives and effects, produced and distributed by the explosion.

6. Geist (2015) traces much of the delay in making this announcement to competing priorities among various stakeholders, exacerbated by the KGB's intention to avoid "embarrassing revelations about the failures and oversights of the Soviet government" (p. 106).

7. Chernobyl Forum (2006) is a commonly cited source for this figure (see, for example, Petryna, 2011, p. 31). Other sources suggest that the number of "liquidators" was higher. Davies (2013) cites 700,000 (p. 136 endnote 4), while Bürkner (2014) cites a range between 600,000 and 800,000 (p. 22).

8. The remaining three reactors continued to generate electrical power before finally being decommissioned one by one in 1991, 1996, and 2000. Two reactors under construction at the time of the accident were never completed.

9. I have published two efforts at heterotopian analysis (Wood, 2003; Wood, 2014). I cite them here, not as exemplars but rather as evidence that authors ought not be judged too harshly for the embryonic nature of their nascent efforts.

10. Following Johnson's (2006, pp. 77) critique of Jay Miskowiec's admittedly influential translation of Foucault's essay, I have opted to employ Lieven De Cauter and Michiel Dehaene's (2008) adaptation.

11. While Parezanović and Lukić (2018) offer an intriguing proposal for how one heterotopia may incur itself upon and/or within another, their argument rests upon an ambivalent engagement with the debate concerning whether heterotopia is ontologically textual or material. See Saindon (2012) for more developed analysis of how one material heterotopia may circulate back upon another in a manner that "re-frames the way in which the first ought to be seen" (p. 41).

12. For additional applications of the heterotopian framework to Chernobyl, see Scott (2012) and O'Connell (2016).

13. U.S. Atomic Energy Commission chair Lewis Strauss coined this phrase in a 1954 speech before the National Association of Science Writers. While his optimistic vision would later inspire consternation among proponents of nuclear power, the notion of energy "too cheap to meter" epitomizes a future of improved health, convenient travel, and material plenty: an "age of peace" wrought either by improvements in either nuclear fission or, in some future date, nuclear fusion (Wellock, 2016). See also Cohn, 1997; Goatcher and Brunsden, 2011, p. 116; Hryhorczuk, 2013, p. 71; Luke, 1987, p. 371; and Young and Launer, 1991, p. 118.

14. Depictions of Chernobyl tourism frequently report surprise, and no small amount of delight, at being able to navigate Pripyat with the aid of games like *Call of Duty*. For merely one example, see Joly (2010, p. 157).

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

15. When contemplating the addition of this clinical axis, one may discern a disquieting similarity with the imaginary axis, especially when relating the qualities of leakage, transgression, and disorder [the pole of illusion] with the qualities of pollution, disease, and corruption [the pole of contamination]. To elucidate the distinction between these axes, I propose that the imaginary axis refers to possibilities of *doing*, while the clinical axis refers to possibilities of *being*. Opting (for now) not to indulge the existential quandaries raised by that distinction, I merely hope that this augmentation to Foucault's framework allows a more refined mode analysis than has previously been available.

16. I would add that we need not rush to impose a theoretical "form" to this complex architecture of dimensions, Euclidean, hyperspatial, or otherwise. At the same time we should consider, at least tentatively, some shape of the analysis to come. We should articulate at least an outline of this shape to avoid both the risks of oversimplification and the vagaries of abstraction. To visualize that problem, I suggest that a mode of analysis that holds that a particular heterotopia works equally on both poles of each axis would resemble a perfect sphere, a pleasing shape that is nonetheless unknown in the real world. One might postulate bubbles and globes as counterpoints to this argument. But objects and practices in the world are not so ideal; their shapes are more complex, portending differing utilities of the domain we call real. Yes, we might attempt a four-dimensional reading of heterotopia, or a five-dimensional reading, or an infinite-dimensional reading, for that matter. Doing so would bring us close to some notion of an ideal form. Yet trying to stretch heterotopia equally to all its poles seems merely to reproduce the fantasy of abstract perfection without conveying the concave realities that surround us.

17. With the exception of a passage drawn from my 2015 visit to the CEZ, I have restricted my selection to narratives written by accredited journalists (and one professional comedian). Admittedly, this approach removes many potentially fascinating accounts. Scholars following up on this work are therefore heartily encouraged to track down especially cinematic narratives found in blog-posts like Ric Gazarian's October 19, 2015, *Thrillist* essay "I Spent the Night at Chernobyl" and Kathryn Schroeder's November 27, 2017, *OZY* post "I Was Bitten by a Radioactive Mosquito at Chernobyl."

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

8

The Doorway to Hell

We conclude this book with a story and a warning.[1]

Let's start with the warning: Beware the reveries of desert travelers.

In the same way that some tourists who wander the crowded quarters and narrow alleys of Jerusalem's Old City may confuse themselves with Christ dragging His cross down the Via Dolorosa, the traveler just back from the undulating sweep of sand dunes and juniper may be forgiven for boasting some deep and newfound understanding of things heretofore unknown when they stumble, perhaps mad from the heat, into civilization. After a recent trip into Central Asia's Karakum Desert, I might have fallen prey to that same conceit. For it is here where I visited a place known previously to me only through strange and affecting photographs of a locale, termed a ruin, now transformed into a peculiar tourist site: Turkmenistan's Darvaza Gas Crater.

Before we visit the crater, let me tell you a little more about the process of getting to this place. Like virtually every visitor to Turkmenistan, I employed an agency that, among other conveniences, secured me the all-important Letter of Invitation. Given the nation's role as the world's fourth largest producer of natural gas, Turkmenistan makes enough money from its natural resources to sustain its political leadership without joining fellow Central Asian nations who have gone into the international hospitality business. One local expert assured me that his country admits barely 20,000 tourists a year, though the State Committee on Tourism understandably reports higher numbers.

One senses that the nation would just as soon avoid the hassle of too many strangers skipping across the borders with Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, bringing a little hard currency but also the threat of cultural contagion. Turkmenistan appears to have concluded that tourists are simply not worth the hassle. As a result, I was obligated to secure the services of a

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

state-approved guide to enter the country. Indeed, I recall few words uttered more sternly upon my arrival at an international airport than when the officer, after surveying my passport and stamping my newly affixed tourist visa, offered his no-nonsense admonition: "Welcome to Turkmenistan. Never travel without guide." Technically this rule does not apply to visitors who stay in the capital city of Ashgabat. And travelers who manage to score short-term transit-visas may also avoid this stricture altogether. But after nearly twenty-four hours of omnitopian flow produced by a structural and perceptual bubble of elevators, shuttles, pedways, buses, trains, and airplanes, departing from my previous abode in Finland to enter this marble and gold enclosure of Turkmenistan's international airport, I was not inclined to quibble.

Exiting the airport, which is shaped like a falcon spreading its wings, I notice more and more the traditional clothing of local folks, particularly the long, colorful caftans and headgear worn by women—often sporting vibrant scarves that cover expansive skull caps to manifest an aristocratic bearing, while also providing insulation from the heat. Some younger women, recent brides, bite down on their scarves while in public, demonstrating a pledge to stay silent until given permission by their in-laws. One should add Turkmen women, stemming from a people whose traditions of pride and bravery recognize no barriers of gender, have no problem learning to speak through clenched teeth. I also notice that men often wear colorful *taqiyahs*, or sometimes *telpeks* (also known by outsiders, not without some derision,

Figure 8.1. Ashgabat Skyline. Photograph by Author

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

as “big furry hats”). And among many women and men in this country, gold-capped teeth are still viewed as a sign of wealth. Saparmurat Niyazov, Turkmenistan’s first post-Soviet president, a dentist before he rose to power, condemned this practice as a threat to personal and national hygiene. Still, some traditions are stubbornly hard to eradicate.

One discerns in Turkmenistan an ever-present sense of formality and decorum. Like Ashgabat’s march of cookie-cutter apartments that arouse visions of Le Corbusier’s Radiant City, this place is a monument to order. Still, as it does everywhere, the surveillance state leaks with humanity. People here are friendly and easy-going—although the overly enthusiastic smile of an earnest tourist may be met with bemusement, or even scorn. Again, this is a post-Soviet society, which means that unwarranted exuberance is often interpreted as foolishness, or deception. Even so, Turkmens are tolerant of strangers, a practical necessity given this nation’s historical position as a desert oasis. Despite the rare appearance of dedicated taxis, most local folks hitch rides by standing alongside the road, hands stretched downward (though without the “patting the dog” maneuver practiced in other countries), awaiting a car driven by anyone looking to score a few Manats. A quick check of destination, a brief negotiation for price, and folks get where they want to go with minimum hassle.

Perhaps it’s the blazing sun that explains why local folks prefer not to draw unnecessary heat in their public lives. By playful illustration, I would note that beards are discouraged in Turkmenistan. Given my own stylistic choices, I am happy to report that they are technically *allowed*, though you can hardly expect to find any worn. President Niyazov condemned them as signs of religious excess against his secular state. Accordingly while most folks here adhere to the Sunni brand of Islam, and quite a few seek their own kind of solace in Russian Orthodoxy, one finds no condemnation for those who practice other faiths. This is, one should remember, the norm across most of the Islamic world; no one would confuse Turkmenistan with Saudi Arabia.

That being said, the government allows virtually nothing in the way of public dissent, political opposition, journalistic freedom, or disrespect toward its president. In fact Ashgabat is positively aglow with golden statues commemorating Niyazov, augmented by a growing number of portraits celebrating his successor, the current president, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow. Instead one finds a multitude of advertisements for the state brand, typically projected on large video displays. On these electronic murals, the president may be shown surrounded by children, cupping his hands upward in piety, or occasionally sitting astride his horse, a symbol of pride among a people famed for their equestrian skills. And, yes, travelers on Turkmenistan’s national airline will find his portrait gracing each cabin, receiving assurance for a safe flight

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

under his watchful eye. In this omnipresent reminder of Niyazov's legacy and Berdimuhamedow's benevolence, one gradually leans inward and toward the disciplinary contours of docility, the ever-fine tendrils of reverence, that perpetuate the performance of control.

Beyond the airport, the nation's surveillance structure expands ever more intricately along physical and digital pathways that connect cameras and other tools of observation nestled among lighting fixtures and inserted throughout other nodes of public life. I would also not be surprised if Turkmenistan has chosen to follow the authoritarian model advanced by China to employ facial recognition devices and algorithmic assessments to mark the movements of every person in the country's larger cities—or at least hopes to do so in the near future. In the meantime, access to social media outlets like Facebook and Instagram is banned.

As for more surreptitious forms of surveillance, I can offer no specific experience. I would merely presume that all tourists, some surely more than others, receive their portion of special attention by the nation's security apparatus. Augmenting this diffused brand of panopticism, one grows familiar with the sight of baton-twirling cops in blue uniforms and high-peaked hats who stand on seemingly every major street corner, sometimes chatting amiably with each other but seldom abandoning their duties to scrutinize. Mirroring the eight-pointed star, the ubiquitous mark of the nation woven into carpets, etched along walls, and even used to shape the Turkmenistan's Wedding Palace, this government does not shirk from its design to maintain an environment of pleasantly total jurisdiction. The eye of state sees in all directions. Nonetheless I did not come to Turkmenistan to study its surveillance practices. I simply took them for granted. Like the irksome blinking light found on smoke detectors in hotels around the world, this reality first vexed me before it became a less troubling feature of life. So with a healthy respect for my surveilled status, nodding politely at cops broiling in the heat, I toured the nation's capital city—a Central Asian version of Las Vegas sprawling with gleaming programmatic architecture—as a cheerful tourist.

So, yes, in fact and in spirit, I would marvel at the city's blocks of white apartment buildings that stretch in geometric repetition along the city's monumental boulevards. Naturally I would delight at the sight of splashing fountains that dance with gaudy excess amid the desert that covers about 80 percent of the country. Led by Murad Arrykov, my guide and translator, I would also tour the ruins of the Old Nissa fortress and visit the Silk Road "Wandering City" of Merv near the city of Mary, a short domestic hop away. And I did come to love those ancient ruins, drawn to the universal desire to trace some passageway between the hyperpresent and the distant past. Of course, my trip was centered on that crater in the desert.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 8.2. On the "Highway to Hell." Photograph by Author

Driving north of Turkmenistan's capital city of Ashgabat on a day that burned hotter than 100 degrees Fahrenheit, I figured AC/DC's "Highway to Hell" was the right tune for the trip. The Aussies, you see, know something about deserts. The Red Center drive from Alice Springs to Uluru, the chance to barrel past hopping kangaroos and bounding wallabies remains one of the highlights of my life. But I trusted Murad who insisted that Little Richard's "Long Tall Sally," that ode to promiscuity and purgatory, the slippery divide between coming and going, was the perfect choice for the moment when we pulled off the main drag, just before the Daşoguz checkpoint, to see the pit.

Hopping over the rocky, rutted pathway toward our destination, we cranked "Sally" up loud enough to bang our heads, though our 4X4 made plenty of percussion on its own. Our driver, a taciturn dude whose eyes squinted sharply under the blazing blue sky, kept his focus on the road. No "да, да, да" of agreement here; if the driver dug the tune, I would never know. Nearing our destination, Murad pointed out details through the windshield, displaying his mastery of culture, history, archeology, flora, and fauna. At other times, however, he too adopted the reserved pose of the driver. Watching, learning, I joined his silence. Just a few miles more, we would find what locals supposedly call the Doorway to Hell. And then, at that moment, Little Richard belted out a line from "Long Tall Sally" that made perfect sense: "He has the blues but he has a lot of fun." This, as much as anything, is the mantra for a place that gathers people to reside between pleasure and despair.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

We arrived in late afternoon, after making stops at two nearby craters produced by failed gas mining efforts. One was filled by water; the other was filled with mud. At these initial stops, my guide and driver waited long enough for me to walk their perimeters. Ambling around the second crater, which bubbled and smelled faintly of sulfur, I recall feeling a similar vibe to the process one endures to circle the labyrinth in a cathedral like Chartres. Whether surrounded by fellow travelers or, in this case, alone, I could still sense a long-needed stillness, a reverential silence. Later, tracing our route from crater to crater, though playing a bit with the order of elements, Murad would remind me of a conversation we had the previous day, while visiting Nissa, concerning the Zoroastrian triangle of earth, water, and fire. Despite my tendency to overstate my perceptions of these experiences, I can confirm the existence of a primal, elemental feeling in this place.

After three and a half hours of banging along rugged terrain, dusty villages, ragged camels, and the occasional highway roamer pointing a hand downward in hopes for a ride, we arrived at the gas crater. The pit, about 230 feet across and more than sixty feet deep, marks a site where ’70s-era Soviet geologists hoped to mine natural gas. Despite their best efforts, though, a vapor pocket exploded, wrecking the drilling rig, and collapsing the land into a crater. The immediate economic and human costs were bad enough. Worse still was the potential for poisonous gasses to kill nearby villagers. In response, engineers would eventually decide to set the chasm on fire, hoping that this operation would burn off the dangerous fumes. The plan would supposedly need only a few weeks to work.

Decades later, the fires still burn.

I must confess that the crater did not impress me at first. In afternoon light, the pit was lit by small flickering bursts of flame that trickled from blackened, flinty surface below. Standing inside the protective rail, I saw gentle waves of heat that rippled like sand dunes, interesting but hardly a spectacle. All at once, I was blown back by a furnace of heat as the wind shifted in my direction. I began to picture the horror that would overcome anyone who might plummet below, caught between temporary presence and permanent absence just long enough to anticipate a fate they could not hope to avoid. I admit it: I also anticipated how easy it would be to jump to my death, to suffer that horror. The feeling passed, but not the guilt of such dismal musing.

How, and why, would I mock mortality so blithely?

Since we had set up camp, I had all evening to practice Murad’s advice that I should return again and again to the pit. As the sky darkened and shadows lengthened, I began to notice that the black edges of the crater started to glow, subtly at first and then with an angrier hue. The flames did not change in any actual way, but they appeared to pop more fiercely from

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 8.3. Twilight at the Crater. Photograph by Author

their torrents. Then I observed something that I had never seen before, except when studying the change of light through a camera viewfinder. As the spurts of conflagration broke through the surface, I could actually feel the irises of my eyes adjusting, producing a jerking response as vision compensated for rapid shifts from deep red to bright yellow and back again. And here, unlike

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Figure 8.4. The Doorway to Hell. Photograph by Author

the Chartres-memory summoned by the mud crater, I did indeed imagine a glimpse of hell—perhaps more closely akin to the "Doomsday Machine" that haunted the heroes, and one guilty survivor, of the eponymous *Star Trek* episode. Thinking about Commodore Decker piloting a stolen, doomed shuttle into the flaming center of a weapon "right out of hell," I wondered more gravely what guilt would compel me to contemplate such a leap.

I had come a long way to see this place, to consider these questions, though I could hardly explain why. If Murad and our driver had succumbed to their own sense of the sublime, they did not show it. They had completed this drive countless times, usually taking small caravans of tourists into the beautiful, brutal desert. They had learned to negotiate the jagged trail of broken stone with professional detachment. No doubt, they came to tolerate the standard questions posed in places like this, the typical fears and exaggerated responses. And surely, patiently, they waited for their doughy visitors to drift off to sleep in tents while guide and driver opted to rest under the stars (or sleep in the 4X4). This time, aside from some Japanese tourists who had come to rent yurts on the other side of the crater, we were alone. I figured this was as good a time as any to ask Murad his opinion: Why do people come here?

As his usual habit, Murad looked me directly in the eyes, forming words from a smile but with a no nonsense demeanor. His reply was poetic, and though memory does not serve to quote him directly, I was moved by his clarity of analysis. First, he said, the crater is unique. There is nothing quite

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

like this place anywhere in the world—a sensible enough hypothesis. Then he paused, gazing solemnly as he chose his next words. At this point, the sun fully dipped below the horizon, setting forth a radiant band of blue and purple. The breeze had begun to pick up and a nearby hill had started to glow with reflected fire. It's the flames, he concluded. That's what attracts us all to places like this. And he makes a good point. Since the beginning of all civilization, people have been drawn around the campfire to share the safety of numbers, to tell stories.

Night had fallen and the cavern glowed in searing eruptions of red and orange, not quite belching but rather constantly streaming a hiss of natural gas set aflame. At first we sat on a carpet, offering some protection from the stony ground, an imaginary shield from jumping camel spiders and pinching scarab beetles. But then Murad stood up and took out a mobile phone and launched an astronomy application that employs augmented reality to layer digital constellations over the display. As soothing music rolled out of the device's speakers, he swung around in a wide arc to reveal a network of otherwise invisible lines. Aided by GPS, he could pick out stars and planets with precision that would have mystified the ancient travelers who relied upon celestial objects to chart their own paths across the unforgiving desert.

And then, fueled no doubt by a fulsome meal of chicken, lamb, tomatoes, and eggplant, and four cans of Turkmen Zip beer, Murad and I began reciting bits and pieces of Homer's *Iliad* to each other. Murad started by asking if I had seen *Troy*, Wolfgang Petersen's 2004 epic starring Brad Pitt as Achilles and Eric Bana as Hector. We both share an affinity for movies, so, despite the middling nature of the film, I could affirm I had indeed seen it. "I like Hector," Murad stated. "He died, but he died as a man." I had to agree. While the Trojans are cast as antagonists to those fractious seafaring heroes who would later be called "Greeks," I hoped that I too could face my fate with the courage mustered by Hector.

Gradually our conversation turned to Homer's original tale, which features gods who meddle in the affairs of human beings. I recalled how the poets sang of the tricks that Athena played upon Hector, using her supernatural powers to give the Achilles an unfair advantage. Hector, in noble contrast, stood alone, knowing that he would be slain this day. But, Murad emphasized, the Trojan hero would perish as a man. In turns, we recalled how Achilles heaved his spear at Hector who, by now, could rely only on his sword. Impaled and near death, Hector begged the wrathful Achilles not to spare his life but rather to spare the indignity of his body being ravaged by dogs. At this moment, Murad and I exclaimed in unison, "But he wouldn't do it!" Then and now, I share my guide's respect for Hector, but that is not quite the point. Like the Trojans who heretofore had awaited the coming of the Greeks where "a

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

thousand camp-fires gleamed upon the plain," we too sought ways to reckon with forces and powers beyond our control. Together, drinking and talking, we could visualize ourselves as heroes who gathered under the stars to share stories of men and gods, lit only by firelight. Aglow in the debris of industrial catastrophe, roiling in heat and toxicity, we warmed ourselves through that most ancient of connections: our desires, our needs, to gather in the darkness.

After the Fire

So we complete our investigation of ruin, having started in pop culture accounts of domed cities cracked asunder and then traveling great distances from California, where I write these words, eastward to a scattered assortment of ghost towns and disaster sites within and beyond North America. We've charted a long and winding road. We've studied these topics through a wide range of perspectives: close textual analysis, picturesque framing, Jeremiadic interpretation, hauntological reading, psychographic prose, and heterotopian exploration. Our inquiries have been grounded in three questions that, upon retrospect, may have been overly facile. Even so, they helped us find some structure in the abyss of modernity's wreckage. Here, then, we should review those challenges and consider what they have wrought: What motivates people to travel to places associated with decay and death? What social, cultural, and artistic purposes do these sites serve? And what lessons can we learn about contemporary life when viewed through the prism of its ruins?

Turning to that initial query, we find that ruins do not merely remind us of mortality; they provide a means of managing it. To gaze into the flames, literally or symbolically, we rehearse a method of our own personal extinction. Remember, it was Plato's version of Socrates who dismissed his Athenian interlocutors as hypocrites and warned his friends that he would never stoop so low as to prioritize life over duty. Philosophy is preparation for death, he said. And one could hardly imagine a more joyous sojourner toward that undiscovered country than Socrates. At the same time, we also stand apart from our fate, articulating our gaze through various windows of the picturesque. Few of us may hope to master of the Socratic calm. Our blood pulses and our muscles twitch with the knowledge that human beings are condemned to carry: *Memento Mori*. In contrast we practice less philosophical arts, opting instead to frame the apocalypse, either through cinematic exemplars such as *Things to Come*, *Logan's Run*, and *Twelve Monkeys*, or through post-apocalyptic visions of a world without us. Watching these places, traveling through them, we hope to confound our inevitable demise, to collapse the chasms that divide life and death and, in doing so, inhale the intoxicating

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

faith that, producing this frame, we may trace a fate beyond its edge. For this reason we gaze into the glass at sites like Bodie, tracing our own recursive modes of seeing, our irises expanding and contracting and expanding again: authoring our own mystery stories. We visit places like Detroit and Centralia, and more extremely, we tour Chernobyl and Darvaza amidst our own secret psychogeographies, entering these frames, and allowing them to enter us. In these touristic fantasies, we play with the boundaries of corporeal reality, enacting rhetorics and performances that push against and pull from the ultimate borderlands of our lives.

Turning to our second query, we wonder what broader social, cultural, and artistic purposes may be served in these sites. In our investigation of Jeremiadic rhetoric, we exhumed an ironic practice employed by presidential speakers ranging from Franklin Roosevelt to Jimmy Carter to Donald Trump. How distinct are these American leaders, and how incommensurate are their times. Still, we observe in this book's admittedly idiosyncratic reading a common way for politicians to build up economic ruins, various types of American Carnage, as foundations to marshal American action. As Jeremiads, these appeals arise from mythical and spiritual promises of better days. And anyone seeking to lead a nation must project optimism. At the same time, Morning in America and Mourning in America occupy two sides of the same coin. That circular process, despite any forecast of hope, reflects an essentially conservative rhetoric, leading us backward and away from the present. Looking beyond this political reading, we come to appreciate creative destruction of both an economic and spiritual essence, learning to recognize and then to seek less formal, often non-authorized creative efforts. Centralia's Graffiti Highway provides a most evocative example of this tendency. Its visitors, at least until the road was covered by private owners fearing liability, would leave traces that would hardly hope to remain. One finds in these efforts the pleasure not of presence but of absence. In an era of precarity (and, more recently, of pandemic), "I *was* here" conjures more hope than "I *am* here." Here, then, we consider not just a politics of ruin but more deeply an *aesthetics* of ruin. Beauty in these texts, these films, and these places, constitutes a jarring reminder that nothing, no matter how strongly reinforced against the future, can endure. Beauty is the near-collapse of a cabin on the high desert, the break of weeds above a coal seam fire, the dangling of a traffic signal over an empty road, the click of a radiometer in a disaster zone, and, yes, it is the moment in which one contemplates a leap into Hell. These pleasures, despite their touristic manifestations, make us creators, curators, and confounders of ruin. As such, they enable us to carve from our totalizing environments some sense of direction and control.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

This quality leads us to one final question: What do ruins say about contemporary life? In response, we must confess the guilty pleasures of our journeys to Bodie, Detroit, Centralia, Chernobyl, and Darvaza. In these places, many hope for the solitary frame, freed of others. Positioning our cameras, revising our histories, departing our guides, we imagine the possibility of a world without others. This is part of the critique offered by that anonymous man who approached me in Detroit. I'd come to take pictures, he observed, but I clearly had nothing to give. Such is the dilemma of the artistic and scholarly impulse. The manifestations of those efforts, no matter how well intended, lead us back to ourselves, alone. This eternal return, I should add, calls us to question the broader sweeps of theories both grand and terrible. Here we are bound to recognize something that Michel Foucault meant when proposing his heterotopian framework: Ruins expose the excesses, the leakages, and the collapsing ambitions of the modern project. Our liberties to bounce through the cosmos like billiard balls produce an emptiness that no monument can fill. A hole in the desert. We are left in ruins; ruins are left in us. In those spaces, we also see what Walter Benjamin meant in his Marxian rebuke of progress narratives, even those espoused by his fellow travelers. The ruin reminds us to be a little less sure of the disciplinary apparatus that we hope will contain our humanity. Those schemes, those plans, those policies, those blueprints, those flowcharts, and, yes, even those words, will not endure. There is no end to history, we come to learn; the future churns us always backward to our origins: a world without us. Thus in the ruin we encounter an awful silence that may only be resolved through human interaction.

In that spirit, let us return one last time to Hell's Doorway.

On that evening in Turkmenistan, ours was a convivial party. We roasted meat and drank beer and swapped stories. And then one more person joined us: a young skinny dude crossing the sands in search of his friends. Speaking not in Russian but in Turkmen, the guy apologized for his intrusion and asked us to share some water. We naturally offered a portion and wished him well as he returned to his path. Anyone who lives here knows the necessary ethic of such an act, and it felt good to share. Ultimately, though, I had to spend just a few more moments alone. I began to trudge up the hill that rose behind us for a God's eye view of the crater. Under a nearly full moon, the valley was bathed in soft light. I added an extra layer of protection with the beam of my phone's lamp that rendered the ruts and rocks more navigable. I made my steps carefully, with the reverence one might adopt when climbing the stone steps of Teotihuacan toward the sun. At last I reached the summit and turned to face the panorama above and below.

A small party of tourists was snapping pictures of the crater, posing with arms outstretched, pointing toward the flame. Next to that yawning chasm

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

of burning gas, buffeted by occasional gusts of wind that could char a person with frightening heat, they traced confident circles and laughed. This, I think, is something of that desert reverie that I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter: that feeling one comes to know in a place like this, and a giddy power to impose upon those forces that constrain us, belittle us, and frighten us. I wonder if each of us who visit Turkmenistan's Darvaza Gas Crater, and places like it, come to find a power to gaze into the abyss of our mortality and face it, perhaps even to inscribe upon it some markings of permanence. We need not pretend to be Heraclitus to grasp the futility of that effort. Even so, our stories, our photographs, our etchings, our graffiti portend some hope against the expanding skies to confront the inevitability of ruin—the belief, no matter how ephemeral, that we may endure.

NOTE

1. Much of the material in the first section of this chapter, and some of the conclusion, first appeared in my blog, *Woodland Shoppers Paradise*.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Bibliography

"A Walk in Old Bodie". n.d. California Department of Parks and Recreation.

Abbott, Pamela, Claire Wallace, and Matthias Beck. 2006. "Chernobyl: Living with Risk and Uncertainty." *Health, Risk & Society* 8, no. 2: 105–121.

Adams, Henry. 1918. *The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Aden, Roger C. 1994. "Back to the Garden: Therapeutic Place Metaphor in *Field of Dreams*." *Southern Journal of Communication* 59, no. 4: 307–317.

———. 2012. "When Memories and Discourses Collide: The President's House and Places of Public Memory." *Communication Monographs* 79, no. 1: 72–92.

Aden, Roger C., Min Wha Han, Stephanie Norander, Michael E. Pfahl, Timothy P. Pollock Jr., and Stephanie L. Young. 2009. "Re-Collection: A Proposal for Refining the Study of Collective Memory and its Places." *Communication Theory* 19, no. 3: 311–336.

Akkerman, Abraham. 2009. "Urban Void and the Deconstruction of Neo-Platonic City-Form." *Ethics, Place & Environment* 12, no. 2: 205–218.

Anders, George. 2006. "This Old Ruin: A Ghost Town is Suspended in Time, Thanks to Handyman's Invisible Hand." *Wall Street Journal*, August 25, 2006.

Anker, Peder. 2005. The Bauhaus of Nature. *Modernism/Modernity* 12, no. 2: 229–251.

Arendt, Hannah. 2006. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Penguin Classics.

Armstrong, Charles. I. 2014. The "Intimate Enemies": Edward Dowden, W. B. Yeats and the Formation Character. *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 13, no. 2, 23–42.

Arnold-de Simine, Silke. 2015. "The Ruin As Memorial—Memorial As Ruin." *Performance Research* 20, no. 3: 94–102.

Atkinson, Joshua, and Clayton Rosati. 2012. "DetroitYES! and the Fabulous Ruins Virtual Tour: the Role of Diffused Intertextual Production in the Construction of Alternative Cityscapes." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 29, no. 1: 45–64.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Balonov, Mikhail I. 2012. "On Protecting the Inexperienced Reader from Chernobyl Myths." *Journal of Radiological Protection* 32, no. 2: 181.

Barnett, Joshua Trey. 2019. "Naming, Mourning, and the Work of Earthly Coexistence." *Environmental Communication* 13, no. 3: 287–299.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1989. "The Anorexic Ruins." In *Looking Back on the End of the World*, edited by Dietmar Kamper and Christoph Wulf, Translated by David Antal, 29–45. New York: Semiotext(E).

———. 1994. *The Illusion of the End*. Translated by Chris Turner. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Benjamin, Walter. 1968. *Illuminations*. Translated by Henry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books.

———. 2004. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bennet, James. 1995. "A Tribute to Ruin Irks Detroit: Decay Theme Park? Not on Your Life." *New York Times,* December 10, 1995.

Bercovitch, Sacvan. 1978. *The American Jeremiad*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Beresford, N. A., S. Fesenko, A. Konoplev, L. Skuterud, J. T. Smith, and G. Voigt. 2016. "Thirty Years After the Chernobyl Accident: What Lessons Have We Learnt?." *Journal of Environmental Radioactivity* 157: 77–89.

Bergman, Teresa. 2003. "A Critical Analysis of the California State Railroad Museum's Orientation Films." *Western Journal of Communication* 67, no. 4: 427–448.

Bidder, Benjamin. "A Day Trip with a Geiger Counter: Fukushima Disaster Boosts Chernobyl Tourism." *Spiegel*. April 20, 2011. https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/a-day-trip-with-a-geiger-counter-fukushima-disaster-boosts-chernobyl-tourism-a-758269.html.

Biesecker, Barbara A. 2002. "Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21st Century." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 4: 393–409.

Blair, Carole. 1999. "Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric's Materiality." In *Rhetorical Bodies*, edited by Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley, 16–57. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

———. 2001. "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places." *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3: 271–294.

Blair, Carole, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott. 2010. "Introduction: Rhetoric/Memory/Place." In *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, edited by Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian. L. Ott, 1–54. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.

Blair, Carole, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci Jr. 1991. "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77, no. 3: 263–288.

Bleiberg, Larry. 2017. "10 Great Ghost Towns, From Old West to Modern Michigan." *USA Today*. July 28, 2017. https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/destinations/10greatplaces/2017/07/28/ghost-towns/516591001/.

"Bodie State Historic Park." 2016. California Department of Parks and Recreation.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

———. 2017. California Department of Parks and Recreation.

Boorstin, Daniel. J. 1992. *The Image: A Guide To Pseudo-Events in America*. New York: Vintage.

Born of the Atom. 1986. *Soviet Life*, 7, no. 13.

Bowman, Michael S. 2010. "Tracing Mary Queen of Scots." In *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, edited by Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian. L. Ott, 191-215. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.

Braithwaite, Rodric. 2019. "Chernobyl: A 'Normal'Accident?" *Chernobyl* (TV miniseries) Craig Mazin, writer. Johan Renck, director. Distributed by HBO (US) and Sky (UK), 2019." *Survival* 61, no. 5: 149–158.

Broder, David. 1979. "Camp David Denouement: Carter Faces a Tough Audience." *Washington Post*, July 15, 1979.

Brown, Richard M. 1991. *No Duty to Retreat: Violence and Values in American History and Society*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Browne, Stephen H. 1999. "Remembering Crispus Attucks: Race, Rhetoric, and the Politics of Commemoration." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 85, no. 2: 169–187.

Burch, Audra D. S. 2019. "Decay, and Indelible Memory." *New York Times*. February 22, 2019.

Burke, Edmund. 1909. "A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, with Several Other Additions." In *Edmund Burke on Taste, on the Sublime and Beautiful, Reflections on the French Revolution, A Letter to a Noble Lord*, edited by C. W. Eliot, 27-148. New York: P. F. Collier & Son.

Burke, Kenneth. 1970. *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bürkner, Daniel. 2014. "The Chernobyl Landscape and the Aesthetics of Invisibility." *Photography and Culture* 7, no. 1: 21–39.

Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. 1985. "Inaugurating the Presidency." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 15, no. 2: 394–411.

Carter, Christopher. 2015. *Rhetorical Exposures: Confrontation and Contradiction in US Social Documentary Photography*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

"Changing the Way Things Are." 1979. *Washington Post*, July 15, 1979.

Chayt, Eliot. 2015. Things to Come. *Moving Image* 15, no. 1: 125–128.

Chernobyl Forum. 2006. "*Chernobyl's Legacy: Health, Environmental and Socio-Economic Impacts and Recommendations to the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine*" (Second Revised Version). Vienna: International Atomic Energy Agency. https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/chernobyl.pdf.

Cielemęcka, Olga, and Christine Daigle. 2019. "Posthuman Sustainability: An Ethos for our Anthropocenic Future." *Theory, Culture & Society* 36, no. 7–8: 67–87.

Clark, Nigel. 1995. "Rear-view Mirrorshades: The Recursive Generation of the Cyberbody." *Body & Society* 1, no. 3–4: 113–133.

Clymer, Adam. 1979. "Speech Lifts Carter Rating to 37%; Public Agrees on Confidence Crisis." *New York Times*, July 18, 1979.

Cohn, Steven Mark. 1997. *Too Cheap to Meter: An Economic and Philosophical Analysis of the Nuclear Dream*. Albany: SUNY Press.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Conley, Donovan S., and Lawrence J. Mullen. 2008. "Righting the Commons in Red Rock Canyon." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 5, no. 2: 180–199.

Crowley, Kelley. 2013. "What We Do: Detroit in Car Advertising." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 28, no. 2: 145–147.

Crutzen, Paul. J., and Eugene Stoermer. 2000. The Anthropocene. *Global Change Newsletter* 41: 17–18.

Darden, Joe, and Joe T. Darden. 1990. *Detroit: Race and Uneven Development*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Daughton, Suzanne M. 1993. "Metaphorical Transcendence: Images of the Holy War in Franklin Roosevelt's First Inaugural." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79, no. 4: 427–446.

Davies, Thom. 2013. "A Visual Geography of Chernobyl: Double Exposure." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84: 116–139.

Davis, Mike. 1999. "Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space." In *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, edited by Michale Sorkin, 154–180. New York: Hill and Wang.

De Cauter, Lieven, and Michiel Dehaene. 2008. "The Space of Play: Towards a General Theory of Heterotopia." In *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, edited by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter, 99–114. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Debord, Guy. 2008. "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography." In *Critical Geographies: A Collection of Readings*, edited by Harald Bauder and Salvatore Engel-Di Mauro, 23–27. Kelowna, BC: Praxis (E)Press.

Dekok, David. 2000. *Unseen Danger: A Tragedy of People, Government, and the Centralia Mine Fire*. Lincoln, NE: Toexcel.

DeLyser, Dydia. 1998. "Good, By God, We're Going to Bodie! Landscape and Social Memory in a California Ghost Town." PhD diss., Syracuse University.

———. 1999. "Authenticity on the Ground: Engaging the Past in a California Ghost Town." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89, no. 4: 602–632.

———. 2001. "'Do You Really Live Here?' Thoughts on Insider Research." *Geographical Review* 91, no. 1–2: 441–453.

———. 2003. "'A Walk Through Old Bodie': Presenting a Ghost Town in a Tourism Map." In *Mapping Tourism*, edited by Stephen P. Hanna and Vincent J. Del Casino Jr., 79–107. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Derrida, Jacques. 1994. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning & the New International*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. London: Routledge.

DeSilvey, Caitlin. 2006. "Observed Decay: Telling Stories with Mutable Things." *Journal of Material Culture* 11, no. 3: 318–338.

DeSilvey, Caitlin, and Tim Edensor. 2013. "Reckoning with Ruins." *Progress in Human Geography* 37, no. 4: 465–485.

Dickinson, Greg. 1997. "Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity In Old Pasadena." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83, no. 1: 1–27.

Dickinson, Greg, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki. 2005. "Memory and Myth at the Buffalo Bill Museum." *Western Journal of Communication* 69, no. 2: 85–108.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Dickinson, Greg, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki. 2006. "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1: 27–47.

Dickinson, Greg, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki. 2013. "(Re) Imagining the West: The Whitney Gallery of Western Art's Sacred Hymn." *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 13, no. 1: 21–34.

Dillon, Brian. 2011. *Ruins*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press/Whitechapel Gallery.

Dowsett, Gary W. 2015. "'and Next, Just for Your Enjoyment!': Sex, Technology and the Constitution of Desire." *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 17, no. 4: 527–539.

Drescher, Cynthia. 2017. "What It's Actually Like to Visit Chernobyl." *Condé Nast Traveler*. October 30. https://www.cntraveler.com/story/what-its-actually-like-to-visit-chernobyl.

Ebert, Roger. 1999. "Peeping Tom." Great Movies. May 2, 1999. https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-peeping-tom-1960.

Edensor, Tim. 2005. *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Edwards, Dustin W. 2020. "Digital Rhetoric on a Damaged Planet: Storying Digital Damage as Inventive Response to the Anthropocene." *Rhetoric Review* 39, no. 1: 59–72.

Ekman, Peter. 2016. "Diagnosing Suburban Ruin: A Prehistory of Mumford's Post-war Jeremiad." *Journal of Planning History* 15, no. 2: 108–128.

Eliade, Mircea. 1971. *The Myth of the Eternal Return, Or, Cosmos and History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ellis, Cameron A. J. 2018. "Abjection and the New Extreme of Utopia." *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 16, no. 1: 57–70.

Fassi, Anthony J. 2010. "Industrial Ruins, Urban Exploring, and the Postindustrial Picturesque." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 10, no. 1: 141–152.

Faubion, James D. 2008. "Heterotopia: An Ecology." In *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, edited by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter, 31–40. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Faulkner, William. 1994. *Requiem for a Nun*. New York: Vintage Books.

Fisher, Walter R. 1980. "Genre: Concepts and Applications in Rhetorical Criticism." *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 44, no. 4: 288–299.

Foley, Malcolm, and J. John Lennon. 1996 "JFK and Dark Tourism: A Fascination with Assassination." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 2, no. 4: 198–211.

Foote, Kenneth E. 2003. *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* [Revised]. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Ford, Laura Grace. 2018. "Drift Report from Downtown LA." *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* 10, no. 2: 215–225.

Foss, Sonja K. 1986. "Ambiguity as Persuasion: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial." *Communication Quarterly* 34, no. 3: 326–340.

Foster, Gwendolyn Audrey. 2014. *Hoarders, Doomsday Preppers, and the Culture of Apocalypse*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

———. 2016. "Consuming the Apocalypse, Marketing Bunker Materiality." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 33, no. 4: 285–302.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Foucault, Michel. 2008. "Of Other Spaces." In *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, edited by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter, 13–29. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Fraser, Emma. 2018. "Unbecoming Place: Urban Imaginaries in Transition in Detroit." *Cultural Geographies* 25, no. 3: 441–458.

Garrett, Bradley L. 2014. "Undertaking Recreational Trespass: Urban Exploration and Infiltration." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 39, no. 1: 1–13.

Garrido, Felipe Espinoza. 2020. "Reframing the Post-Apocalypse in Black British Film: The Dystopian Afrofuturism of *Welcome II the Terrordome* and *Shank*." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 37, no. 4: 310–323.

Geist, Edward. 2015. "Political Fallout: The Failure of Emergency Management at Chernobyl' [sic]." *Slavic Review* 74, no. 1: 104–126.

Gelernter, David. H. 1995. *1939: The Lost World of the Fair*. New York: Free Press.

Genocchio, Benjamin. 1995. "Discourse, Discontinuity, Difference: The Question of 'Other' Spaces." In *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, edited by Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson, 35–46. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Gibson, William. 1988. "The Gernsback Continuum." In *Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology*, edited by Bruce Sterling, pp. 1–11. New York: Ace Books.

Gibson, William, and Dennis Ashbaugh. 1992. *Agrippa (A Book of The Dead)*. New York: Kevin Begos Jr. Publishing.

Goh, Robbie B. H. 2011. "Competitive Cities and Human Scales: The Semiotics of Urban Excess." *Semiotica* 185, no. 1/4: 189–211.

Gold, John R. 2001. "Under Darkened Skies: The City in Science-Fiction Film." *Geography* 86, no 4: 337–345.

Gorsevski, Ellen W., Raymond I. Schuck, and Canchu Lin. 2012. "The Rhetorical Plasticity of the Dead in Museum Displays: A Biocritique of Missing Intercultural Awareness." *Western Journal of Communication* 76, no. 3: 314–332.

Greenberg, Michael R., Frank J. Popper, and Bernadette M. West. 1990. "The TOADS: A New American Urban Epidemic." *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 25, no. 3: 435–454.

Greenblatt, Stephen. 1996. "Memory and Monumentality." *The Threepenny Review* 64: 35–36.

Gunn, Joshua. 2004. "Mourning Speech: Haunting and the Spectral Voices of Nine-Eleven." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 24, no. 2: 91–114.

Gunn, Joshua, and David E. Beard. 2000. "On the Apocalyptic Sublime." *Southern Journal of Communication* 65, no. 4: 269–286.

Gunn, Joshua, and David E. Beard. 2003. "On the Apocalyptic Columbine." *Southern Journal of Communication* 68, no. 3: 198–216.

Haas, Benjamin. 2016. "Hopeless Activism: Performance in the Anthropocene." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 36, no. 4: 279–296.

Hahn, Dan F. 1984. "The Rhetoric of Jimmy Carter, 1976–1980." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 2: 265–288.

Harvey, David. 1992. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Hell, Julia, and Schönle, Andreas. 2010. *Ruins of Modernity*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Henning, Michelle. 2006. *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory*. Maidenhead, Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

Hetherington, Keith. 1997. *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering*. London: Routledge.

Higginbotham, Adam. 2011. "Is Chernobyl a Wild Kingdom or a Radioactive Den of Decay?" *Wired Magazine*. April 14, 2011. https://www.wired.com/2011/04/ff-chernobyl/.

Hostetter, Ellen. 2011. "Boomtown Landscapes." *Material Culture* 42, no 2: 59–79.

Hryhorczuk, Nicholas. 2013. "Radioactive Heritage: An Autoethnographic Investigation of Chernobyl as a Dark Heritage Site." PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Huyssen, Andreas. 1995. *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. London: Routledge.

———. 2006. "Nostalgia for Ruins." *Grey Room* 23: 6–21.

Jackson, J. B. 1980. *The Necessity for Ruins: and Other Topics*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Jargin, Sergei V. 2010. "Overestimation of Chernobyl Consequences: Poorly Substantiated Information Published." *Radiation and Environmental Biophysics* 49, no. 4: 743–745.

Jenks, Chris, and Tiago Neves. 2000. "A Walk on the Wild Side: Urban Ethnography Meets the *Flâneur*." *Cultural Values* 4, no. 1: 1–17.

Johnson, Davi. 2008. "Psychiatric Power: The Post-Museum as a Site of Rhetorical Alignment." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 5, no. 4: 344–362.

Johnson, George. 2014. "The Nuclear Tourist: An Unforeseen Legacy of the Chernobyl Meltdown." *National Geographic*. October 2014. https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/article/chernobyl-nuclear-tourism.

Johnson, Peter. 2006. "Unravelling Foucault's 'Different Spaces'." *History of The Human Sciences* 19, no. 4: 75–90.

———. 2013. "The Geographies of Heterotopia." *Geography Compass* 7, no. 11: 790–803.

Joly, Dom. 2010. *The Dark Tourist: Sightseeing in the World's Most Unlikely Holiday Destinations*. London: Simon & Schuster.

Jonas, Gerard. 1993. "The Disappearing $2,000 Book." *New York Times*, August 29, 1993.

Katriel, Tamar. 1994. "Sites of Memory: Discourses of the Past in Israeli Pioneering Settlement Museums." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80, no. 1: 1–20.

Kelly, Casey Ryan. 2016. "The Man-Pocalpyse: Doomsday Preppers and the Rituals of Apocalyptic Manhood." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 36, no. 2–3: 95–114.

King, Stephen A. 2006. "Memory, Mythmaking, and Museums: Constructive Authenticity and the Primitive Blues Subject." *Southern Communication Journal* 71, no. 3: 235–250.

Knight, Kelvin T. 2017. "Placeless Places: Resolving the Paradox of Foucault's Heterotopia." *Textual Practice* 31, no. 1: 141–158.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Knutson, J. 2020. “The End of Centralia’s Abandoned, Colorful, Anarchic ‘Graffiti Highway.’” *Atlas Obscura*. September 14, 2020. https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/centralia-graffiti-highway-buried.

Kofman, Ava. 2015. “Chernobyl: A Vacation Hotspot Unlike Any Other.” *VICE*. July 19, 2015. https://www.vice.com/en/article/wd7jxy/chernobyl-a-vacation-hotspot-unlike-any-other-0283.

Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon. S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kroll-Smith, J. Stephen, and Stephen Robert Couch. 1987. “A Chronic Technical Disaster and the Irrelevance of Religious Meaning: The Case of Centralia, Pennsylvania.” *Journal For The Scientific Study of Religion*: 25–37.

Kuftinec, Sonja. 1998. “[Walking Through A] Ghost Town: Cultural Hauntologie in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina or Mostar.” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 18, no. 2: 81–95.

Kumparak, Greg. 2018. “Banksy Piece Immediately Shreds Itself after Being Sold for $1.1M.” *Techcrunch*. October 6, 2018. https://techcrunch.com/2018/10/06/banksy-piece-immediately-shreds-itself-after-being-sold-for-1-25m.

Kuznetsova, Maria. 2014. “The Accident.” *The Iowa Review* 44, no. 1: 121–138.

Landler, Mark. 2017. “A Broadside for Washington.” *New York Times*. January 21, 2017.

Lehren, Andrew.W. “Walking The Streets of a Nuclear Ghost Town.” *New York Times*, May 27, 2012.

Lind, Michel. “Things to Come.” *The National Interest*, Summer, 1994.

Longinus. 1890. *On the Sublime*. Translated by H. L. Havell. London: Macmillan.

Luke, Timothy W. 1987. “Chernobyl: The Packaging of Transnational Ecological Disaster.” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 4, no. 4: 351–375.

Lyons, Rob. 2011. “Chernobyl: When Truth Went into Meltdown.” *The Australian*, March 26, 2011.

MacCannell, Dean. 1973. “Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings.” *American Journal of Sociology* 79, no. 3: 589–603.

Mandziuk, Roseann M. 2003. “Commemorating Sojourner Truth: Negotiating the Politics of Race and Gender in the Spaces of Public Memory.” *Western Journal of Communication* 67, no. 3: 271–291.

Marback, Richard. 1998. “Detroit and the Closed Fist: Toward a Theory of Material Rhetoric.” *Rhetoric Review* 17, no. 1: 74–92.

Marcus, Greil. 2009. *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of The Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Marschall, Sabine. 2015. “Touring Memories of The Erased City: Memory, Tourism and Notions of ‘Home.’” *Tourism Geographies* 17, no. 3: 332–349.

Martin, Lawrence. 1979. “Address Is Seen as Turning Point for Carter.” *Globe and Mail*, July 18, 1979.

Mattson, Kevin. 2010. *“What the Heck Are You Up To, Mr. President?”: Jimmy Carter, America’s ‘Malaise,’ and the Speech That Should Have Changed the Country*. New York: Bloomsbury.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

———. 2017. "President Trump's "American Carnage" Speech Fit into a Long American Tradition." *Vox*. January 28, 2017. https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2017/1/26/14393288/trump-inaugural-american-carnage-speech.

McAlister, Joan Faber. 2013. "Collecting The Gaze: Memory, Agency, and Kinship In The Women's Jail Museum, Johannesburg." *Women's Studies in Communication* 36, no. 1: 1–27.

McFadden, Robert D. 2018. "John Portman Dies at 93; Architect Made Skylines Soar." *New York Times*, January 1, 2018.

McGee, Michael Calvin. 1990. "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture." *Western Journal of Communication* 54, no. 3: 274–289.

McGuire, Meghann E. 2015. "Centralia and its Rhetorical Remnants: Ambient Reimagination of Discarded Space". MA thesis, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO.

Miller, Perry. 1956. *Errand into the Wilderness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Millington, Nate. 2013. "Post-Industrial Imaginaries: Nature, Representation and Ruin in Detroit, Michigan." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 1: 279–296.

Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. 2014. "Touching The Grass: Science, Uncertainty and Everyday Life from Chernobyl to Fukushima." *Science, Technology and Society* 19, no. 3: 331–362.

Morten, Richard, Philip R. Stone, and David Jarratt. 2018. "Dark Tourism as Psychogeography: An Initial Exploration." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies*, edited by Philip R. Stone, Rudi Hartmann, Tony Seaton, Richard Sharpley, and Leanne White, 227–255. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mott, Carrie, and Susan M. Roberts. 2014. "Not Everyone Has (the) Balls: Urban Exploration and the Persistence of Masculinist Geography." *Antipode* 46, no. 1: 229–245.

Mukherjee, Rahul. 2017. "Anticipating Ruinations: Ecologies of 'Make Do' and 'Left With.'" *Journal of Visual Culture* 16, no. 3: 287–309.

Mulvey, Laura. 1975. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16, no. 2: 6–18.

Murphy, Andrew R. 2008. "Two American Jeremiads: Traditionalist and Progressive Stories of American Nationhood." *Politics and Religion* 1, no. 1: 85–112.

Murphy, Bernice. 2005. "Memory, History and Museums." *Museum International* 57, no. 3: 70–78.

Murphy, John M. 1990. "'A Time of Shame and Sorrow': Robert F. Kennedy and the American Jeremiad." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76, no. 4: 401–414.

Nolter, Melissa A., and Daniel H. Vice. 2004. "Looking Back at the Centralia Coal Fire: A Synopsis of Its Present Status." *International Journal of Coal Geology* 59, no. 1–2: 99–106.

Nora, Pierre. 1989. Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*. Translated by Marc Roudebush. *Representations* 26: 7–24.

O'Connell, Gerard. 2016. "Shadowed Void_ [sic] Monumenting the World's Worst Nuclear Disaster." MA thesis, University of Copenhagen. https://issuu.com/gerardoconnell/docs/oconnell_g_thesis_issuu.compressed_.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Ott, Brian L., Eric Aoki, and Greg Dickinson. 2011. "Ways of (Not) Seeing Guns: Presence and Absence at the Cody Firearms Museum." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 8, no. 3: 215–239.

Paiva, Troy, and Geoff Manaugh. 2008. *Night Visions: The Art of Urban Exploration*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Parezanović, Tijana, and Marko Lukić. 2018. "Tracing the Nowhere: Heterotopian Incursions in *Twin Peaks*." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 41, no. 1: 109–128.

Parrish, Wayland M. 1936. "Objective Literary Standards in Interpretation." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 22, no. 3: 368–379.

Peeples, Jennifer. 2011. "Toxic Sublime: Imaging Contaminated Landscapes." *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture* 5, no. 4: 373–392.

Pesek, Margo Bartlett. 2010. "Bodie Brings Authenticity to Ghost-Town Tourism." *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. August 29, 2010.

Pessoa, Fernando. 2003. *The Book of Disquiet*. Edited and Translated by Richard Zenith. New York: Penguin.

Petrucci, Mario. 2004. *Heavy Water: A Poem for Chernobyl*. London: Enitharmon.

Petryna, Adriana. 1995. "Sarcophagus: Chernobyl in Historical Light." *Cultural Anthropology* 10, no. 2: 196–220.

Petryna, Adriana. 2004. "Biological Citizenship: The Science and Politics of Chernobyl-Exposed Populations." *Osiris* 19: 250–265.

———. 2011. "Chernobyl's Survivors: Paralyzed by Fatalism or Overlooked by Science?." *Bulletin of The Atomic Scientists* 67, no. 2: 30–37.

Pezzullo, Phaedra. C. 2007. *Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel, and Environmental Justice*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Phillips, Sarah D. 2004. "Chernobyl's Sixth Sense: The Symbolism of an Ever-Present Awareness." *Anthropology and Humanism* 29, no. 2: 159–185.

Phillips, Sarah Drue. 2002. "Half-Lives and Healthy Bodies: Discourses on Contaminated Food and Healing in Post-Chernobyl Ukraine." *Food and Foodways* 10, no. 1–2: 27–53.

Piatt, Michael H. 2003. *Bodie: "The Mines Are Looking Well. . ."*. El Sobrante, CA: North Bay Books.

Plato. 2009. *Phaedo*. Translated by David Gallop. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Post, Robert M. 1970. "Auditory Imagination, Mythic Consciousness, and the Oral Interpreter." *Western Speech* 34, no. 3: 203–211.

Powell, Benjamin D., and Tracy Stephenson Shaffer. 2009. "On the Haunting of Performance Studies." *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* 5, no. 1: 1–19.

Reed, Cheryl L. 2017. "A Hot Destination: Radioactive Ukraine." *Washington Post*. July 27, 2017.

Reston, James. 1977. "Moral Equivalent of War." *New York Times*, April 20, 1977.

Reyes, G. Mitchell, and Kundai Chirindo. 2020. "Theorizing Race and Gender in the Anthropocene." *Women's Studies in Communication*: 1–14.

Rowland, Robert C. 2019. "The Populist and Nationalist Roots of Trump's Rhetoric." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 22, no. 3: 343–388.

Rush-Cooper, Nicholas. 2013. "Exposures: Exploring Selves and Landscapes in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone" PhD diss., Durham University.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Russell, C. P. 1927. “Bodie, Dead City of Mono.” *Yosemite Nature Notes* 6, n. 12: 89–96.

Rylsky, Maksim. 1986. “The Nuclear Power Industry in the Ukraine.” *Soviet Life* 7, no. 8: 8–9.

Saindon, Brent Allen. 2012. “A Doubled Heterotopia: Shifting Spatial and Visual Symbolism in the Jewish Museum Berlin’s Development.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98, no. 1: 24–48.

Santoro, Patrick. 2015. “Performing Landscapes of/and Loss.” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 35, no. 2-3: 234–254.

Schmid, Sonja D. 2011. “When Safe Enough Is Not Good Enough: Organizing Safety at Chernobyl.” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 67, no. 2: 19–29.

———. 2020. “*Chernobyl* The TV Series: On Suspending the Truth or What’s the Benefit of Lies?.” *Technology and Culture* 61, no. 4: 1154–1161.

Schmitt, Casey R. 2015. “Contours of the Land: Place-as-Rhetoric and Native American Effigy Mounds.” *Western Journal of Communication* 79, no. 3: 307–326.

Schönle, Andreas. 2006. “Ruins and History: Observations on Russian Approaches to Destruction and Decay.” *Slavic Review* 65, no. 4: 649.

Schram, Martin, and Edward Walsh. 1979. “Carter Sees Need to Do Better Job, Counter ‘Malaise.’” *Washington Post*. July 10, 1979.

Schumpeter Joseph A. 1994. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. London: Routledge.

Scott, Conohar. 2012. *Beyond The Invisible Membrane: The Chernobyl Disaster and Foucault’s Heterotopia*. Paper Presented at Reading Nature: Cultural Perspectives on Environmental Imagery, Facultad De Filología, Universidad Complutense De Madrid, Spain: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266851694_Beyond_the_Invisible_Membrane_The_Chernobyl_Disaster_and_Foucault’s_Heterotopia.

Senior, Chase. 2018 “Residents Hold Out Hope for Girardville.” WNEP. August 12, 2018. https://www.wnep.com/article/news/local/schuylkill-county/residents-hold-out-hope-for-girardville/523-6f3ebbd9-839e-4a75-8959-ac98ae5456c0.

Settles, J. B. 1946, February. Trade Your Trouble for a Bubble. *Amazing Stories*, N.P.

Shelton, Robert. 1993. “The Utopian Film Genre: Putting Shadows on the Silver Screen.” *Utopian Studies* 4, no. 2: 18–25.

Silverman, Craig. 2015. “People In Toronto Created A Memorial To A Dead Raccoon After The City Forgot To Pick It Up.” *BuzzFeed*. July 9, 2015. https://www.buzzfeed.com/craigsilverman/people-in-toronto-created-a-memorial-to-a-dead-raccoon-after.

Smithson, Robert. 2011. “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey.” In *Ruins: Documents of Contemporary Art*, edited by Brian Dillon, 46-51. London: Whitechapel Gallery.

Sohn, Heidi. 2008. “Heterotopia: Anamnesis of a Medical Term.” In *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, edited by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter, 41-50. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Soja, Edward. W. 1995. “Heterotopologies: A Remembrance of Other Spaces in the Citadel-LA.” In *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, edited by Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson, 13-34. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

———. 1996. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real andImagined Places*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Somerville, Kristine. 2011. "The Urban Canvas and Its Artists." *The Missouri Review* 34, no. 3: 97–108.

Sontag, Susan. 1977. *On Photography*. New York: Picador USA.

———. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador USA.

Steinhauser, Georg, Alexander Brandl, and Thomas E. Johnson. 2014. "Comparison of the Chernobyl and Fukushima Nuclear Accidents: A Review of the Environmental Impacts." *Science of The Total Environment* 470: 800–817.

Stob, Paul. 2016. "Sacred Symbols, Public Memory, and the Great Agnostic: Robert Ingersoll Remembers the Civil War." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 19, no. 2: 275–306.

Stone, Philip R. 2013. "Dark Tourism, Heterotopias and Post-Apocalyptic Places: The Case of Chernobyl." In *Dark Tourism and Place Identity: Managing and Interpreting Dark Places*, edited by Leanne White and Elspeth Frew, 79–93. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Strazdes, Diana. 2013. "The Display of Ruins: Lessons from the Ghost Town of Bodie." *Change Over Time* 3, no. 2: 222–243.

Strieber, Whitley, and James Kunetka, 1986. *Nature's End*. New York: Warner Books.

Strong, Robert A. 1986. "Recapturing Leadership: The Carter Administration and the Crisis of Confidence." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 16, no. 4: 636–650.

Sturken, Marita. 1997. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 2007. *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Susman, Warren. I. 1980. "The People's Fair: Cultural Contradictions of a Consumer Society." In *Dawn of a New Day: The New York World's Fair, 1939/40*, edited by Helen A. Harrison, 17-27. New York: The Queens Museum.

Tell, Dave. 2017. "Can a Gas Station Remember a Murder?" *Southern Cultures* 23, no. 3: 54–61.

Telotte, J. P. 1998. "So Big": The Monumental Technology of *Things to Come*." *Science Fiction Studies* 25, no. 1: 77–86.

Terry, David P. 2010. "Global Co-Incidence: "Ontos" Poetics of the Worldwide." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 30, no. 4: 335–355.

Travers, Timothy. 1976. "The Shape of Things to Come: HG Wells and Radical Culture in the 1930's." *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 6, no. 2: 22–30.

Trigg, Dylan. 2006. *The Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia, and the Absence of Reason*. New York: Peter Lang.

Trudeau, Justin Thomas. 2011. "Specters in the Rear-View: Haunting Whiteness in Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 31, no. 2: 149–168.

Trujillo, Nick. 1993. "Interpreting November 22: A Critical Ethnography of an Assassination Site." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79, no. 4: 447–466.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Turner, Frederick Jackson. 1921. *The Frontier in American History*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Vergara, Camilo. 2017. "American Acropolis: The End of an Era in Detroit." *Metropolis*. April 24, 2017. https://www.metropolismag.com/cities/american-acropolis-the-end-of-an-era/.

Voltaire. 1977. "Candide." In *The Portable Voltaire*, edited by Ben Ray Redman, 229–328. New York: Penguin Books.

Vultee, Fred. 2013. "Finding Porn in the Ruin." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 28, no. 2: 142–145.

Walsh, Edward. 1979. "Carter Finds 'Crisis of Confidence'; Carter Links Energy War to Revival of America's Spirit; 'Energy Will Be the Immediate Test.'"*Washington Post*. July 16, 1979.

Walsh, Niall Patrick. 2018. "The Architecture of Chernobyl: Past, Present, and Future." *Archdaily*. April 30, 2018. https://www.archdaily.com/893523/the-architecture-of-chernobyl-past-present-and-future.

Wander, Philip. 1984. "The Third Persona: An Ideological Turn in Rhetorical Theory." *Communication Studies* 35, no. 4: 197–216.

Wellock, Thomas Wellock. 2016. "Too Cheap to Meter": A History of the Phrase." U.S. NRC Blog. June 3, 2016. https://public-blog.nrc-gateway.gov/2016/06/03/too-cheap-to-meter-a-history-of-the-phrase/.

Wilson, Richard. 1987. "A Visit to Chernobyl." *Science* 236, no. 4809: 1636–1640.

Wood, Andrew F. 2003. "The Middletons, Futurama, and Progressland: Disciplinary Technology and Temporal Heterotopia in Two Twentieth Century New York World's Fairs." *New Jersey Journal of Communication* 11, no. 1: 63–75.

———. 2004. "Managing The Lady Managers: The Shaping of Heterotopian Spaces in the 1893 Chicago Exposition's Woman's Building." *Southern Journal of Communication* 69, no. 4: 289–302.

———. 2005. "'What Happens [In Vegas]': Performing the Post-Tourist *Flâneur* in 'New York' and "Paris.'" *Text and Performance Quarterly* 25, no. 4: 315–333.

———. 2009. *City Ubiquitous: Place, Communication, and the Rise of Omnitopia*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

———. 2010. "Two Roads Diverge: Route 66, "Route 66," and the Mediation of American Ruin." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27, no. 1: 67–83.

———. 2020. "Haunting Ruins in a Western Ghost Town: Authentic Violence and Recursive Gaze at Bodie, California." *Western Journal of Communication* 84, no. 4: 439–456.

Yablokov, Alexey V., Vassily B. Nesterenko, Alexey V. Nesterenko, and Janette D. Sherman-Nevinger. 2009. *Chernobyl: Consequences of the Catastrophe for People and the Environment*. New York: New York Academy of Sciences.

Yang, Michelle Murray. 2019. "*Kairotic* Reflections on Detroit: The Rhetorical Cartography of the Heidelberg Project." *Western Journal of Communication* 83, no. 5: 560–580.

Yeoman, Barry. 2012. "The Death and Life of Detroit." *The American Prospect*. April 30, 2012. https://prospect.org/economy/death-life-detroit/.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Young, Marilyn J., and Michael K. Launer. 1991. "Redefining Glasnost in the Soviet Media: The Recontextualization of Chernobyl." *Journal of Communication* 41, no. 2: 102-24.

Zagacki, Kenneth S., and Victoria J. Gallagher. 2009. "Rhetoric and Materiality in the Museum Park at the North Carolina Museum of Art." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95, no. 2: 171-191.

Zelizer, Barbie. 1995. Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies. *Critical Studies In Mass Communication* 12, no. 2: 214-239.

———. 1999. "Exploring Sites of Memory." *Journal of Communication* 49, no. 4: 201-205.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Index

Page references for figures are italicized

9/11, vii, xvi; 16, 29, 96
1933 inaugural address, xx, 53, 55–59
1939–40 New York World's Fair, ix, *x*, xi, xxii, 5, 63
2007–2009 Great Recession, 65

A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey, xx, 27, 33–35, 37, 41–42, 46–47
A.I. Artificial Intelligence, 120. *See also* Centralia
abjection, 31–32
AC/DC, *161*. *See also* Darvaza Gas Crater
academic tourism, xxi, 48, 72, 88, 95, 96, 124
Adams, Henry, 44–45, 57
Aden, Roger, 86, 113
afrofuturism, 94
Aftermath: Population Zero, xx, 27, 35–37, 43, 48
Agrippa, 34.
Aldiss, Brian. *See Earthworks*
Amazing Stories, xvii
American Acropolis, 97
"American Carnage" speech, xxi, 63–67, 96, 167
American Jeremiad. *See* Jeremiadic rhetoric
Anderson, Michael. *See Logan's Run*
Angelus Novus, 124–125. *See also* Benjamin, Walter
anthropocene, xx, 35–37. *See also* holocene
apocalyptic sublime, xx, 30, 40. *See also* sublime
apocotainment, 25
Arendt, Hannah, 25
Aristides, 115
Aristotle, 30, 53
Ark II, 23n12
arrested decay, *70*, 71, 87–88. *See also* Bodie
Arrykov, Murad, 160-165
Ashgabat, *158*–161. *See also* Darvaza Gas Crater
Ato Genbaku Dome. See Hiroshima
aura, 32, 33, 38, 77, 125. *See also* Benjamin, Walter
authenticity, viii, xiii, xxi, 15, 38, 72–80, 82, 87–88
autoethnography, xviii, 83, 113

Banksy, 34, 116

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Baudrillard, Jean, xx, 30, 40
Beard, David. *See* abjection *and* apocalyptic sublime
Bel Geddes, Norman, 5, 7, 8
Benjamin, Walter, xix, 12, 17, 36, 77, 97, 124–125, 168
Bercovitch, Sacvan. *See* Jeremiadic rhetoric
Berdimuhamedow, Gurbanguly, 159–160.
See also Darvaza Gas Crater
Bergson, Henri, xix
Berlin, xv, 12, 40–41
Berman, Marshall, xiv
Blade Runner, 12, 92
Bloch, David Ludwig, xv
Bodie, vii, viii, xxi, 69–89, 167, 168
Bodies: The Exhibition, 74
Borges, Jorge Luis, 133.
See also heterotopia
Bosch, Hieronymus, 64
Brazil, 16
bricolage, 105
Bruderkuss mural, 40–*41*.
See also Berlin
Burke, Edmund, 31, 123
Burke, Kenneth, 28, 66
Bush, George W., 96

Caddell, Patrick. *See* "Crisis of Confidence" speech
Call of Duty, 143, 155n14
Candide, 87, 139
Carter, Christopher, xxiiin3, 97
Carter, Jimmy. *See* "Crisis of Confidence" speech
Cash, Johnny, 112
Cassandra Complex, 19.
See also Twelve Monkeys
Centralia, vii, xviii, xxi, 111–126, 167, 168;
Graffiti Highway, xxi, 116–123
Origins of coal seam fire, 112–113
tour, 113–116
Chernobyl, viii, xxii, 31, 124, 127–156, 167, 168;
cause, 129
death toll, 130–131
Duga radar-tracking Array, 142
HBO-Sky UK miniseries, 127–128
liquidators, 130, 155n7
Reactor 4, xxii, 130, 144, 150, 154
Reactor 5 cooling tower mural, *145*
sarcophagus, *128*, 130, 144, 147, 150
S. T. A. L. K. E. R, 143
touristic accounts, 147–151
Chirindo, Kundai. *See* anthropocene
Cody Firearms Museum, 74
Cold War, The, xii, 26–27
Covid-19. *See* pandemic.
See also Twelve Monkeys
creative destruction, xiv, 98, 167
"Crisis of Confidence" speech, 59–63
Crutzen, Paul. *See* anthropocene

Dachau, xv
Damocles, 39
dark tourism, xix, 113, 128, 140, 147–149
Darvaza Gas Crater, xxii, 157, 162–169
Davis, Mike, 17, 138
De Cauter, Lieven. *See* heterotopia
Dealey Plaza, 73
Debord, Guy. *See* psychogeography
Dehaene, Michiel. *See* heterotopia
DeLyser, Dydia. *See* Bodie
dérive, *See* psychogeography
DeRoche, Joseph. *See* Bodie
Derrida, Jacques, xx, 77.
See also hauntology
Descartes, 120
DeSilvey, Caitlin. *See* ecofacts
détournement, 77, 99.
See also psychogeography
Detroit, vii, xxi, 51, 66, 91–109, 124, 167, 168;
"Do you not care that we are perishing" mural, *100*–101
Heidelberg Project, 107–108

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

"Imported From Detroit" spot, 95
Michigan Central Station, 105, *106*, 107–108
Renaissance Center, *103*, 104–105
The Fist, 95
Dickinson, Greg, xii, 72, 74, 77, 82, 89n4
Dillon, Brian, xix–xx
Doorway to Hell. *See* Darvaza Gas Crater
Dr. Strangelove, 26
Dust Bowl, 58–59.
See also Great Depression, U.S.

Earthworks, 34
Eastwood, Clint. *See* Detroit
Ebert, Roger, 101
Ecclesiastes, 137
ecofacts, xiv
Edensor, Tim, xix, 123, 132
Edison, Thomas, 114.
See also Centralia
Edwards, Dustin. *See* anthropocene
Eliade, Mircea, 48, 52
Eliot, T. S. *See The Waste Land*
Eminem. *See* Detroit
Enclavic rhetoric, xvi, 3, 12–15, 17, 71, 81, 89n6, 104–105, 118, 119–122, 123
Energy Crisis. *See* "Crisis of Confidence" speech, 59–63
Enlightenment, The, xiv, xix, 30, 31, 132
Enthymemes, xxii, 35, 52, 66
epideictic rhetoric, 53, 55, 65
eschatology, 30, 54, 75

Fail Safe, xx, 26–27, 31, 32, 49
fascism, xx, 6, 11, 21, 59, 67, 125
Faulkner, William, 45
Fitzgerald, F. Scott, ix, xvi
flâneurie, *See* psychogeography
Flash Gordon, 4
Foley, Malcolm. *See* dark tourism
Ford, Laura Grace. *See* Detroit
Foucault, Michel. *See* heterochrony *and* heterotopia
Frazier, Preston, 93
Freud, Sigmund, 132
Friedrich, Caspar David, xv
Fukuyama, Francis, xvi
Fuller, R. Buckminster, 17

Garrido, Felipe Espinoza. *See* afrofuturism
Gelernter David, 63
Gernsback, Hugo. *See The Gernsback Continuum*
Gershwin, Ira, xxii.
See also 1939–40 New York World's Fair
ghost signs, xii–xiv
Gibson, William. *See Agrippa and* semiotic ghosts and *The Gernsback Continuum*
Gilliam, Terry. *See Brazil* and *Twelve Monkeys*
Gore, Al, 49n2
Great Depression, U.S., ix, 4, 5, 7, 55–59, 97
Greenberg, Michael R. *See* TOADS.
Guernica, 34
guerrilla gardening, 94
Gunn Joshua. *See* abjection *and* apocalyptic sublime *and* hauntology
Guyton, Tyree, 107–108.
See also Detroit

Haas, Benjamin. *See* anthropocene
Harvey, David, xiv–xv
hauntology, viii, xxi, 72, 74–75, 87, 166
Haussmann, Georges-Eugène, 98
Heidegger, Martin, xix
Hell, Julia, xix
Heraclitus, 79, 85, 169
heterochrony, xxi, 113, 118, 123, 147;
temporal enclaves, *119*–121
temporal projection, *121*–122

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

heterotopia xxi, xxii, 40, 46, 128, 132-140, 166, 168;
  axes, 134, 139, 142, 144–151, 156nn15–16
  contamination, xxii, 7, 136, 144–147, 149–151, 154, 154–155n3, 156n15
  critiques, 132–133
  etymology, 133
  principles, 134–140
  purification, xxii, 28, 138, 144, 146, 150–151, *153*, 154
Hibberd, Dominic, xxiiin2
Hiroshima, 39, 46–*47*
holocene, 35–36.
  See also anthropocene
Holy War, 55, 60.
  See also 1933 inaugural address
Homer. *See The Iliad*
Huyssen, Andreas, 30, 38

I, Robot, 117.
  See also Centralia
Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull, 32.
  See also Raiders of the Lost Ark
Ingersoll, Robert G. *See* "Withered Leaves"
Instagram, 34, 72, 114, 160
Isaiah, viii, 56, 57.
  See also "Withered Leaves"
Italian Futurism, 11–12.
  See also fascism

Jackson, J. B., xix, 65, 87
Jeremiadic rhetoric, xx–xxi, 53–55, 60–62, 64–66, 101, 166, 167
Jesus Jones, xvi
Jetpacks, xvi
Johnson, George Clayton. *See Logan's Run*
Joly, Dom, 147, 148, 149, 150, 155n14.
  See also dark tourism
Junk, 29, 43

Kant, Immanuel, 31, 123
Karakum Desert. *See* Darvaza Gas Crater
Kennedy, John, 74
Kennedy, Robert, 66
Kennedy, Ted, 62
Kermode, Frank, 30
King, Jr., Martin Luther, 66
Korda, Alexander. *See Things to Come*
Kristeva, Julia, 32.
  See also abjection
Kubrick, Stanley. See *Dr. Strangelove*
Kunetka, James. *See Nature's End*
Kuznetsova, Maria, 128.
  See also Chernobyl

La Jetée, 3.
  See also *Twelve Monkeys*
Lacan, Jacques, 76.
  See also recursive gaze
land acknowledgements, 45
Lang, Fritz. *See Metropolis*
Las Vegas, 136, 160
Layering, xxi, 21, 42, 45–46, 73, 76–77, 83–84, 86–88, 89n5, 99, 101, 104, 111, 113, *117*–120, 122–123, 137, 142, 165, 168
Le Corbusier, 7, 159
Lehrer, Tom, 37
Lennon, J. John. *See* dark tourism.
Lincoln Project, 51.
  See also "Morning in America" spot
Lincoln, Abraham, 15, 65
Logan's Run, xx, 3, 12–16, 20, 21, 22–23nn10–20, 104–105, 166
Longinus, 31
love hotels, 135, 139.
  See also motels
Lucretius, xiv
Lumet, Sidney. *See Fail Safe*

Mackey, Sam, 107
Mad Max, 64
malaise, 52, 60, 62.
  See also "Crisis of Confidence" speech

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Mann, Aimee, xxii.
See also 1939–40 New York World's Fair
Marcus Aurelius, xiv
Marcus, Greil, xv
Marker, Chris. *See La Jetée*. *See also Twelve Monkeys*
Marxism, 98, 122, 132, 168
Mbembe, Achille. *See* anthropocene
MC Frontalot, 48
McAlister, Joan, viii, 77
McGee Michael Calvin, 113
McGuire, Meghann, 113, 117
Memento Mori, 29, 137, 166
Menzies, William Cameron. *See Things to Come*
Metropolis, 12, 22n4
Mexico Theatre, 1, *2*, 3
"Morning in America" spot. *See* "Prouder, Stronger, Better" spot
"Mourning in America" spot, 51–53, 167
Mondale, Walter, 51
Mondrian, Piet, 100
mono no aware, xviii, 118
Monro, Harold, xxiiin2
mortification, 28.
See also Burke, Kenneth
motels, xviii, 3, 6, 139, 144.
See also love hotels
Mukherjee, Rahul. *See* anthropocene
Mulvey, Laura, 76
Mumford. Lewis, 53
museal gaze, 38, 42
Nature's End, 38–39, 42
necropolitics, 37
neoliberalism, xvi, 43, 89n6, 97–98, 120
neurasthenia, 120
Nietzsche, Friedrich, xix
Nixon, Richard, 58, 59
Niyazov, Saparmurat, 159–160.
See also Darvaza Gas Crater
Nolan, William F. *See Logan's Run*
Nora, Pierre, 76, 87, 89n6
nostalgia, xii, 9, 89n6
omnitopia, xvi, 47, 98, 158, 187
"Only a Strong America Can Prevent Atomic War!" comic book cover, *xiii*
Orwell, George, xv
ostalgie, 40
overlapping temporality, 72, *78*, 83.
See also pluritemporality
pandemic, xvi, 35, 44, 51, 63, 167

panopticism, 16, 160
Paris, 12, 44, 99, 136
Peeping Tom, 101–102
Peeples, Jennifer. *See* toxic sublime
Pessoa, Fernando, 28, 44
Petersen, Wolfgang. *See Troy*
Petrucci, Mario, 152.
See also Chernobyl
Pezzullo, Phaedra. *See* toxic tourism
philosophy as preparation for death, xiv, 166
Picasso. See *Guernica*
picturesque, 29, 31, 33, 37, 49, 99, 103, 166.
See also sublime
Plato, xiv, 15, 17, 23n15, 23n19, 42–43, 134, 166
pluritemporality, 38, 42.
See also overlapping temporality
Popper, Frank J. *See* TOADS
Portman Jr., John C., 104
Powell, Michael. See *Peeping Tom*
Pripyat, 128, 129–130, *131*, 142–144, 148, 150–151, 154, 155n14
See also Chernobyl
"Prouder, Stronger, Better" spot, viii, 51–53, 95, 166, 167.
See also "Mourning in America" spot
psychogeography, xii, xxi, 85, 93, 98–100, 140, 166, 167
Pyrrho, xiv

Raiders of the Lost Ark, 105.
See also Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Reagan, Ronald, 51–53, 62, 64, 65, 95.
See also "Prouder, Stronger, Better" spot
recursive gaze, viii, xxi, 72, 76–77, 83, *84*–87, 89n1, 89n5, 167
Reyes, Mitch. *See* anthropocene
Riney, Hal. *See* "Prouder, Stronger, Better" spot
RoboCop, 101, 104–105.
See also Detroit
rolling coal, 45
Romanticism, xv, xviii, 47, 57, 59, 97
Route 66 [highway], 75.
Rubáiyát, 19.
See also Twelve Monkeys
ruin porn, xxi, 101–103
ruin value, 33, 97.
See also Speer, Albert

Santoro, Patrick, xviii–xix, 113
Saturday Night Live, 96
Schönle, Andreas, xix, 118
Schumpeter, Joseph. *See* creative destruction
semiotic ghosts, xii, 5, 46
Settles, James B., See "Trade Your Trouble for a Bubble"
Shelley, Percy Bysshe. See "Withered Leaves"
Silent Hill, 114.
See also Centralia
simulacra, 34, 97
slasher films, 101
Smithson, Robert. *See A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey*
social safety valves, 135, 143, 151
Socrates, xiv, 15, 79, 166
Soleri, Paolo, 17
Sontag, Susan, 28–29, 101
Speer, Albert, 4, 97.
See also ruin value
Star Trek, xx, 23n19, 37, 43, 120, 164
Steely Dan, 92
Stewart, Potter, 102.
See also ruin porn
Stoermer, Eugene. *See* anthropocene
Strieber, Whitley, *See Nature's End*
Sublime, xxii, xviii, 29, 31–33, 123, 144, 150, 164.
See also apocalyptic sublime
See also picturesque
See also technological sublime
See also toxic sublime
See also Western sublime
Suburbia, 17, 27, 46–47, 52, 53, 87, 92, 104, 139
synecdoche, 94
technological sublime, 142.
See also sublime

The Fixx, 46
The Gernsback Continuum, xx, 3–6, 21, 27, 108
The Iliad, 23n24, 165–166
The Simpsons, 49n3, 117
The Terminator, 117.
See also Centralia
The Twilight Zone, xx, 39–40
The Waste Land, 40
Things to Come, xii, xx, 3, 6–12, 16, 20, 21, 22, 22nn4–10, 48, 104, 122, 166
third spaces, 143
Thoreau, Henry David, 55
Tiananmen Square, xvi
Till, Emmett, 59, 75
TOADS, xviii
toxic sublime, 123–124, 151.
See also sublime
toxic tourism, 151.
"Trade Your Trouble for a Bubble" comic book illustration, *13*.
See also enclavic rhetoric
Trigg, Dylan, xix
Troy, 165.
See also The Iliad
Trump, Donald. *See* "American Carnage" speech.
See also fascism
Truth, Sojourner, 74, 120

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Turkmenistan. *See* Darvaza Gas Crater
Turner, Frederick Jackson, 66
Twelve Monkeys, xx, 3, 16–22, 23nn20–25, 104, 166

U2, 45
Urban exploration/Infiltration, xxi, 105, 114
utopianism, xvi, 5–6, 17, 30, 42, 47, 75, 98, 125, 133, 139, 140

van Helten, Guido, *145*.
See also Chernobyl
Vergara, Camilo, 97
See also Detroit
Verhoeven, Paul. *See RoboCop*
Vietnam Veterans Memorial, 41, 73, 77
Virilio, Paul, xx
Voltaire. *See Candide*
Vrubel, Dmitri. See *Bruderkuss* mural

Waits, Tom, 20.
See also Twelve Monkeys
Wander, Philip, 29
Wells, H. G. *See Things to Come*
West, Bernadette M. *See* TOADS
Western sublime, 82.
See also sublime
"Withered Leaves", viii, 56–57, 67
Westworld, 117.
See also Centralia
Winthrop, John, 53–54
See also Jeremiadic rhetoric
Wozniak, Steve, 1

Yeats, William Butler, 45, 52, 56–57

Zombies, 7

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

About the Author

Andrew F. Wood (PhD, Ohio University, 1998) is Professor and Chair of Communication Studies at San José State University. He has authored or co-authored books on internet communication, reality television, roadside Americana, and the 1939–1940 New York World's Fair. His 2009 book *City Ubiquitous: Place, Communication, and the Rise of Omnitopia* received the Jane Jacobs Urban Communication Award from the Urban Communication Foundation. His 2014 co-authored book, *Die ortlose stadt: Über die virtualisierung des urbanen,* further examines the impact of new communications technologies on urban life and human relationships. His peer-reviewed articles have appeared in scholarly journals dedicated to media, performance, education, and rhetoric, and he has served on editorial boards for regional and national journals. His teaching interests include architectural rhetoric, urban design, media analysis, and the humanities, and he is committed to helping globalize his department and campus. He has led student groups to Austria, China, Finland, Slovenia, and Taiwan (and he has facilitated side trips to Estonia, Russia, and Sweden), and he is a Fulbright Scholar who taught at Belarusian State University.

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

EBSCOhost - printed on 2/10/2023 11:13 AM via . All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use