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Televising the American Nightmare: The Twilight Zone and Postwar Social Criticism

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Televising the American Nightmare:
The Twilight Zone and Postwar Social Criticism

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Humanities
And Social Sciences

by

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For Janet

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Abstract

Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone* (1959-1964) emerged during a period of American history which has since become something of myth, legend, and lore. Popularly portrayed as a kind of golden age when middle class aspirations were within reach, suburban housing affordable, and the nuclear family perfectly contented, postwar America was more accurately characterized by profound cognitive dissonances. At a time when the Cold War was understood to be first and foremost a battle of ideas, psychological marketing promoted many different facets of the American Dream. While market researchers plumbed the depths of American minds and explored their subconscious desires and insecurities to better promote goods, homes, and jobs, American consumers were generally not as well-acquainted with understanding how psychological manipulations were impacting their rapidly changing world. Consequently, a fast-growing knowledge gap began to emerge between marketers and politicians on the one hand, and the consuming public on the other. *The Twilight Zone*, by focusing on the "dimension of mind," worked to raise viewers' awareness of how their minds represented fiercely contested ground for marketers and postwar policymakers alike.

Knowing that explicitly depicting socially marginalized minorities was sure to alert increasingly paranoid sponsors and networks, Serling instead focused his creative energies on white American society and its collective preservation of bigotry, prejudice, and white supremacy. By turning a critical eye toward issues permeating suburbia, space exploration, white collar work, consumerism, war, and technology, Serling's *Twilight Zone* appraised the priorities of white mainstream society - priorities which frequently necessitated greed, corruption, indifference, and violence. In this way, he followed the dominant television trend in making the aspirational, and seemingly wholesome, American Dream the centerpiece of his new

series with one major qualification – the American Dream would be contained within a nightmare. By placing the American Dream inside a nightmare, Serling attempted to raise critical thought as it related to manufactured desires, public policies, advertised products, and white utopian visions that incessantly predominated postwar life in the United States.

Introduction

The Twilight Zone, A Socially Critical Fantasy

Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone* (1959-1964) emerged during a period of American history which has since become something of myth, legend, and lore. Popularly portrayed as a kind of golden age when middle class aspirations were within reach, suburban housing affordable, and the nuclear family perfectly contented, postwar America was more accurately characterized by profound cognitive dissonances. At a time when the Cold War was understood to be first and foremost a battle of ideas, psychological marketing promoted many different facets of the American Dream. While market researchers plumbed the depths of American minds and explored their subconscious desires and insecurities to better promote goods, homes, and jobs, American consumers were generally not as well-acquainted with understanding how psychological manipulations were impacting their rapidly changing world. Consequently, a fast-growing knowledge gap began to emerge between marketers and politicians on the one hand, and the consuming public on the other. *The Twilight Zone*, by focusing on the "dimension of mind," worked to raise viewers' awareness of how their minds represented fiercely contested ground for marketers and postwar policymakers alike.

The Twilight Zone stood out as a relatively unique program when compared to most television content at the time. By the late fifties, programming was increasingly dominated by westerns, cop shows, family sitcoms, and game shows making *The Twilight Zone* more of an exception than the rule in *TV Guide* lineups from the day. The increasingly strained relations between the Soviets and Americans and the heightening of the Cold War both militarily and culturally pressured sponsors, networks, and writers to promote the American way of life, rather

than critique it. During this time, the FCC even changed their definition of “public interest” from one that included creative experimentation, minimal advertising, and inclusion of minority tastes to one that sought to legitimate the status quo and praise the values of capitalism.¹

However, at the same time this consumer juggernaut was taking hold of the nation and television content, a wave of lively social commentary and criticism emerged throughout popular print culture. Writers and intellectuals such as E. Franklin Frazier, Betty Friedan, Paul Goodman, Michael Harrington, C. Wright Mills, Vance Packard, David Riesman, William Whyte, and many others disseminated a wide array of insights, critiques, indictments, and proposals to a postwar society that was experiencing so many intense changes all at once. While most popular and scholarly conceptions of television have taken the sweeping influence of consumerism and marketing into account, few have deeply considered how a thriving popular print culture rife with critical thought also visibly impacted television’s early development. And while television seemed to basically broadcast the American Dream by enabling marketers to advertise directly and repeatedly to the American public within their own homes, many television writers such as Serling, in his early teleplays and in *The Twilight Zone*, followed a critical path more in line with Packard, Riesman, and Friedan. Instead of simply extolling the virtues of the American Dream, *The Twilight Zone* sought to portray something very different – the American nightmare. These nightmares, which covered a wide range of social topics, reveal a need to look more deeply into this relationship between the popular social commentary of postwar print culture and the development, as well as the potentials, of popular television content.

¹ Andrew J. Falk, *Upstaging the Cold War American Dissent and Cultural Diplomacy, 1940-1960* (Amherst, MA: UMass Press, 2011) 132, 152.

All too often, scholars and popular audiences have isolated television from other social elements, particularly with regard to print culture. This artificial and arbitrary separation has largely manifested itself in two ways – with an emphasis on the inherent differences of each medium’s effect on audiences and an emphasis on differences in content. The former differentiation is most closely associated historically with media scholar Marshall McLuhan, who most famously of all, explained how the “medium is the message” and that a society based around television was “retribalizing” mankind, whereas the printed word had worked over the centuries to individuate men and women. Although McLuhan argued that the content of television merely represented a “juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind,” popular audiences, critics, and scholars have tended to focus more on just that – the “juicy meat” of content.² Almost since its inception, television’s most outspoken critics and detractors have frequently found the content to be mentally malnourishing at best. They, too, have tended to draw a sharp line contrasting the hot medium of print and the cool medium of TV - the former for serious thought, reflection, and learning, the latter for guilty pleasures, entertainment, and for pushing products. Simply put, books and print culture have commonly represented a vast brain land, television, a “vast wasteland.”³ Such a conception, however, takes certain developments in the history of television as inevitable or nearly predestined and also fails to consider significant changes occurring in print culture.

Indeed, before television became the national craze, a different revolution in consumer culture and marketing was already underway in the form of the paperback book. Initially spearheaded by Allen Lane’s Penguin Publishers in the U.K., American publishers, notably

² Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, p. 32.

³ Newton Minow, “Television and the Public Interest,” speech delivered May 9, 1961, National Association of Broadcasters, Washington, DC.

Robert de Graff of Pocket Books, began selling mass-market paperbacks for twenty-five cents at a time when hardcovers cost over two dollars. Previously considered a consumer good primarily for the wealthy, these new and more affordable paperback books opened the floodgates of print culture consumerism after World War II. In a similar manner to many other postwar consumer goods, books transformed from a demand-led market to a supply-led one. You could now not only buy Freud for an affordable fifty cents, you could purchase a copy featuring an enticing, colorful cover adorned by a dark-haired woman. In addition to these eye-catching mass-market publications, trade paperbacks also burst onto the scene in 1953 as a mid-range option between mass-market books and hardcovers. Much like magazines, such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*, these new trade paperbacks appealed to an educated middle-class that did not have the prestige or wealth usually associated with hardcover connoisseurs, but preferred them above the frequently lurid covers and seemingly low grade appeal of many mass-market publications. This two-pronged paperback revolution, consisting of mass-market and trade publications, made reading more accessible, affordable, and seemingly more democratic. While presses released reprints of classics and bestsellers, they also released new works of fiction, history, and contemporary social criticism. In this way, television initially did not war with print culture and the general public's reading habits, but developed simultaneously alongside them.⁴

This connection between postwar print culture and television would be further illustrated by Serling's own career as he obtained several book deals before, during, and after *The Twilight Zone*. Inexpensive paperback books such as *Patterns*, *Devils and Demons*, *Witches*, *Werewolves*, and *Warlocks*, and *Stories from The Twilight Zone* showed a kind of mutual demand and a more

⁴ For more on the postwar book market, see Evan Brier, *A Novel Marketplace: Mass Culture, the Book Trade, and Postwar American Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

fluid crossover between the worlds of print and television than critics at the time and since have fully reckoned with. Among such books were titles which could appeal to a younger reading audience with a thirst for fantasy and horror as well as an audience yearning for more social criticism. The mere fact that Serling was involved throughout his career in both worlds of print and television reinforces how the two different media informed one another in content, style, marketing techniques, and consumer appeals right from the start.

Among the works that have demonstrated to what extent the marketplace impacted the content of television, Eric Barnouw's seminal study *Tube of Plenty* has done so most thoroughly and convincingly. Given the fact that by the close of the 1950s, nearly ninety percent of American homes had a television, advertising on the tube emerged as the most effective means to reach the broadest possible audience. As Barnouw shows, the increasing influence marketers exerted with regard to television programming was not only seen in their sponsorship and recurring commercials, but in how they shaped the actual content and format of programs as well. Sponsors did not want to alienate any potential consumers, and as a result, programming that was accessible to the widest audience possible and did not contain offensive material or controversial subject matter became the dominant norm by the end of the 1950s. While live anthologies and teleplays that dealt with social drama and controversy were once ubiquitous on television (frequently referred to as the "Golden Age of Television"), episodic series, with each program representing merely a safe "variation of an approved ritual," became the preferred standard.⁵ So too, did stories with a clear resolution. As Barnouw explains, programming with clear, simple resolutions helped to reinforce marketing techniques that sought to sell products by promising consumers that buying their product would be the definite answer to their problems:

⁵ Barnouw, 166

“Most advertisers were selling magic...in their commercials there was always a solution as clear-cut as the snap of a finger: the problem could be solved by a new pill, deodorant, toothpaste, shampoo, shaving lotion, hair tonic, car, girdle, coffee, muffin recipe, or floor wax. The solution always had finality.” Conflict arose between sponsors and creative writers, however, when television writers dealt with real-life problems and made them appear complicated and not so easily resolvable. Concerned about this phenomenon, Serling noted in 1957, “We’re developing a new citizenry. One that will be very selective about cereals and automobiles, but won’t be able to think.”⁶ Complex, thought-provoking, socially conscious, and open-ended epitomized by Serling’s early teleplays and most episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, tended to make the commercial seem “fraudulent.” Consequently, stories that offered nuanced, complex, or even just realistic depictions of anything from family life to foreign policy became quickly endangered.⁷ As Alan Nadel has explained, “That television omitted, ignored, or distorted just about everything in American life is less surprising than that it did so at the same time it touted itself as the definitive source of ‘reality.’” The truth was, television was actively divorcing Americans from reality.

This was not always the case, though. For one, when television was first introduced, advertisers had not yet grasped what a boon this new medium could be in selling their products. In this way, most of us frequently understand television with misapplied marketing hindsight – if television became the medium dominated by marketers and superficial, non-offensive content, it must have always been so, or at least somehow predestined for such a fate. This assumption is not only false and skews our historical understanding, it also stifles our vision for the potential of television and other forms of mass media. Secondly, just as a critical popular print culture

⁶ Quoted in Gordon Sander, *The Rise and Twilight of TV’s Last Angry Man* (New York: Dutton Press, 1992) 135.

⁷ Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty*, 163.

emerged side-by-side with the dominance and spread of white-collar work, suburban living, and consumer spending, the FCC and television executives initially saw a similar role for their new medium - to serve the public interest by aiding people's ability to deal with reality and all of the changes taking place, much like social critics did at the time.⁸

Indeed, social commentaries, such as Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders*, David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, and Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* helped to shape public debate and discussion at large. Far from being esoteric treatises, books like these entered into the public sphere of social and political dialogue even if people had not sat down and read them for themselves. In a similar fashion, socially conscious television writers, including Rod Serling, Reginald Rose, Gore Vidal, and Paddy Chayefsky among others, entered into this new medium seeing it as a conduit for meaningful, intellectual, social commentary and debate. Even a seemingly simple love story such as Paddy Chayefsky's popular 1953 teleplay *Marty*, contained serious social consideration and commentary by spurning commercialized ideals of glamour, beauty, and family life in its casting. In Chayefsky's own words, part of his motivation for writing a romance about a butcher who refers to himself as a "fat little man," and a woman who is called a "dog" by the other characters, was to challenge certain assumptions, including that "love is simply a matter of physical attraction, virility is manifested by a throbbing phallus, and regular orgasms are all that's need to make a woman happy."⁹ The far from idealistic appearances, occupations, and relationships with friends and family members of both characters struck a chord with audiences, as did the awkward, bumbling romance that developed between them. While letters flooded in from home viewers expressing their admiration and appreciation

⁸ Falk, *Upstaging the Cold War*, 138.

⁹ *Ibid*, 167.

for *Marty*, marketers had a clear interest in seeing that pedestrian romantic tales which showcased the “marvelous world of the ordinary,” with no clear connection to the “magic” of consumerism, would be less frequently broadcasted in the future.¹⁰ Indeed, while Chayefsky abandoned writing for television and went on to harshly criticize the inner operations of television in his 1976 film *Network*, other writers, such as Reginald Rose and Rod Serling, remained contributors to the medium into the sixties and beyond.

Among the many works that have analyzed television content, two general trends have emerged over the years, with some scholars emphasizing television’s hegemonic and constrictive social influence, and others arguing that television, at least at certain times, has embodied social openness, progressivism, and reform. Among the former, Alan Nadel’s recent study *Television in Black and White America* illustrates how racial topics, or even the idea of showing a non-white representation of American life, became one casualty of television’s sponsor-induced limitations. Programming reinforced middle class whiteness, patriarchy, and conformity, while bypassing black American communities in order to show there really was “one nation under God,” and it was racially homogenous.¹¹ Similarly, Lawrence R. Samuel argued how the social “pressure to turn myth into reality intensified” as a direct result of television content and advertising.¹² Serving as one of the many example of this phenomenon, Stephanie Coontz has explained how

¹⁰ Barnouw, 163.

¹¹ Two exceptions, which are also discussed by Nadel, were *The Amos n Andy Show* (1951-53) and *The Nat King Cole Show* (1956-57). The former led to civil rights protests and the NAACP calling for the show’s cancellation due to its offensive and demeaning portrayal of African-Americans. Ultimately, however, the show was cancelled mainly because CBS feared white southerners who objected to having any portrayal of black Americans at all on TV. In a similar manner, while *The Nat King Cole Show* featured stars such as Eartha Kitt, Ella Fitzgerald, and Tony Bennett, many of them performed for little to no pay because of the show’s lack of sponsorship. Ultimately, without a national sponsor willing to fund a program hosted by an African-American, which made it inherently controversial, the show was cancelled. In the pursuit of “non-threatening” material, the mere appearance of a racial minority on television was consistently deemed too much controversy for sponsor, network, and audience alike.

¹² Lawrence R. Samuel, *Brought to You By: Postwar Advertising and the American Dream* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001) 84.

portrayals of women who “can be fully absorbed with her youngsters while simultaneously maintaining passionate sexual excitement with her husband was a 1950s invention that drove thousands of women to therapists, tranquilizers, or alcohol when they actually tried to live up to it.”¹³ On the other hand, scholarship, such as Thomas Doherty’s *Cold War, Cool Medium*, argues that television actually made the United States a more accepting and cosmopolitan nation by increasing the visibility of certain segments of the population. The visibility, for example, of “the Junior Senator from Wisconsin,” Joe McCarthy, hastened his fall from grace, just as Lucille Ball, Desi Arnaz, and Liberace helped to promote acceptance of less traditional expressions of gender and marriage. Scholarship on sixties television, including Todd Gitlin’s *The Whole World is Watching*, and Aniko Bodroghkozy’s *Groove Tube* similarly argue that television played a significant role in showcasing certain elements of sixties countercultural youth movements.

Clearly, though, a sort of tension exists between how one ought to characterize TV’s role in postwar America, whether it was more repressive or reformatory. By using *The Twilight Zone* as my main historical lens takes into account both tendencies: the repressive aspects of marketing and censorship led Serling to conceal certain topics and shift from realistic drama to fantasy-based narratives to elude censors; TV’s reformatory aspect is illustrated in the show’s persistent critical engagement with social issues and contemporary social commentary. But just as the show’s content was not wholly determined by censors and sponsors, neither was it solely determined by concurrent social commentary in print. Rather, *The Twilight Zone* shows television’s ability to reflect, engage with, and even critique prevalent forms of social commentary at the time. Moreover, because the show provided a platform for a variety of

¹³ Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 9.

writers, including Richard Matheson, Charles Beaumont, George Clayton Johnson, Ray Bradbury, and Reginald Rose among several others, *The Twilight Zone* provides a particularly rich cross-section of socially critical writers of the time. By restoring this public context, and the relationship television writers such as Rod Serling had with social criticism, a clearer picture of television's place in postwar society comes into view, as does a more accurate understanding of the limited agency but broad engagement of television writers. This engagement further reveals continuities between the fifties and sixties in meaningful thematic ways and resists the historical tendency to sharply bifurcate the two decades.

Serling's *Twilight Zone* represented a kind of compromise between a creative writer and the dominant trends of his day. Indeed, for Serling's own career, the show was a marked shift from dramatic realism to fantasy and science fiction. Prior to creating *The Twilight Zone*, he was already a household name, garnering three Emmy Awards for his teleplays *Patterns* (1955), *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, (1956) and *The Comedian* (1957). All three teleplays provided a critical, dramatic look at the worlds of big business, sports, and entertainment, respectively. However, as TV began to shift away from critical content, some of Serling's scripts underwent excessive edits. In 1956, for example, Serling wrote a teleplay entitled *Noon on Doomsday* for *The Steel Hour*, which was based on the vicious murder of Emmett Till, who had allegedly flirted with a white woman, and the subsequent mistrial that took place in Mississippi of 1955. Till's killers, J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant, had not only been acquitted of their crimes, they later described the gruesome details of how they kidnapped and brutally murdered the visiting fourteen year old Chicago boy. In the January 24, 1956 issue of *Look* magazine, they recounted how after they kidnapped Till and threatened him, the young boy emphasized how he is just as good as they are and that he had "had" white women before, adding that his grandmother was

also white. Till's frank, unapologetic discussion of miscegenation was too much to bear for Bryant and Milam, however. Milam recounted in the *Look* interview,

Well, what else could we do? He was hopeless...I like niggers - in their place - I know how to work 'em. But I just decided it was time a few people got put on notice. As long as I live and can do anything about it, niggers are gonna stay in their place. Niggers ain't gonna vote where I live. If they did, they'd control the government. They ain't gonna go to school with my kids. And when a nigger gets close to mentioning sex with a white woman, he's tired o' livin'. I'm likely to kill him. Me and my folks fought for this country, and we got some rights. I stood there in that shed and listened to that nigger throw that poison at me, and I just made up my mind. 'Chicago boy,' I said, 'I'm tired of 'em sending your kind down here to stir up trouble. Goddam you, I'm going to make an example of you...'

After repeatedly pistol-whipping Till, Bryant and Milam recounted how they then stole a 74 lb. cotton gin fan, even though they were slightly concerned they might get caught for stealing the fan. They said nothing, however, about being worried that they might eventually be brought to justice for the murder they would soon commit. Their presumptive overconfidence was soon vindicated, however, after they shot Till in the head with a .45 handgun, tied him to the barbed wire gin fan, and rolled his dead body into the muddy waters of the Tallahatchie River. More recently, Carolyn Bryant, the target of Till's alleged advances, explained in an interview that the story she told at the trial was not based on actual events, but was instead filled with "Black Beast" rapist imagery, an all too familiar popular culture trope to every white man sitting on the jury. As far as Till grabbing her around the waist and uttering sexually explicit language, she simply stated, "That part's not true." Bryant concluded, "Nothing that boy did could ever justify what happened to him."¹⁴

¹⁴ Timothy B. Tyson, *The Blood of Emmett Till* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017) 6-7.

Up against this vast web of mass-marketed, popular racist imagery, false testimonies, and unified injustice, Serling's provocative writing proved to be no match. After the corpse was recovered from the river, Emmett's mother insisted on having an open casket funeral back in Chicago to display the horrifying condition of her son's body, hoping to raise the public's racial consciousness. ABC and U.S. Steel, however, proved to have significantly less fortitude and resolve under pressure. Before Serling's teleplay ever aired, news of the upcoming program led to an outpouring of thousands of threatening letters from southern White Citizen Councils, raising public relations concerns for U.S. Steel and ABC, both of whom did not want to upset any viewers or potential consumers, including unapologetic white supremacists. After Serling refused to alter his script, thirty editors did the job for him, removing everything that might suggest the South, including the word "lynch" and even Coca-Cola products from the script.¹⁵ Serling later sardonically explained how the victim in the story, initially scripted to be Jewish so as not to be too literal, was also changed "to suggest an unnamed foreigner, then the locale was changed from the South to New England, and I'm convinced they would have gone up to Alaska or the North Pole using Eskimos...except I suppose the costume problem was of sufficient severity not to attempt it."¹⁶ Censorship of scripts such as these helped to guarantee the declaration of Ralph Ellison's protagonist would remain the cultural standard:

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids – and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me...That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come into contact...their *inner* eyes...You wonder whether you aren't simply a phantom in other people's minds...a figure in a nightmare which the sleeper tries with all his strength to destroy...You ache with the need to

¹⁵ Rod Serling, *Patterns: Four Television Plays with the Author's Personal Commentaries* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957) 20-23.

¹⁶ Rod Serling, Interview by Mike Wallace, 22 September 1959, *The Mike Wallace Interview* (CBS).

convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you're a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear to make them recognize you. And, alas, it's seldom successful.¹⁷

In this way, postwar television similarly exemplified Adilfu Nama's concept regarding science fiction, namely how the "structured absence of blackness" served as "the symbolic wish fulfillment of America's staunchest advocates of white supremacy."¹⁸ Non-white Americans would, by and large, be structurally absent from the vast majority of television programming throughout the postwar period. In addition, merely alluding to how ethnic, racial, and sexual differences continually shape larger social issues would also be relegated to the world of invisible realities.

After seeing socially conscious scripts such as this one gutted of their intended meaning and commentary, Serling decided to make a career move by concealing social criticism within fantasy and science fiction stories. Indeed, while social criticism abounded in print form during the postwar era, its presence on television by the early sixties was almost non-existent.¹⁹ By dealing in fantasy, Serling believed he would be able to tackle social issues, albeit in a metaphorical and veiled manner and at least partially uphold what he believed was the chief role of the writer - to "menace the public's conscience." He further emphasized, speaking before the Library of Congress in 1968, that writers "must see the arts as a vehicle of social criticism," and in doing so, endeavor to highlight the most vital issues of their time.²⁰ In this limited way,

¹⁷ Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1952) 3-4.

¹⁸ Adilfu Nama, *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008) 10.

¹⁹ Another contemporaneous exception to this general rule was Reginald Rose's *The Defenders*, which dealt with social controversies through courtroom drama. Rose, like Serling, became one of the foremost television writers of the fifties but also experienced the increasing levels of censorship by the decade's end. While Serling chose fantasy as a vehicle for critical thought, Rose placed social issues at the center of this legal drama, which ran from 1961-1965.

²⁰ Sander, *Serling*, xvii.

Serling sought to use television as a means to reframe popular portrayals of white American wish-fulfillments as nightmares, rather than dreams. And, in doing so, he attempted to raise critical thought at the exact same time the medium generally worked to repress critical thinking and promote stereotyping. Amidst programming and advertising that worked to promote overly simplistic notions regarding the American Dream and largely ignore social problems, Serling reminded Americans excessive dreaming without an occasional nightmare was bad for the national psyche. His next stop was *The Twilight Zone*.²¹

Although Serling realized that explicitly dealing with race relations on television was essentially off limits, his social commentary would remain racially inspired. Knowing that explicitly depicting socially marginalized minorities was sure to alert increasingly paranoid sponsors and networks, Serling instead focused his creative energies on white American society and its collective preservation of bigotry, prejudice, and white supremacy. By turning a critical eye toward issues wrapped up in suburbia, space exploration, white collar work, consumerism, war, and technology, Serling's *Twilight Zone* appraised the priorities of white mainstream society - priorities which frequently necessitated greed, corruption, indifference, and violence. In this way, he followed the dominant television trend in making the aspirational, and seemingly wholesome, American Dream the centerpiece of his new series with one major qualification – the American Dream would be contained within a nightmare. By placing the American Dream inside a nightmare, Serling attempted to raise critical thought as it related to manufactured desires, public policies, advertised products, and white utopian visions that incessantly

²¹ Serving as the executive producer for Cayuga Productions, Rod Serling personally authorized every episode of *The Twilight Zone* during its five season run. Serling himself wrote a total of 92 of the 156 episodes along with approving the other 64 before they aired. The exceptional production control Serling had over *The Twilight Zone* ensured that the series as a whole, including episodes penned by other writers, lined up with his own personal, creative vision.

predominated postwar life in the United States. And while millions of individual Americans had unprecedented access to a variety of comforts, Serling sought to remind them that they needed to consider the needs of others and the conditions of the society in which they live. Responding to one particularly angry viewer, who wrote Serling a letter and accused him of aiding the Communist international conspiracy, he simply expressed that his work was based on a core belief, namely “that human beings must involve themselves in the anguish of other human beings.”²² In fact, viewers might find, the anguish is also their own. *The Twilight Zone* used a fantastic, imaginary setting as a vehicle to discuss real, complex social issues at the exact time television was utterly dominated by shows which featured seemingly real settings, but consisted of unreal fantasies. Whether they dealt with the Old West, a local police force, or a contemporary nuclear family, television offered an abundance of simplistic forms of escapism. Instead of simply offering Americans yet another escape portal, which leads to a white utopian world, Serling attempted to grant the American public an opportunity to look at themselves, their thinking habits, and their nation’s. In other words, an invitation to engage with reality, rather than to continually disengage from it.

Indeed, the postwar fantasies wrapped up in the pursuit of individual wealth and comfort could prove to be a detriment not only to society, but even to the individual. Among many illustrations of this, the seventeenth episode of *The Twilight Zone*, entitled “The Fever,” tells the story of Franklin and Flora Gibbs, a married couple who has won an all-expenses-paid trip to Las Vegas, Nevada for three days and two nights. As they become acquainted with the casino and hotel where they will be staying, Franklin is noticeably uncomfortable amidst the extreme hedonism, greed, and gambling, decrying that a vacation spent in the casinos is “a miserable,

²² Letter quoted in Anne Serling, *As I Knew Him: My Dad, Rod Serling* (New York; Citadel Press, 2013) 161.

terrible waste of time.” Flora, on the other hand, is more than excited to be there and pleads with her husband, “Oh, Franklin, try to enjoy it, won’t you?” After receiving some more admonishment from Franklin, Flora decides to take a nickel and put it in one of the slot machines to no avail. Feeling somewhat vindicated after his wife’s one gambling attempt and failure, Franklin tells her that he is going to head up to the room. But before he can get to the elevators, a drunk stranger grabs Franklin and gives him one of his nickels to play the slot machine. After some resistance, Franklin reluctantly places the coin in the hunk of hedonistic metal, slowly pulls the lever, and immediately hears the clinking of coins - his very first attempt at gambling is a success. His initial excitement, however, is soon replaced by sober reflection, as he explains to his wife that unlike so many other Vegas dupes, he knows when to stop and the couple retires for the evening.

But Franklin cannot sleep. He lies on his back, his hands clasped behind his head, while he repeatedly hears his name, “Franklin,” in a raspy tone mixed with the sound of tinkling coins – it is “the voice” of the slot machine beckoning him downstairs for more gambling. He gets up from bed, returns to the slot machine, and becomes so infatuated with winning the jackpot that he remains at the machine pulling the lever again and again until morning the next day. When Flora tries to gently reason with Franklin that he should get some sleep, he only becomes more incensed: “I’m concerned with this...this machine! It’s inhuman the way it lets you win a little and then takes it all back. It teases you! It holds out promises and weasels you! It sucks you in...This machine it mocks me...It’s got to pay off sooner or later. It’s just got to I tell you!” The scant intermittent rewards, however, do not indicate any sense of mechanized morality or fair play expected by Franklin.

Finally, at eight o'clock in the morning, the machine jams. Franklin starts screaming at the silent, indifferent metal contraption to give him back his dollar. Sweaty, broke, and psychologically shattered, Franklin charges the machine, knocking it down onto the carpeted casino floor. After being escorted by security up to his room, Franklin, still unable to sleep, anxiously explains to Flora how the machine actually broke down purposefully because it knew he was about to hit the jackpot: "It's not even a machine, Flora. It's an entity. It's a thing with a mind and a will of its own!" Immediately thereafter, the raspy slot machine once again calls out for Franklin. While Franklin darts around the room screaming, "It's chasing me! It's following me! It's trying to get me, Flora," his wife, in vain, admonishes him that nothing is, in fact, there. Completely overcome by his delusions, Franklin frightfully retreats backward, crashing out of his hotel room window to his death.

"The Fever" is a quintessential example of *The Twilight Zone's* social drama and commentary on pursuits of pleasure, comfort, and wealth. A classic middle class, white, Midwestern American couple is given the chance to vacation in the ultimate geographical location and expression of American consumerism and abundance – Las Vegas, Nevada. Deliberately choosing a casino, which thrives on exploiting wealth that is inherently more expendable than essential, speaks to postwar affluence and the anxieties that frequently came with it. Indeed, the very line between what was considered essential and expendable or excessive was blurred significantly in the postwar period. Coming on the heels of the Great Depression, many Americans accustomed to penny-pinching and saving like Franklin were put-off by what they saw as the excesses of consumerism, thrill-seeking, and loose-spending. Serling shows, however, that those same people could frequently be the most vulnerable of all to the deep and vast changes occurring in the postwar American economy, bringing them to the point of

addiction and possibly death if their consumer adventures got too far out of hand. While Flora seemed innocently curious and open to having some new experiences in this new world of consumerism, Franklin tries to resist the tide, only to drown underneath its force.

This episode's third main character, the slot machine, also speaks to an increasingly pervasive phenomenon of postwar consumer culture – the spread of anthropomorphic consumer goods and technology. And just like actual humans, these goods could be a blessing or curse to the consumer, depending on who was using whom. Not surprisingly, marketers at the time promised the wares they were selling, the experiences they were promising, and the technologies they were promoting, were all more akin to benevolent angels freeing you from boredom, helping you achieve your deepest dreams and desires. As Ernest Dichter, the famed marketing researcher, articulated without any misgivings, “Things which surround us motivate us to a very large extent in our everyday behavior. They also motivate us as the goals of our life – the Cadillac that we are dreaming about, the swimming pool that we are working for, the kind of clothes, the kind of trips, and even the kind of people we want to meet from a social-status viewpoint are influencing factors. In the final analysis objects motivate our life probably at least as much as the Oedipus complex or childhood experiences.” Dichter goes on to state that not just humans have souls, but “all objects which surround us have souls of their own, have human qualities because they only exist in a human world. There are really...no raw inhuman objects.”²³ The Vegas vacation, the slot machine seduction, and the addictive promises of a jackpot were all representations of Dichter's assessment that the objects which made up the consumer world of postwar America had souls all their own.

²³ Ernest Dichter, *The Strategy of Desire*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Publishers, 1960) 92-93.

How their magnetic power should be wielded, however, was seemingly up for debate. While Dichter nonchalantly claimed that people who buy items to merely impress others are clearly being possessed by objects, rather than the possessor of them, he showed, albeit predictably, little thought over how one ought to overcome or escape such a consumeristic black hole among his many psychological musings.²⁴ Indeed, for marketers like Dichter, this responsibility lay squarely on the consumer's shoulders to control him/herself. The luxury to be reckless was to be enjoyed more by manufacturers and marketers and merely envied by consumers. If consumers attempted to mirror the behavior of major manufacturers and marketers, they would find themselves, like Franklin did, without any more nickels to play. This episode, which aired nearly three years before President Kennedy outlined a consumer bill of rights and eight years before the Consumer Federation of America was founded, illustrated how Americans had not yet grasped how to handle such a large, sweeping, profound influence on their lives as it related to marketing regulation, open and honest product information, and ways to instill more secure forms of consumer protection.²⁵ Relatively uninitiated in the vast world of consumerism and luxury spending, many postwar Americans could find themselves in the middle of a seemingly dream-like scenario, only to find it quickly devolve into an inescapable nightmare.²⁶

In this postwar environment, marketers like Ernest Dichter and Louis Cheskin profoundly and enduringly shaped the all-pervasive world of advertising and consumerism. And as Lawrence R. Samuel has most recently pointed out in his work, *Freud on Madison Avenue*:

²⁴ Ibid., 109.

²⁵ For more information on this topic, Lawrence B. Glickman's *Buying Power: A History of Consumer Activism in America* (University of Chicago, 2009) offers a lively account of consumer movements from the nation's founding up to the twenty-first century.

²⁶ One major aspect of this was over-borrowing and consumer debt. Among several works that deal with this pervasive trend, Louis Hyman's *Debtor Nation: The History of America in Red Ink* (Princeton University, 2011), details how credit was responsible for both postwar affluence and its decline, creating borrowing habits that would impact the stagflation of the 1970s.

Motivation Research and Subliminal Advertising in America, these motivational researchers relied heavily on Freudian psychology, particularly with regard to the concept of wish-fulfillment. Samuel points out how “marketers were very happy to learn about” such concepts, “knowing their ad agencies could figure out ways to complete what was missing from consumers’ lives.”²⁷ Equipped with Freud’s dream psychology, marketers seemingly found a psychological treasure map, providing the directions to America’s buried wishes and loot. But as motivational researchers got to work on promoting products with increasing levels of psychological sophistication and promises to fulfill Americans’ innermost desires, they left behind an important Freudian caveat: “It will be noticed how conveniently everything was arranged in this dream. Since its only purpose was to fulfil a wish, it could be completely egoistical. A love of comfort and convenience is not really compatible with consideration for other people.”²⁸ Undeterred by such considerations, advertisers ensured their marketing creations always catered to the ego and had finality and closure, containing the essential message, “*This is what you are missing – the key to your fulfillment.*” And in this way, postwar advertisements carried on the dominant marketing assumptions from the 1920s, namely that consumers preferred an image of “life as it ought to be,” rather than life as it is.²⁹ While television sponsors sought to sell consumers’ unfulfilled wishes and repressed desires back to them, whether it had to do with masculinity, femininity, wealth, power, status, fun, or sex, Serling’s writing took a contrasting approach that deliberately left problems and issues unresolved. In this way, Serling not only contrasted the content of most advertising and popular TV programs, but the format as well. By leaving stories more open-ended, the burden was deliberately placed on the audience to think,

²⁷ Lawrence R. Samuel, *Freud on Madison Avenue: Motivation Research and Subliminal Advertising in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) 11.

²⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1955) 149.

²⁹ *Advertising and Selling*, September 8, 1926, p. 27.

reflect, and act, not simply to passively consume. And while advertisers tended to assure people that they are the ones in control in this world of consumption, Serling reminded Americans they in fact have little control over many things in the postwar world, but can perhaps have more by regaining some of their consciousness.

Serling's approach to writing and popular entertainment in many ways paid respect to Carl Jung's observation that the "more that consciousness is influenced by prejudices, errors, fantasies, and infantile wishes, the more the already existing gap will widen into a neurotic dissociation and lead to a more or less artificial life far removed from healthy instinct, nature, and truth."³⁰ The Jungian goal, like Serling's, was to help close this neurosis-inducing gap between the conscious and unconscious mind, not just simply manipulate it and toy with it for profit. Instead of producing more material that reflected predominant "American Dream" trends in marketing and television content, Serling arguably sought again in Jungian fashion, "to restore our psychological balance by producing dream material that re-establishes, in a subtle way, the total psychic equilibrium." Jung referred to this as the "complementary (or compensatory) role of dreams in our psychic make-up," and cited, for example,

People who have unrealistic ideas or too high an opinion of themselves, or who make grandiose plans out of proportion to their real capacities, have dreams of flying or falling. The dream compensates for the deficiencies of their personalities, and at the same time it warns them of the dangers in their present course. If the warnings of the dream are disregarded, real accidents may take their place.³¹

Within a culture that was overflowing with depictions and pronouncements of America's inherent superiority and wealth, Serling attempted, in no small way, to balance the popular

³⁰ Carl Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1964) 34.

³¹ *Ibid.*

psyche of the American TV viewing public. By inviting viewers to look into the “fifth dimension, beyond that which is known to man,” he de-incentivized television audiences to focus their mental energies on the mere props of the American Dream – modern homes, kitchens, automobiles, fashion, and technology. Indeed, these elements formed what Roland Marchand once aptly described as the advertisements’ highly selective, “*Zerrspiegel*,” or fun-house mirror, distorting and exaggerating the elements it supposedly reflects.³² In a somewhat similar fashion, *The Twilight Zone* might be described as a highly selective haunted house mirror, some nightmares would not make it to the screen, nor would everyone be reflected. But for those who could find their likeness among the haunted mirror’s reflections, amidst the cobwebs and layers of neglected dust, perhaps they could emerge slightly more shadow-conscious. Indeed, while millions of Americans had plenty of evidence of their dominance of the natural world through modern conveniences and technology, Serling’s work critically reminded them that the nature of man still had yet to be mastered, just as the character and priorities of their nation had yet to be fully determined. In these matters, Americans were likely to be found walking in their sleep, in need of some kind of nightmare to wake up.

Once again, Serling’s work arguably reflected Carl Jung’s observation with regard to the western world: “If we could see our shadow (the dark side of our nature), we should be immune to any moral and mental infection and insinuation. As matters now stand, we lay ourselves open to every infection. Only we have the additional disadvantage that we neither see nor want to understand what we ourselves are doing, under the cover of good manners.”³³ And just as the Swiss psychoanalyst endeavored to empower his patients by raising their awareness of certain

³² Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985) xvii.

³³ Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, 73.

repressed elements in both the personal and collective unconscious, this arguably proved to be among Serling's main goals. By creating compensatory dreams that attempted to alert dreamers to both real and potential dangers, Serling's *Twilight Zone* sought to produce social nightmares on television before they happened, happened again, or continually worsened in the real world. Indeed, Serling's opening narration for "The Shelter" could properly serve as a kind of mission statement for the entire series: "What you are about to watch is a nightmare. It is not meant to be prophetic, it need not happen, it's the fervent and urgent prayer of all men of good will that it never shall happen. But in this place, in this moment, it does happen. This is *The Twilight Zone*." It would be up to Americans to define the limits and extent of the spook, and determine whether the content of these nightmares stayed in *The Twilight Zone*, were dealt with directly, or were continually ignored and free to continually haunt the nation's sleepwalking inhabitants.

Chapter 1

Fighting a War, Combating a Myth: How the Horrors of World War II Shaped *The Twilight Zone*

On June 28, 1975 Rod Serling died. He had suffered a heart attack in early May, subsequently experienced two more, with the third proving fatal. Three months prior to his death, Serling gave what would become his final interview. He sat down with Linda Brevelle at La Taverna, one of Serling's favorite restaurants on the Sunset Strip in West Hollywood, and discussed his prolific career as a television writer. After conversing about some of the challenges of Serling's craft, Brevelle asked him what his emotional low point was in his life. Serling, without hesitation, replied that it was during the war: "I was convinced I wasn't going to come back," he recounted.³⁴ Serling had served in the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 11th Airborne Division in the Pacific Theatre during World War II. This particular period in Serling's life not only proved to be his emotional low point, it also served as his primary creative impetus. Serling told a group of college students in 1970, "I was traumatized into writing by war events, by going through a war in a combat situation and feeling...the terrible need for some sort of therapy, get it out of my gut, write it down. This is the way it began for me."³⁵ In this sense, there is arguably no better place to start to understand the creative output of Rod Serling than his military service.

As a teenager in high school, Rod expressed a great deal of eagerness to enroll in the military and fight in the war. Like the three million Americans who had enlisted in 1942 alone, Serling was undeniably motivated by the attack on Pearl Harbor and the outpouring of patriotism

³⁴ "Rod Serling: The Facts of Life," interview by Linda Brevelle, *Writers' Digest Magazine*, 1976.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

and war propaganda that followed.³⁶ Brimming with enthusiasm, Serling even contemplated leaving school before he graduated in order to enlist but a history teacher eventually talked him into getting his degree before enlisting: “War is a temporal thing. It ends. An education doesn’t. Without your degree where will you be after the war?” he told the young Serling.³⁷ The teacher’s provocative question caused him to rethink his situation and stay at Binghamton Central where he earned his high school diploma on January 15, 1943. The very next morning, Serling enlisted as a paratrooper, or skytrooper, as they were referred to at the time. Having gone through basic training in Georgia, Serling became part of the 11th Airborne Division. On April 25, 1944 the newly formed unit was ordered out west to California, and soon thereafter, to the frontlines in the Pacific Islands. In November, General Douglas MacArthur ordered the 11th Airborne to secure the Filipino island of Leyte and when the war ended the following year, Serling’s regiment became part of the postwar occupation of Japan. These two years of service would prove to have an incalculable impact on Serling’s life and work.

For veterans of any war, it is invariably true that coming back does not only mean physically stepping foot in one’s home country again. Rather, it also means coming back mentally and psychologically as well. In order to do this, Elaine Scarry argues in her work, *The Body in Pain*, that humans fundamentally need to articulate past suffering in some way: “One of two things is true of pain...either it remains inarticulate or else the moment it...becomes articulate it silences all else.”³⁸ Rod Serling’s writing still has the capability to silence audiences into horror, reflection, and suspense – sometimes all at once. This ability was arguably borne out

³⁶ Theodore J. Hull, “The World War II Army Enlistment Records File and Access to Archival Databases.”

³⁷ Gordon F. Sander, *Serling: The Rise and Twilight of TV’s Last Angry Man* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 36.

³⁸ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 60.

of Serling's lifelong attempts to articulate his own pain, particularly regarding war and ever-present death. Not only were numerous *Twilight Zone* episodes focused on war and mortality, but two of his early teleplays, *The Strike* (1954) and *The Rack* (1956), dramatically dealt specifically with the Korean War. With regard to warfare, Serling had himself seen it, felt it, heard it, smelt it, lived it, and nearly died because of it.

In his adult years, he not only sought to cope with the experiences of it, but also how the war was grossly mythologized and romanticized in popular portrayals. World War II veteran and literary scholar, Paul Fussell, explained how "optimistic publicity and euphemism had rendered their experience so falsely that it would never be readily communicable." Veterans like Serling and Fussell "knew that in its representation to the laity what was happening to them was systematically sanitized and Norman Rockwellized, not to mention Disneyfied." In the United States, "the meaning of the war seemed inaccessible" and up to the present time, "America has not yet understood what the Second World War was like and has thus been unable to...arrive at something like public maturity."³⁹ It seems likely that Serling turned to writing fiction because the medium allowed him to express wartime trauma, emotion, and pain without having to do battle with public memory and consensus at every turn. His dealings with the romanticizing of World War II also arguably prepared him to do battle with the romanticizing of American life on television. While "A Quality of Mercy" (S3, e15) portrayed the racial violence that profoundly shaped the Pacific War, "Thirty-Fathom Grave" (S4, e2) sought to illustrate some of the long-term psychological impacts of experiencing real combat. Both of these aspects of the war, its

³⁹ Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 267-268.

racially-inspired barbaric violence and the psychological fallout experienced by survivors, were almost entirely missing from popular portrayals of the war.

And just as World War II informed his work, it informed the Cold War in general. On the Soviet side of the affair, World War II represented the worst tragedy in the history of the Soviet Union and Russia in terms of human cost. As one Soviet reformer pointed out when describing his nation's policies in the Cold War, "It was widely argued that the people would forgive the leadership anything but a repetition of the tragedy of the beginning of World War II and that this was the primary political priority."⁴⁰ Just as the Soviets approached the Cold War as the avoidance of another immense tragedy, and used it to domestically suppress oppositional elements, American policy makers used public perception of WWII myth and memory to ostracize advocates of peaceful alternatives to war and further justify an unprecedented number of foreign interventions during the last half of the twentieth century. The war, in other words, was not over.

"A Quality of Mercy"

In the third season of *The Twilight Zone*, "A Quality of Mercy" aired on December 29, 1961. While this episode dealt with the dual realities of racism and brutal violence, it was far from being the only one to explore such topics. "Purple Testament" (S1, e19) dramatized a WWII officer's ability to foresee which members of his regiment would die before the next mission, illustrating the psychological weight and guilt commanders bore when following orders and leading their men into the next casualty-filled battle. "The Encounter" (S5, e31) depicts a young Japanese man and a hardened U.S. Marine who share stories over a beer in an attic filled

⁴⁰ John Lamberton Harper, *The Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17-18.

with war memorabilia. The racial tension and baggage is palpable until the two men come to blows and the marine is killed with the samurai sword he took from a surrendered Japanese soldier whom he killed. With these episodes, the unique challenges of combat-related deaths and racial tension during WWII are presented as open wounds that still need careful consideration.

“A Quality of Mercy” begins with the infantrymen scoping out a nearby cave with their binoculars. Inside the cave are several Japanese soldiers who are in the way of the American advance and subsequently need to be “mopped up.” After repeated mortar blasts continue to miss the cave, the exasperated platoon is pleased to hear that they may be able to simply bypass it: “I’ve got no big yen to run into anything anymore, not at this stage of the game,” Sergeant Causarano says. The men collectively reflect on the pitiful state of the sick and starving Japanese soldiers, who also have no idea that the war is essentially over for them. Amidst this practically lifeless scene, Serling introduces the episode: “It’s August 1945, the last grimy pages of a dirty, torn book of war. The place is the Philippine Islands. The men are what’s left of a platoon of American Infantry, whose dulled and tired eyes set deep in dulled and tired faces look toward a miracle. That moment when the nightmare appears to be coming to an end. But they’ve got one more battle to fight, and in a moment we’ll observe that battle. August, 1945, Philippine Islands. But in reality, it’s high noon in *The Twilight Zone*.”

Immediately thereafter, a Jeep carrying a new officer pulls up to the infantry unit and it soon becomes clear that the platoon has gone through several officers, each one killed off by the Japanese. After their new officer, Lieutenant Katell, is briefed on the unit’s current situation he opts to look at the targeted cave for himself. Very quickly, however, his eagerness for action becomes readily apparent as his thirst for killing obviously surpasses any of his recently acquired, battle-weary subordinates. Instead of agreeing to bypass the sick and starved Japanese

soldiers, the lieutenant claims that they are going to have to wipe them out. After several of the men mockingly comment that Katell has the wrong platoon, the lieutenant adamantly retorts, “When I tell you boys to jump, you’ll jump, if I tell you to stand up on your feet, you’ll stand up, if I tell you to head toward that cave with weapons forward and bayonets fixed, that’s exactly what you’re going to be doing.” The soldiers, however, appear deeply unimpressed with the officer’s youth and evident lack of battle experience. After Katell asks the sergeant what he thinks, Causarano first tells him to take the gold bars off his helmet and collar so as not to make himself an obvious target to the Japanese. After the sergeant says that they should wait to see if the mortar shells of another unit can hit the cave, Katell fires back, claiming they could wipe out the Japanese inside of an hour if they throw some grenades into the cave and “pulverize them.” Unconvinced, the sergeant advises him that “this is no football game,” but “one long, hard gut ache with a lot of torn-up, mangled guys,” and explains how “it’s going to take a long time for us to forget it... You haven’t been shot at yet. And you haven’t shot anybody either.” Katell states that while the sergeant has been fighting longer, he will soon show his efficiency with killing Japanese. While the other soldiers continue to lie around, exhausted from lack of sleep, one remarks, “This one is bloodthirsty,” while another sardonically adds, “You don’t think he’ll want us to scalp them?” Infuriated by the men’s sarcasm and irreverence, Katell questions if they are tired of killing “Japs” or just don’t have the stomach for it. The sergeant quickly responds that they have “seen enough dead men to last us for the rest of our lives,” but if the lieutenant has some “big yen to do some killing...we’ll do some killing for you, but don’t ask us to stand up and cheer.”

In these opening scenes, the episode’s main focal points come into view - the gruesome, arduous violence and the extreme racist attitudes that predominately characterized the war in the

Pacific. Among the many veterans who later recollected these aspects of the War in the Pacific, Eugene Sledge recalled, “To deny this hatred or make light of it would be...a lie... This collective attitude, Marine and Japanese, resulted in savage, ferocious fighting with no holds barred...This was a brutish, primitive hatred as characteristic of the horror of war in the Pacific as the palm trees and the islands.”⁴¹ Indeed, the Pacific Theatre has since been considered a kind of race war, most notably by John Dower in his seminal book, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. For American soldiers who experienced the war firsthand like Serling, the brutality typically resulted in a collective weariness, illustrated in the platoon members lamenting how many dead men they have seen. Within Serling’s own unit, one of his fellow soldiers recollected overrunning a Japanese campsite very similar to the one featured in the episode: “Japanese flags were strewn about...maps, diaries, code books...lay on the mossy ground of the village among the dead Japanese. Awe-inspiring above all was the sight of the Japanese wounded, deserted in caves and lean-tos on the side of the canyon. Gagged and bound and left to die, these pitiable creatures would have inspired the revolted pity of the fiercest soldier.”⁴² The fact that this episode focuses particularly on these soldiers, those wounded and “left to die” in a cave and who no longer really represent a major threat, clearly was deliberate in order to show that killing was neither glorious nor was it always about survival. Like Sergeant Causarano in this episode, Serling must have felt a “revolted pity,” or in the words of his script, “a quality of mercy,” towards these Japanese soldiers on the verge of death near the end of WWII. Like this soldier of the 511th attests to, these scenes of war in the Pacific could have shaken the most blood thirsty soldier to have a sense of pity. Although the soldiers in this episode exhibit a profound case of war-weariness and have a sense of pity even toward enemy

⁴¹ E.B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) 34.

⁴² E.M. Flanagan, *The Angels: A History of the 11th Airborne Division* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1989) 171.

combatants having actually experienced the war, Katell clearly does not share the same attitudes as his simplistic, zealous, and hateful views become instantly apparent. When one of the men alludes to the inexperienced lieutenant perhaps wanting to scalp the Japanese, his sardonic metaphor powerfully reveals these dual wartime realities of racism and savage violence perpetrated by both sides during the war. In the following scene, these wartime realities become even starker.

As the soldiers reluctantly prepare themselves for the assault and cover their faces in mud for camouflage, Katell, sizing up Causarano, tells him that he either has battle fatigue or is “chicken.” The sergeant replies, “Maybe neither, maybe a little bit of both” and offers his honest take on his new commanding officer: “You’re a pea green shavetail just fresh from some campus. You’re afraid you won’t bag your limit, or worse...somebody might spot you as a Johnny-come-lately instead of a killer of men... You want to prove your manhood but it’s a little late in the day and there aren’t many choices left in how to do it. It all boils down to that lousy cave full of sick, pitiful, half-dead losers and a platoon of dirty, tired men that have their craw full of this war.” With the officer’s frustration on the rise, Katell dresses down the sergeant, describing him as “lousy” as well as “the rest of these poor, sad, sensitive, sick boys you want me to bottle-feed!” The newly acquired officer asks his men, “Did somebody forget to tell you, when you fight a war, you fight a war. And you kill until you’re ordered to stop killing!” After Causarano asks how many men have to be killed for him to be satisfied, Katell retorts, “Offhand, I’d say all of them. No matter who they are or where they are, if they’re the enemy, they get it! First day of the war or last day of the war, they get it!”

Here, Katell’s bloodthirsty sentiments reflect that of Serling’s own commander, General Swing, who temporarily led the 11th Airborne Division. In a letter to General March describing

the events on Leyte, Swing wrote, “It would do your heart good to see the...joyful manner in which they kill the rats. I really believe this is the first time the Japs have run against American troops that never stop coming...my troops keep going until dark...so they don’t know where we are located. As a result, we’ve killed about twice as many Japs in proportion to our own casualties as had any other division...the dawn attack caught 300 Japs sleeping outside...and we slaughtered them there with bayonet, knife, and hand grenades.”⁴³ Swing’s boast with regard to the number of kills in his unit rather than any specific tactical or strategic gains reflects the murderous priorities of both Katell and many officers during the actual war. When asked how many men have to die for him to be satisfied, Serling’s character replies in much the same way his own officer did: “Off-hand I’d say all of them. No matter who they are or where they are. If they’re the enemy they get it!”

Moreover, Swing’s deeply racist language, referring to the Japanese as “rats” and “Japs” also figures prominently in the lieutenant’s vocabulary: “We’re gonna kill Japs! That’s my job!” Far from being a unique case, however, racially charged language was featured all over in the propaganda and news of the day. And although propaganda abounded on every side of the war, the Americans’ depiction of the Japanese was particularly dehumanizing and far worse than any characterization of the Nazis. Not only were the depictions of the Japanese even more degrading than other American enemies, there existed no similar concept to that of the “good German.” While Americans were able for the most part to psychologically separate Nazis from other Germans, no such nuance existed toward the Japanese in wartime propaganda, as the Japanese were indiscriminately characterized as barbarians, apes, and even parasitical insects. One illustration, originally published in *Leatherneck* magazine, depicted the Japanese soldiers as

⁴³ Flanagan, *Angels*, 199.

buck-toothed lice and included the caption, “The first serious outbreak of this lice epidemic was officially noted on December 7, 1941, at Honolulu...To the Marine Corps, especially trained in combating this type of pestilence, was assigned the gigantic task of extermination...Flame throwers, mortars, grenades, and bayonets have proven to be an effective remedy. But before a complete cure may be effected the origin of the plague, the breeding grounds around the Tokyo area, must be completely annihilated.”⁴⁴ In this way, war was much less about fighting for the four freedoms, but more about wiping out diseased parasites, a phenomenon later given voice by Lieutenant Cable in the Rodgers and Hammerstein song, “You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught” from *South Pacific*:

You've got to be taught
To hate and fear,
You've got to be taught
From year to year,
It's got to be drummed
In your dear little ear
You've got to be carefully taught.
You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made,
And people whose skin is a diff'rent shade,
You've got to be carefully taught.
You've got to be taught before it's too late,
Before you are six or seven or eight,
To hate all the people your relatives hate,
You've got to be carefully taught!⁴⁵

During the war, these ideas played out with horrific results on the battlefield. As John Dower explains, “Race hate fed atrocities, and atrocities in turn fanned the fires of race hate. The dehumanization of the Other contributed immeasurably to the psychological distancing that facilitates killing...Such dehumanization, for example, surely facilitated the decisions to make

⁴⁴ *Leatherneck*, March 1945.

⁴⁵ Oscar Hammerstein II and Richard Rodgers, “You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught,” *South Pacific*, 1949.

civilian populations the targets of concentrated attack, whether by conventional or nuclear weapons.”⁴⁶ Before civilian populations became the primary targets for two nuclear bombs, the horrors of combat in the Pacific served as a grisly prelude that foreshadowed the small logical step it would take to justify Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Eugene Sledge, a veteran of the Pacific War, described several such pre-nuclear atrocities in his memoir, *With the Old Breed*: “One day a buddy told me he had a unique souvenir to show me. We sat on a rock as he carefully removed a package from his combat pack. He unwrapped layers of waxed papers that had originally covered rations and proudly held out his prize for me to see...I remonstrated as I stared in horror at the shriveled human hand he had unwrapped.” His friend explained how he thought it was a much more interesting souvenir than the common gold teeth other soldiers tended to pilfer but he still needed to “dry it in the sun a little more so it won’t stink.”⁴⁷ Sledge also described Japanese atrocities: “The bodies were badly decomposed and nearly blackened by exposure...One man had been decapitated. His head lay on his chest; his hands had been severed from his wrists and also lay on his chest near his chin. In disbelief I stared at the face as I realized the Japanese had cut off the dead Marine’s penis and stuffed it into his mouth. The corpse next to him had been treated similarly.” After witnessing such horrifying butchery, Sledge honestly stated, “My emotions solidified into rage and a hatred for the Japanese beyond anything I ever had experienced.”⁴⁸ Another veteran of the Pacific, Anthony Coulis, begged the question, “Why did we extract such extreme delight in firing a burst of machine-gun fire into already dead Japanese?” As Coulis recalls, he and his fellow marines fired repeatedly at the deceased and watched as their “bodies...jerked and quivered,” while he and his comrades “would laugh

⁴⁶ John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 11.

⁴⁷ Sledge, 152.

⁴⁸ Sledge, 148

gleefully and hysterically.” Only when the Japanese corpses became so badly torn open that they started to emit “a stench that stung our nostrils and turned our stomachs, did we snap back to sanity, turning our backs now on the dead enemy, disgusted with our behavior.” Coulis finally and impossibly asks, particularly when it comes to warfare, “When does sanity end and madness begin?”⁴⁹ While the question remained a dilemma for most veterans, Dower has shown how incidents like these usually did not inspire philosophical discussions, but instead were opportunistically used on both sides to further justify and intensify the already racially-fueled hatred and extreme violence toward the enemy.

American prejudice and racism existed not just towards the Japanese and the Japanese-Americans, who were interred en masse during the war in camps, it was also clearly evidenced by the military’s treatment of its own black soldiers. Jim Crow was at work not only in the southern United States, he was functioning in the U.S. military all over the world. In addition to being segregated from white regiments, black men could not become officers and were frequently used for menial jobs such as cooks and mess attendants. Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, expressed his racial views, which were also undoubtedly shared by many: “Leadership is not imbedded in the Negro race yet and today to make commissioned officers lead men into battle - colored men - is only to work a disaster to both.”⁵⁰ In this way, institutionalized racism and segregation in the military created a vicious circle, much like the violent atrocities had on the battlefield. Black soldiers were seen as inherently inferior and they were never allowed the chance to prove otherwise.

⁴⁹ Anthony Coulis, “When Marines Wondered,” *The Purple Testament: Life Stories by Disabled War Veterans* ed. Don M. Wolfe (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Sons, 1946) 191-192.

⁵⁰ Stimson quoted in James Patterson’s *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 23.

One example of this was the 555th Airborne Regiment, which consisted solely of African-American troops. The regiment was never deployed overseas due to segregation practices. Instead, they were used on the West Coast of the United States to put out fires started by Japanese fire balloons. However, not all commanders believed segregation to necessarily be the best practice. General George Marshall knew that segregation and unequal treatment presented a serious problem: “My God! My God! I don’t know what to do about this race question in the Army...I tell you frankly, it is the worst thing we have to deal with...We are getting a situation on our hands that may explode right in our faces.”⁵¹ When the war was over, unequal treatment of black soldiers persisted, as they were banned from most veterans’ organizations and were funneled into unskilled, low-paying jobs through the GI Bill.⁵²

When Katell turns back toward his men, he bumps his binoculars with his right elbow and suddenly finds himself transported back to May 4, 1942 as part of a Japanese regiment. His name is no longer Katell, but Lieutenant Yamuri. When one of his fellow soldiers hands his binoculars to him, he is shocked to find himself amongst the Japanese and runs off into the trees. As he races into a clearing, he is quickly fired upon by an American machine gunner and retreats back to the unit. Confused, the lieutenant asks, “Those are Americans in the cave?” Sergeant Yamazaki answers, “Yes, sir. We figure there are twenty or thirty of them. Most of them wounded.” After the lieutenant proposes that they bypass the wounded men in the cave, his superior officer asks, “Bypass them, lieutenant? Is that tactical or is that some sudden nugget of compassion that you have unearthed in your fever?” After Yamuri states that they cannot do the Japanese Army much harm in their wounded state, he is rebutted once more: “Neither can they

⁵¹ Ibid, 24.

⁵² Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 167-169.

sink a battleship, but nevertheless, we have to destroy them...The...men in the cave, they are Americans, they are enemy. Healthy, wounded, walking or lying, they are the enemy...The Japanese Army wipes out its opponents...the comparative health and well-being of the enemy, his comfort, or his discomfort, the degree of his anguish or his incapacities have no more bearing on a military action, a tactical move, or a decision of command than the fortunes of an anthill that you step on when we move out to attack...This is war and in war, you kill. You kill, lieutenant. You kill until you are ordered to stop killing.” After Yamuri asks his superior officer how many men have to be killed for him to be satisfied, the answer eerily reflects the exact philosophy once uttered by Katell to his infantrymen: “Offhand, I’d say all of them. No matter who they are or where they are, if they are the enemy, they are to be destroyed! First day of the war or last day of the war, we will destroy them!” When Yamuri again asks if they might be able to bypass the injured American troops in a cave, the captain slaps him across the face and he soon finds himself transformed back to an American officer in August 1945.

Before the infantry can attack the cave, the men are suddenly ordered to pull back after being informed that the United States will soon be dropping the atomic bomb on Japan. Amidst screams of joy and celebration, the lieutenant merely looks dumbfounded and remains silent. Addressing his once bloodthirsty superior, Sergeant Causarano tells the lieutenant not to worry, as there will be more wars and more people to kill. Katell, stunned by his experience in *The Twilight Zone*, responds somberly, “I hope not...” clearly showing his transformed views of war and death as Serling offers his closing narration, “The quality of mercy is not strained, it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.’ Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, but applicable to any moment in time, to

any group of soldiery, to any nation on the face of the Earth – or, in this case, to *The Twilight Zone*.”

As John Dower aptly explained with regard to WWII, the “propagandistic deception often lies, not in the false claims of enemy atrocities, but in the pious depiction of such behavior as peculiar to the other side.”⁵³ When Katell is forcibly transformed into a Japanese officer, and ordered to brutally kill Americans, he suddenly can realize the damaged, vulnerable humanity that lies on the other end of a gun. When his own blind, violent hatred and racially-charged rancor is put on display before him, he finally is able to see its destructiveness. His transformation bore resemblance to Sledge’s account of such a scene: “I shuddered and choked. A wild desperate feeling of anger, frustration, and pity gripped me. It was an emotion that always would torture my mind when I saw men trapped and was unable to do anything but watch as they were hit...I turned my face away and wished that I were imagining it all. I had tasted the bitterest essence of war, the sight of helpless comrades being slaughtered, and it filled me with disgust.”⁵⁴

Lacking actual combat experience, however, the traumatic effects of Katell’s war philosophy could have forever remained unchallenged. As a veteran himself, however, Serling was no longer capable of viewing any war in simplistic, self-righteous, black-and-white terms. And after coming back home from the front, he eventually bore witness to a series of new conflicts being framed in a painfully familiar pattern – the Cold War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and a host of other conflicts throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. The fact that the vast majority of Americans were comfortably insulated from having to directly experience any of these engagements, meant that they were also in constant danger of

⁵³ Dower, 12.

⁵⁴ Sledge, 60.

perpetually remaining belligerent “shavetails,” non-combatants who, like Katell, lauded combat, but could easily maintain a safe psychological distance and self-righteous outlook. Like the lieutenant in this episode, many Americans could be found to have a highly underdeveloped “quality of mercy.”

In this way, it was arguably Serling’s creative intent for Lieutenant Katell to be a kind of stand-in for the American public. Just like Katell, Americans were largely educated during the Cold War with a simple, competitive revulsion for, among other things, any nation or people subscribing to Communism. The fact that many such nations, including China, Korea, and Vietnam were also Asian, made the racial aspects of World War II that much more relevant. But also like Katell, while millions of Americans internalized this prevailing fighting spirit, they also lacked actual experience. Furthermore, just as the atomic bomb “saved” Katell and other American soldiers from having to more intimately experience the horrors of combat, technological innovations in warfare meant that the targeted victims would more exclusively be the ones suffering the trauma of war, leaving their killers physically and psychologically relatively unscathed. And while Serling was not wholly pacifistic himself, his experiences had clearly led him to conclude that combat was not something to approach with the naïve, boyish eagerness exemplified by Katell. Instead, war, if it was to be viewed realistically and maturely, should be considered an altogether unexciting, desperate affair. And before war is ever hastily declared, it should be primarily informed by the traumatized, yet living minds of those who had beheld gratuitous, emaciated death and been reared by the merciless hand of real warfare.

“Thirty-Fathom Grave”

While Katell mostly eluded the traumatizing effects of war, for millions of other veterans, they were not as lucky. For those who had experienced the horrors of warfare, peacetime would

not necessarily be altogether peaceful. In this way, *The Twilight Zone's* "Thirty Fathom Grave" explores the psychological impacts battle fatigue, or PTSD as it is referred to now, could potentially have on an individual. In a similar manner, the episode "Judgment Night" featured a Nazi U-Boat officer who once ordered an attack on the S.S. Queen Glasgow, a British passenger liner. Having killed hundreds of civilians, Captain Lanser is perpetually condemned to relive the attack, but rather than relive the event from his German submarine, he is aboard the very ship he destroyed, during the year 1942.⁵⁵ Additionally, "King Nine Will Not Return" (S2, e1) tells the story of Captain James Embry, who was aboard the B-25 Mitchell bomber *King Nine* when it crashed in North Africa in 1943. Envisioning himself back at the crash site, Embry searches for the other crew members to no avail. Eventually, the former WWII captain is shown to be in a hospital back in the states, suffering from a bout of survival guilt after he reads a newspaper headline that reveals the discovery of the crashed bomber. Furthermore, "Death's-Head Revisited" (S3, e9) dramatizes the psychological torment of former SS Captain Gunther Lutze, who upon visiting Dachau, is painfully tortured by the eerie ghosts of his former Holocaust victims. Luntze eventually is interred at a mental institution where the doctor asks why Dachau is still standing, while Serling's closing narration offers an answer: "All the Dachaus must remain standing. The Dachaus, the Belsens, the Buchenwalds, the Auschwitzes – all of them. They must remain standing because they are a monument to a moment in time when some men decided to turn the Earth into a graveyard. Into it they shoveled all of their reason, their logic, their knowledge, but worst of all, their conscience. And the moment we forget this, the moment we cease to be haunted by its remembrance, then we become the gravediggers." In all of these

⁵⁵ One of the many famous conflicts Serling had with sponsors took place during the shooting of this episode and was discussed in Serling's appearance on the *Mike Wallace Show* in 1959. While Serling had the Britons aboard the ship predictably drinking tea, Sanka, an instant coffee producer and sponsor of the show, demanded that the tea be changed to coffee in order to better promote their product.

productions of *The Twilight Zone*, the tremendous mental weight of surviving war is depicted as a necessary, and even helpful, psychological torment. By giving honest expression to the horrors of war, the survivors pass on valuable, if painful, insight for future generations. And like Serling's closing narration articulates, the haunting remembrances perform an important service – that of helping to minimize the number of future gravediggers.

“Thirty Fathom Grave” begins on an American naval destroyer in the South Pacific Ocean in the year 1963. In the opening scene, one of the ship's crewmembers reports having found some recent storm damage on one of their motor whale boats. Captain Beecham, the officer in charge of the ship, angrily responds that the boat was not properly secured for torrential weather and that even a “thirteen-year old sea scout” would have known what to do. Chief Bell, the boatswain's mate, whose duties include securing the boats in the time of a storm, immediately reports to the Captain's office. When Bell arrives, the captain sardonically orders, “At ease, chief. That shouldn't be too difficult for you, should it...you're the champion of the fleet when it comes to being at ease, Bell.” After Beecham chastises Bell for his negligence, the reprimanded Bell explains in an apprehensive, hushed voice, that he did his best but had not been feeling “up to par.” Altering his tone somewhat, the captain says that he is not interested in “pistol-whipping” his crew and cares when one of his crewmembers has a problem. In Bell's case, he says that he has rated “4.0” throughout his time on the ship, but noticed his performance and focus slipping the past few days. After Bell agrees to fulfill his duties reliably, Beecham tells him to stop by his office if he needs to discuss anything further and Bell steps out of his office with a pale, dizzy look on his face.

In the sonar room, several crewmembers begin to detect a tapping sound in the waters below. Thinking it may be a submarine, the crewmembers immediately notify Captain Beecham,

who decides to check the scope for himself. With two mysteries now established, Bell's apparent compromised health and some peculiar metal tapping in the waters below, Serling introduces the episode, "Incident one hundred miles off the coast of Guadalcanal. Time: the present. The United States naval destroyer on what has been a most uneventful cruise. In a moment, they're going to send a man down thirty fathoms and check on a noise maker – someone or something tapping on metal. You may or may not read the results in a naval report, because Captain Beecham and his crew have just set a course that will lead this ship and everyone on it into *The Twilight Zone*."

Captain Beecham soon orders his men to shut off all the engines so they can better hear the mysterious tapping noise from below. As the men stand around listening closely, Chief Bell, still appearing woozy, faints and collapses on the top deck. When he awakes, he finds himself in bed in the sick bay. Eager to get up, Bell is urged by the medic to get some rest instead. Bell explains how he has a "funny feeling" but cannot really describe it while the medic gives him a shot to help him relax. Meanwhile, on the main deck, Captain Beecham organizes plans to send a crewmember down to explore what could be making the noise. Worried that his superior officers will think he lost his mind, the captain tells one of his men that he will need several witnesses to back up his report. When one of his crewmembers tries to reassure him that it is probably just a submarine, the captain replies, "Sure it could be a sub, that's probably what it is. But what about this sub? Has it got two arms and a fist? Somebody's making that noise down there...maybe it's just our imagination..."

The diver slowly descends all the way to the ocean floor where he locates an old submarine. After hearing the tapping once more, he knocks a couple times on the submarine, hoping for a response but there is nothing but silence. After he inspects the submarine, he notices that the whole deck has severe shell and machine gun damage. Suddenly, he hears the tapping

once more, he determines that the noise is coming from the middle of the ship below the tower. He ascends back to the surface, and is met by the disturbed and confused captain who explains, “That sub was hit by shell-fire. Whatever action took place must have happened within a period of hours or else there wouldn’t have been anyone still alive. But there’s been no action or we’d have seen it or heard it. Now put all that together and it spells nothing.”

Back in the sick bay, Chief Bell awakes once more, this time telling the medic that he feels like he can’t stay in one place: “This crazy feeling that I’m, that somebody, is ordering me some place, is pulling me some place. And if I didn’t stay put, if I didn’t fight it, I’d go up on that deck and never come back. Sound pretty nuts?” The medic tries to relax Bell again, reassuring him that everything will be alright and he just needs some more rest. Meanwhile, the diver converses with Captain Beecham, declaring, “There is somebody inside her, Sir. I’ll lay odds on that.” The sonar room once again detects noise coming from the ocean floor, but this time it appears that the sub is moving. The captain orders the diver to explore the situation once more, hoping that the shifting position of the submarine will reveal the number on its hull. When he arrives at the sub, he spots the numbers “714” on the hull. Excitedly, the captain searches a reference book for ship 714, reading its description aloud: “714 commissioned December 1941, sunk in action, first Battle of the Solomons, August 7, 1942.” In disbelief, the captain slowly repeats the date, “August 7, 1942,” realizing the sub was sunk more than twenty years ago.

Now back in his office, the captain is visited by the medic who wants to discuss Chief Bell’s health status: “Well, it’s an illusion, or a psychosis or whatever that’s a little out of my line...I do know that he needs help. Psychiatric help...he has a look about him...it’s not a look you see very often. Usually it’s an hour after a battle when the eyes face upward but you know they’re really looking inside. That’s what he looks like. Like a man who’s been just picked up

off a raft of dead men.” The captain agrees to keep Bell in sick bay and hospitalize him when they port again. As the captain sits down to have coffee with some of his men, he mentions how their problems are further compounded by the fact that Chief Bell has “something eating at him.” One remarks that he may be “drudging up a couple of memories” from World War II: “He was picked up here after sinking...He was on a ship that was hit, the only survivor, or something like that, they pulled him out of the water.”

In this particular episode, Serling explores the psychological effects of combat, particularly as they relate to battle fatigue, or what is now labeled PTSD. Prior to WWII, the U.S. military believed that battle fatigue or shell-shock, as it was termed in WWI, was largely the result of a soldier’s pre-existing psychological issues. As a result, the armed forces assumed that psychological breakdowns, as well as the undesired presence of gay men, could be mostly evaded through a psychiatric screening process.⁵⁶ This screening process, headed by psychoanalyst Harry Stack Sullivan, was first implemented in 1940 and resulted in the exclusion of about two million men of the fifteen million who were interviewed.⁵⁷

Despite the dominant assumption that the military could limit the psychiatric damage wrought by war by excluding those allegedly predisposed to, or with a history of, psychological problems and anxiety, the war itself soon proved otherwise. Instead of confirming these past assumptions, World War II further complicated them and eventually resulted in the desperate need to rethink psychiatric disorders. This need, borne out of the psychiatric fallout of the war and the increased involvement of psychiatrists on the front lines, such as Brigadier General

⁵⁶ For more on this topic, see Berube Allen’s *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

⁵⁷ Harry Stack Sullivan, “Mental Hygiene and National Defense: A Year of Selective Service Psychiatry,” *Mental Hygiene* 26, no. 1, 1942, 7-14.

William C. Menninger, eventually led to the formation of the first Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1952. Indeed, as the war dragged on, psychological attrition rates increased dramatically and steadily, casting doubt on the dominant belief that combat-related psychological disorders were merely the result of pre-existing conditions. Faced with an ever-increasing number of soldiers being repatriated back to the United States for psychiatric issues, the military increasingly sought out assistance from psychiatrists in the war effort and keeping soldiers at the front lines. While a mere thirty-five psychiatrists were involved in the military at the start of the war, by the end, this number had dramatically increased to one thousand, representing a whole third of all American psychiatrists.⁵⁸

Among the one thousand psychiatric professionals who became involved in the war, Roy R. Grinker and John P. Spiegel, proved to be among the most influential. Having worked with soldiers on the front lines of North Africa, they eventually published their first-hand wartime experiences, treatments, and conclusions in two separate books, *War Neuroses* and *Men under Stress*. Their work serves as an example of the general shift away from viewing veterans with mental disorders as cowards or malingerers, and instead, viewing mental illness as a direct result of combat-related experiences. Instead of further pathologizing anxiety-ridden veterans, the psychiatrists pronounced that it “would seem to be a more rational question to ask why the soldier does *not* succumb to anxiety, rather than why he does.”⁵⁹

Grinker and Spiegel explained how after WWI, recorded data showed that sixty-five percent of patients with war neuroses had a “personal or family history of nervousness,” compared to only forty-five percent of non-neurotics. However, they questioned the fairness and

⁵⁸ WC Menninger, “Psychiatric Experiences in the War, 1941-1946,” *American Journal of Psychiatry*, May 1947, 577-86.

⁵⁹ Roy R. Grinker and John P. Spiegel, *War Neuroses* (Philadelphia: Blakiston, 1945), 115

accuracy of these findings, explaining how those “who develop war neuroses have their attention directed to nervousness and ‘remember’ more of similar events in their past than more normal soldiers unconcerned with the problem at the moment. The latter have a tendency to deny all previous anxieties or phobias. Their pasts are too healthy to be true.”⁶⁰ Additionally, Grinker and Spiegel noted that although “it might speculatively be held that those with no previous anxiety will do better in battle than their less stable brothers, observation has led us to suspect that is not always the case.” They cited individuals who gave no history of previous anxiety but “crack rather early under shellfire, just as there are many persons with a history of previous anxiety who endure many battles before being overwhelmed.” They concluded that “in certain instances of lifelong anxiety states, the ego’s capacity to endure anxiety is relatively great” because anxiety “is nothing new to these people; they have always had it, and know how to deal with it.”⁶¹ In this way, thinking about trauma and the development of mental illnesses needed to be reconsidered and even radically altered.

During WWII, psychiatrists explained how the “holocaust of battle exposes the primitive forces within every man’s personality.” And even though war was brutal, unforgiving, and horrifying, it presented for that very reason, unique opportunities for understanding human psychology in profound ways. They explained how war, perhaps more than any other occasion or set of circumstances, “permits detailed studies to be made of...ego reactions in various stages of dissolution and repair.” They argued that their observations were also not merely limited in value to wartime alone, but “furnish experimental data for the understanding of anxieties from the

⁶⁰ Ibid., 65

⁶¹ Ibid., 66

stresses of civilian life.”⁶² Their research regarding the human psyche would have implications far beyond combat.

While psychiatrists worked to change prevalent misconceptions both within the field and outside of it, the task was not an altogether easy one. One of the most respected generals in the Army, George S. Patton, exemplified some of the challenges to expanding psychiatric understanding. Unlike Captain Beecham in this episode, Patton persistently believed that soldiers who showed signs of anxiety or mental trauma were merely faking it in order to shirk their duties and once fantastically claimed, that there was no such things as shell-shock, and claimed it was “an invention of the Jews.”⁶³ In his directive to the Seventh Army, dated August 4, 1943, a day after he slapped a soldier he mistook for one of his men suffering from battle fatigue, Patton wrote, “It has come to my attention that a...number of soldiers are going to the hospital on the pretext that they are nervously incapable of combat. Such men are cowards and bring discredit on the army and disgrace to their comrades, whom they heartlessly leave to endure the dangers of battle while they, themselves, use the hospital as a means of escape. You will take measures to see that such cases are not sent to the hospital but dealt with in their units. Those who are not willing to fight will be tried by court-martial for cowardice in the face of the enemy.”⁶⁴ Convincing certain military personnel, who could also be apparently showing signs of mental disorders themselves, would not be an easy task.

Not only was increasing psychiatric awareness a challenge within the ranks of the military, it was also a serious concern for the civilian population which had remained insulated

⁶² Ibid., vii-viii.

⁶³ Noel Monks quoted in George Seldes, *Witness to a Century: Encounters with the Noted, Notorious, and the Three SOB's* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1987) 1.

⁶⁴ Alan Axelrod, *Patton: A Biography* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 117.

from many of the disturbing realities of the war. The trauma experienced by veterans of World War II had to contend with the already predominant notion of “the good war.” While Americans at home went to see films such as *The Flying Tigers* and *The Fighting Seabees* as the war was going on, productions such as these John Wayne films arguably served to only widen the psychological gap between civilians and enlisted servicemen all the more. One veteran described how the romanticized depictions of death, such as a military hero slowly and dramatically dying in his friend’s arms for example, is so utterly far from the reality of warfare: “All of this play acting is just so much rot, an insult to those who died in real battles. Death cannot be imitated by such a display of mock heroics dreamed up by fifty-thousand-dollar-a-year script writers...Death is a reality, the thought of which terrifies, yet fascinates me. I shall always remember those who died on my ship...those poor dead faces, the sightless eyes, the clenched hands...No speeches. No cigarettes. No drama.”⁶⁵ The actual realities of war were not just romanticized and simplified in these movies, but the vast majority of war films conspicuously lacked any allusion whatsoever to the psychiatric problems combat could potentially have on an individual. One of the few exceptions to this general rule, however, was William Wyler’s *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), which depicted a wide array of struggles experienced by soldiers who were readjusting to civilian life. By and large, though, popular depictions of soldiers returning to civilian lives were grossly romanticized and simplified throughout the popular culture of the day.

Psychological trauma was arguably the most relevant and significant effect of war as it would not only impact veterans’ futures, but their families as well. This relative gap in understanding meant that adjusting to peacetime would be even more jarring and challenging to all parties involved. If veterans attempted to follow Patton’s intolerant lead regarding their own

⁶⁵ “Death and Drama,” *Purple Testament*, 204, 206.

mental health, or families internalized John Wayne's many impervious characterizations of a combatant, the long-term effects of psychological trauma could potentially worsen. As Spiegel and Grinker explained, "The difference between the ideal and the fact is sometimes so great, a severe intrapsychic tension is established which, with an increase in the degree of external stress, often leads to psychological illness."⁶⁶ They pleaded, "Too high a priority cannot be given to this problem" of "appreciably large numbers of men with regressed attitudes and damaged confidence" entering civilian life as "it may be too late to correct or control the immediate emotional reactions which will be aroused by their impact upon civilians who have had no experience or knowledge of the war." They remarked how in the "absence of an intimate knowledge of the feelings and problems of the combat veteran, it is easy to see how oversolicitous or overharsh attitudes in the nonmilitary public could lead to a vast confusion..."⁶⁷ And although those who fought in WWII have since been lauded for their stoicism and silence regarding their experiences, they offered a warning about such thinking: "It has been sometimes stated that the veteran does not want people to pay attention to him, that he wants to be let alone and ignored." They claimed that these assumptions do not "coincide with our experience" which has shown that "the veteran does not want to be ignored; he wants to be understood and helped. It is only because of his inability to understand himself, and of his lack of faith in the capacity of others to understand or help him, that he prefers to be alone with his difficulties or in the company of other combat veterans."⁶⁸ The public's general lack of awareness combined with the relative silence of veterans, resulted in postwar psychiatric challenges that could seem cryptic to

⁶⁶ Roy R. Grinker and John P. Spiegel, *Men under Stress* (Philadelphia: Blakiston, 1945), 456

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 444

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 460

common civilians. “Thirty-Fathom Grave” attempts to partially fill in this knowledge gap, which had been shrouded all the more by the profuse mythic portrayals of the “good war.”

Left alone in the sick bay, Chief Bell gets up from his bed to look at himself in the mirror. To his surprise, his face is not the only one he sees, as several young men who are soaking wet, wave to Bell for him to come follow them. Horrified, Bell quickly retreats and throws a metal dish at the mirror, shattering the glass. After hearing the sudden commotion, the medic rushes back into the sick bay and Bell tells him, “I was looking in the mirror and I saw faces...they were staring at me, they were pointing at me. Now I know this sounds crazy but they were there. It’s as if they were ordering me into the mirror, pulling me in.” Again, the doctor tries to reassure Bell that they will conquer whatever is ailing him but Bell quickly gets up after he senses something out in the passageway. The doctor assures him that nothing is out there but an empty hallway. Feeling the compulsion increase all the more, Bell goes out to the passageway only to see several men once again motioning him: “Oh my dear God in heaven. Did you see them, doc? Men. Men looking at me they were wet they were wet they were dripping wet and they were not alive!” The doctor tries to convince Bell that he talked himself into what he wanted to see, but is shocked to find a wet pile of seaweed on the floor of the passageway.

In this scene, Bell’s symptoms closely resemble those recorded by psychiatrists during the war. After observing a variety of battle fatigue cases near the frontlines, Grinker and Spiegel explained that severe “anxiety states produce an intensely striking, unforgettable picture.” Patients in such a state appear “terror-stricken, mute and tremulous.” Their facial expression is frequently “vacuous or fearful and apprehensive,” while their ability to speak is “usually impossible except for a few stuttering attempts to frame an occasional word.” In spite of their severely compromised state, those suffering from battle fatigue “persist in attempting to

communicate with attendants” and commonly experience “sudden fits of crying or laughing...without reason.” To most observers, their behavior is “extremely bizarre and attitudinizing,” consisting of “apparently senseless gestures alternating with periods of excessive activity, characterized by running about the ward and leaping over beds.”⁶⁹ And like Chief Bell hearing the underwater clanging and hearing noises in the hallway, the psychiatrists noted how any “sharp or sudden noise produces a marked startle reaction...the patient jumps, trembles violently, and turns toward the source of the noise with an expression of fear on his face.”⁷⁰

When McClure dives down again to the sunken submarine, he finds dog tags with Chief Bell’s name on them. When the captain takes the tags to Bell, he decides to ask when he lost them. Bell answers, “Twenty years ago...I was aboard ship...that one down below us that was my boat...We were on the surface and it was night. I was a signalman then. I was supposed to put an infrared filter on the signal light, otherwise the Japs would have seen us, they would have seen the light. I don’t know what happened, I dropped the signal light, the infrared filter fell off. They were waiting for us out there, Jap destroyers. They saw our light, they let us have it. They straddled us with their first salvo...they unloaded depth charges the sub was never going to be able to come up again...I got flung over the side...all the time I was in the water there I could hear the voices of our guys. They were *screaming!* I know what it was now. This thing has been bugging me. I know. I know what it is. I got out, see? One guy in our whole crew, I got out. I got picked up later by one of our destroyers. I got out. You understand that, captain? I sunk that sub, right? I was responsible. I got out! That’s what this thing is. See them guys down there in that sub, they know I’m up here. That’s what this thing has been, see I should be down there with

⁶⁹ Grinker and Spiegel, *War Neuroses*, 4-5

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

them. I should be down in that sub. I should be dead. And all this noise see, this pounding this clanging, that's them guys down there they're calling muster on me."

After listening to his disturbed crewmember's account, the captain does his best to rid Bell of his wartime demons: "One man does not sink a sub and one lousy circumstance does not decide a battle and one case of sudden fear does not add up to a coward. You've been taking a dirty rap for twenty years. You've slept with it, you've hung it around your neck, you've let it dig deep down inside and tear you to pieces. Now let me tell you something, Bell. It's not deserved, it's not right. It's a dead weight guilt blown way out of proportion of the facts. And do you know what the facts are, Bell? The facts are that that sub was dead in the water and surrounded by enemy craft. That was a crew that was doomed! Do you understand that? A frightened sailor didn't destroy that ship or kill off that crew. Bell! You've got to understand. A war did! A set of circumstances did! Bell, you've got to believe me. You've got to believe me. All you should put in your sea bag is a regret, not a guilt. You understand, Bell?! Not a guilt!" Bell, still consumed with his own hallucinations and sense of guilt, rushes out of the office to the deck, diving down in the depths of the Pacific Ocean.

After the crew frantically attempts to rescue Bell, one of the crewmembers informs the captain that they have been searching for ten hours to no avail. McClure comes up to report on the submarine to the captain one last time, explaining that the periscope shears had been cut in half and eight men remained in the ship while one of them was holding a hammer in his hand. Adding a final note to the mystery-tinged suicide, Captain Beecham reflects, "Funny thing, how long it takes some men to die or to find any peace at all. Sometimes I think that's the worst thing there is about war - not just what it does to the bodies but what it does to the *minds*." He steps out onto the deck and looks out at the great expanse of the Pacific Ocean and addresses his

former crew member: “Rest in peace, Chief Bell. I think it’s your due now.” Serling then closes his episode: “Small naval engagement, the month of April, 1963. Not to be found in any historical annals. Look for this one filed under "h" for "haunting" in *The Twilight Zone*.”

Although the concept of survivor guilt was not codified until the sixties, it is clear that many WWII veterans, like the fictional Chief Bell in this episode, experienced it nonetheless. In his memoir about the war in the Pacific, Eugene Sledge recounted a psychological disturbance not unlike Bell’s: “I imagined Marine dead had risen up and were moving silently about the area. I suppose these were nightmares, and I must have been more asleep than awake, or just dumbfounded by fatigue. Possibly they were hallucinations, but they were strange and horrible. The pattern was always the same. The dead got up slowly out of their waterlogged craters or off the mud and, with stooped shoulders and dragging feet, wandered around aimlessly, their lips moving as though trying to tell me something. I struggled to hear what they were saying. They seemed agonized by pain and despair. I felt they were asking me for help. The most horrible thing was that I felt unable to aid them.”⁷¹ When Grinker and Spiegel discussed treating a patient with similar symptoms, they explained how the “socially acceptable outlet for suicidal drives consists in volunteering to return to combat duty, where a less sordid death is sought.”⁷² Not only could battle fatigue and survivor guilt weigh on a combatant’s mind, it could drive them to a semi military-assisted, socially acceptable form of suicide like Chief Bell’s in this episode.

While veterans who came home were sometimes doted on by their families and entertained by friends and neighbors with parties, food and drinks, they could also appear “somewhat reticent and sad instead of gloriously happy” because the “more he receives, the

⁷¹ Sledge, 269

⁷² Grinker and Spiegel, *Men under Stress*, 304

guiltier he feels toward those he left behind...the effect is a gloomy reaction.” Consequently, a veteran not uncommonly “dismisses his personal exploits from the conversation and is reticent about talking of himself, not because of any inherent modesty, but because ‘Joe,’ who died on the very same mission, haunts his memory with reminders that he has not done as much.” As a result, a veteran’s guilty feelings can “reach such an intensity that the returnee thinks of asking to return to combat as soon as his overseas leave is finished.”⁷³ Instead of combat turning men into pillars of strength, they more than likely “have had their birthright of independence exchanged for...inferiority feelings or socially unadapted behavior...shattered confidence and continued helplessness which...have enforced a regression to and perpetuation of dependent and immature attitudes.”⁷⁴

As a survivor of the war, Serling himself undoubtedly wrestled with such psychological dilemmas and challenges. His own regiment, the 511th Airborne Infantry, suffered a staggeringly high casualty rate of fifty percent – roughly one thousand men died in his regiment of approximately two thousand.⁷⁵ Although death during wartime is anticipated, the way in which it came was frequently unexpected. During the 511th regiment’s two-week siege in Leyte as cargo planes were dropping food crates for the American soldiers, a horrifying example of this reality took place. While Serling and the rest of his regiment took cover under a palm tree, one of the food crates plummeted from the sky. As it fell through the tree leaves, the enormous crate decapitated one of the 511th regiment’s men, Corporal Melvin Levy, killing him instantly. After this nightmarish incident which unquestionably made death seem both highly uncertain and patently absurd, Serling led the burial services for the deceased Levy, who like Serling, was a

⁷³ Ibid., 280

⁷⁴ Ibid., 449

⁷⁵ Leo Kocher, “511th Casualties & Medals,” <http://users.owt.com/leodonna/511-CAS-WWII..htm> (accessed April 10, 2013)

Jewish New Yorker.⁷⁶ During the war, the overwhelming, omnipresent possibilities of death, disaster, and tragedy could even come in the form of a food crate descending from the sky.

While Serling witnessed countless deaths, such as Corporal Levy's, he also inevitably had several close calls that could have easily resulted in his own demise. In one instance, during the Battle of Manila, Serling spotted a Japanese soldier who was staring back at him with his rifle ready and aimed to fire right at him. But before the Japanese soldier pulled the trigger, another American soldier intervened and shot Serling's potential killer, saving him from an early death. While Corporal Levy was freakishly killed by a supply crate, Serling found himself unexpectedly saved by no merit of his own. Why did Levy die and Serling survive? Death, survival, and heroism in combat seemed to be all too arbitrary in the real-life fields of battle.

In their published work, Grinker and Spiegel explained how battle fatigue and its ensuing psychological problems were not exclusively the result of intense and prolonged periods of combat. One patient who "kept thinking of his dead friend," whose "face constantly appeared before him," provided some evidence of this. After they had given him a small dose of Pentothal, a type of barbiturate, he "expressed a strong desire to return to China" because he "felt guilty about the other soldier's death...and felt guilty about leaving the squadron with the job unfinished," while he also expressed how "the Chinese people were the only ones who appreciated his efforts" and "Americans had no concept of war and didn't care."⁷⁷ In this way, survivor guilt and public indifference could combine to create profound psychological dilemmas.

In a related sense, wartime psychiatrists witnessed how a lack of morale and support could have devastating effects on a combatant's psyche. Enlisted African-Americans, for

⁷⁶ Gordon F. Sander, *Serling: The Rise and Twilight of Television's Last Angry Man* (New York: Dutton, 1992), 45

⁷⁷ Grinker and Spiegel, *Men under Stress*, 281

example, who were segregated and mostly based within the United States during the war, frequently showed even greater amounts of battle fatigue-related symptoms. Just as the previous patient lamented the lack of care and concern for all of his efforts in the United States, the ratio and percentages were even greater amongst African-Americans who had been rewarded for their efforts with continual experiences of prejudice and discrimination at home.⁷⁸ Similarly, women who also participated in the war effort by taking positions in manufacturing and industry and were subsequently laid off also remained relatively under recognized and forgotten. Just as many combatants suffered more intensely because of public indifference and lack of understanding regarding the actual experiences of war, stress-related mental disorders involving racial and sexual minorities were arguably even less publicly recognized due to the fact that their efforts were not nearly as acknowledged to begin in the first place.

Chief Bell's psychological trauma in "Thirty-Fathom Grave" not only illustrates the effects of survivor guilt and the complicated aspects of public understanding and support, it also illuminates the important dynamics of group cohesion during World War II. Psychiatrists' experiences with combatants during WWII further revealed just how vital a unit's camaraderie, cohesion, and sense of community was. Even more powerful than abstract ideals of liberty, democracy, or even hatred for the enemy, group morale and solidarity proved to be what kept the vast majority of soldiers fighting and forging ahead.⁷⁹ Although fighting primarily for each other could effectively sustain units that had lower casualty rates, for those that lost most, or even all their members, the long-term impacts could be devastating. And while military psychiatrist Albert Glass later asserted that "the most significant contribution of World War II military

⁷⁸ Ellen Dwyer, "Psychiatry and Race During World War II," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 61, no. 2, 2006, 117–143

⁷⁹ Herbert X. Spiegel, "Preventive Psychiatry with Combat Troops," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 101, no. 3, 1944, 310–15.

psychiatry was recognition of the sustaining influence of the small combat group,” relying primarily on the group could make a sole survivor particularly susceptible to developing a mental disorder, dramatized in this episode of *The Twilight Zone*.⁸⁰

Psychiatrists noted that if a soldier’s superego unrelentingly identified “with the spirit of friends on the battlefield – both dead and alive – it will remain angry and demanding.” And while those with moderate levels of anxiety were usually able to break free from such psychological torture after proper medical attention in a secured environment, in “the more severe cases...this identification is surprisingly strong” and the “patient stubbornly regards himself as the missing, weak link in his company or platoon.”⁸¹ Although Captain Beecham tries to free Bell from his unrelenting psychological association with the dead members of his former unit, Bell’s severe state of anxiety clearly demands professional attention beyond the abilities of anyone on the ship.

Overall, the efforts and involvement of psychiatrists during WWII helped to solidify many important conclusions regarding the psychology of warfare. Among the most significant were the primacy of group dynamics and the reality that everyone, not merely those with a history of anxiety, was susceptible to developing battle fatigue and other related mental disorders. These crucial observations would help improve understanding and the quality of care in the future. Additionally, the importance of immediate psychiatric attention was also recognized by psychiatrists who noted that the time it took to transport mentally disordered combatants could considerably worsen their anxiety states. Despite these important discoveries,

⁸⁰ Albert J. Glass, “Mental Health Programs in the Armed Forces,” in *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Sociocultural and Community Psychiatry*, ed. Gerald Caplan, *American Handbook of Psychiatry* (New York: Basic, 1972), 995.

⁸¹ Grinker and Spiegel, *War Neuroses*, 91

the long-term impacts of battle fatigue were relatively undervalued and not wholly understood. While psychiatric professionals noticed significant improvement and recovery for those they tended to, the likelihood of symptoms to reemerge and the need for continual care was still relatively underestimated at the war's end.⁸²

While the majority of veterans themselves did not want special care or attention, those suffering from serious mental disorders, such as acute battle fatigue, were helped with the postwar expansion of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the passage of the National Mental Health Act, which established the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in 1946. For Serling, who had experienced the gruesome, horrifying realities of war and death as well as the psychological burden of surviving it, he found various ways to recover from such horrors, particularly through his writing. Psychiatrists similarly noted how a patient who “kept all the experiences to himself and deliberately tried to forget,” continually suffered a “load on his stomach,” but was finally able to progress by choosing “to suffer the pain of remembering first.”⁸³ Unfortunately, for many veterans like Rod Serling and Eugene Sledge, being cured was not something that happened once, but it represented a life-long struggle. Completely forgetting what had happened was impossible. Veterans, in other words, were perhaps the first significant group of postwar Americans who discovered one could not simply, “Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the positive, eliminate the negative, latch onto the affirmative” and not “mess with Mister In-between.”

In his memoir, Sledge explained this phenomenon: “Under that cap were the most ghastly skeletal remains I had ever seen – and I had already seen too many. Every time I looked over the

⁸² Normal Q. Brill and Gilbert W. Beebe, *A Follow-up Study of War Neuroses* (Washington, DC: Veterans Administration, 1955).

⁸³ Grinker and Spiegel, *Men under Stress*, 288

edge of that foxhole down into that crater, that half-gone face leered up at me with a sardonic grin. It was as though he was mocking our pitiful efforts to hang on to life in the face of the constant violent death that had cut him down. Or maybe he was mocking the folly of the war itself: 'I am the harvest of man's stupidity. I am the fruit of the holocaust. I prayed like you to survive, but look at me now. It is over for us who are dead, but you must struggle, and will carry the memories all your life. People back home will wonder why you can't forget.'"⁸⁴ Continually confronting and even occasionally re-experiencing the nightmares of war proved vital for Sledge, Serling, and other veterans who at least partially restored their mental health and continued to develop psychologically. Immersing oneself in a repressed nightmare could be the key to experiencing freedom, release, and growth for the years ahead. In this manner, nightmares did not merely represent a debilitating event or a frightful problem; embedded within them were the necessary and vital elements for personal growth and social progress alike. By Serling seeking to expose the nightmarish realities of a mythologized war and the excessively idealized pictures of American postwar society, technology, family life, consumerism, and suburbia, he was not intending to merely inspire disparagement, derision, and disgust. Rather, as his wartime experiences revealed, the unpleasant and horrifying nightmares that lurk behind the veils of mass-produced, deceitful dream imagery, could potentially reopen the possibilities for future growth, progress, and change for the individual and the nation alike. Throughout Serling's life as a civilian writer, he continued to reflect what WWII veteran Daniel A. McDonald articulated in his published piece, "Out of Uniform: A Strange New World." McDonald writes,

It is not your fault that you came back and they didn't, but you feel guilty for being the one to survive. This feeling will live with you for years to come....Then we begin to realize that all sacrifices are not made in the field of battle...The guns are silent, but there are still wars to fight, wars against disease, poverty, illiteracy,

⁸⁴ Sledge, 270

and injustice. These enemies are still taking their toll of lives and happiness. We are being discharged from one army and folding our uniforms to reenlist in a new army...and fight the battle for success. Although the experience of war has taken something out of each of us, it puts something into us, too. We were children when we entered the service; now we are men. We have more practical knowledge of men and of the whole world...which will help us as civilians to work and vote to keep the world from going into another great conflict.⁸⁵

Just like real combat, success was not guaranteed in these other areas of postwar life, but the causes were certainly worth a uniform change for Serling and millions of other veterans.

⁸⁵ Daniel A. McDonald, "Out of Uniform: A Strange New World," *The Purple Testament: Life Stories by Disabled War Veterans* ed. Don M. Wolfe (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Sons, 1946) 261-262.

Chapter 2

Cold War Space and Technology: A Fertile Frontier or a New Human Wasteland?

In 1961, Yale historian Derek de Solla Price captured many of the prevailing beliefs regarding science and technology during the first decades of the Cold War in his work *Science Since Babylon*. Price argued, above all, for the inherent beneficial progress that comes with the continual expansion of science, increasing the number of scientists, and escalating the amount of federal funding allocated for research and development. “We have the position, then, that in normal growth, science begets more science and technology begets more technology.”⁸⁶ More science and more technology was unquestionably good according to Price, the state department, and for the vast majority of Americans who were busy furnishing their homes and garages with the latest technological gadgets. Capturing the predominant belief that science and technology both inherently improved people’s lives as well as proving and protecting the superiority of American culture, Price’s work reflected David Noble’s observation that because of “both of our ignorance and incessant inculcation by our established institutions,” we have come to believe in a false Darwinian logic as it relates to technological development. Noble later explained how “we believe that the process of technological development is very much like the biological evolution of the species through ‘natural selection’ and because this view is ideological, deeply ingrained as a habit of thought, we rarely if ever actually think about it.”⁸⁷

In this manner, which was also characteristic of the time, *Science Since Babylon* conspicuously lacked serious consideration to the value judgments, moral implications, or

⁸⁶ Derek De Solla Price, *Science Since Babylon* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961) 129-130.

⁸⁷ David Noble, *Progress without People: New Technology, Unemployment, and the Message of Resistance* (Toronto: Between the Lines Books, 1995) 71.

ideological complexities that were, and always are, an intrinsic part of scientific development. Cold War science and technology represented in many ways, a kind of disembodied intelligence. For Price and so many other Americans at the time, science was considered to be free from the baggage of politics and social issues. As Audra J. Wolfe has recently shown, though, this belief was contradicted by the massive amount of defense-driven federal investments in science laboratories and university research at the time. In unprecedented ways, the “idea of ‘open science’ sat uneasily next to the reality of a research infrastructure that was largely backed by...military interests.”⁸⁸ Indeed, military power and scientific advancement became more closely linked than ever before as the “battle for hearts and minds turned all kinds of science – military and civilian, basic and applied, big and little – into proxy areas in which to demonstrate the superiority of the American way of life.”⁸⁹

When the Soviets successfully launched Sputnik 1 into orbit in 1957, a wave of panic swept over American politics and popular culture alike as fears that the Soviets were outpacing Americans in space and science technology were on the rise. In one of many examples of this fear, *Life* magazine published an article in its March 24, 1958 issue detailing how Soviet teenagers were much more studious, self-disciplined, and educated than American teens, who spent most of their time worrying about dating and driving cars.⁹⁰ As a result of this widespread concern, funding for science programs as well as grants and fellowships sharply increased the following years. However, the space race, as the predominant sign of scientific advancement and Soviet superiority to the Americans, remained at the forefront of concerns. The newly formed organization of NASA and the mission to put men on the moon would soon take center stage in

⁸⁸ Audra J. Wolfe, *Competing with the Soviets: Science, Technology, and the State in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013) 5.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 53.

⁹⁰ “Crisis in Education,” *Life* magazine, March 24, 1958.

American Cold War policy. But as Serling's "I Shot an Arrow in the Air" (S1, e15) and several other episodes illustrate, manned space flight was a deeply flawed enterprise from the very outset for the very reason that it sought to prove political and military superiority, rather than attain significant scientific discoveries which might benefit all mankind.

Moreover, the fact that the Department of Defense was also funding huge portions of research and development at General Electric, Westinghouse, RCA, and other major corporations meant that industries could pursue technological innovation with an ever increasing amount of deliberate speed. With the aid of the defense department's budget, a variety of industries looked to develop and invest in technology that could maximize earnings and limit production costs. While American corporations reaped great benefits from these federally allocated funds, they did not always result in improving the lives of working Americans. Consequently, many critics sought to point out that scientific and technological growth did not necessarily equal social or cultural progress. One particularly vitriolic critique came from Philip Wylie, who explained in his 1942 work *Generation of Vipers*, "A people already conditioned psychologically to identify material construction with spiritual progress became, automatically, suckers for the illusion that movement connoted advancement."⁹¹ In "Brain Center at Whipple's" (S5, e33) Serling dramatized how new technology does not automatically bring progress or a better standard of living. Instead, new technology raised new challenges and questions that cannot be answered by merely celebrating its arrival. In these various ways, Serling reminded Americans that technology was not a mere product of evolutionary biology, but had profound implications when it came to socioeconomic class structure, racial issues, and foreign policy.

⁹¹ Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers* (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1996) 225.

“I Shot an Arrow in the Air”

When “I Shot an Arrow in the Air” aired on January 15, 1960, it was *The Twilight Zone*’s fifteenth episode, but already represented the fifth time the subject of space exploration was presented to the home audience, illustrating the urgency and fascination with the space race at the time. The fact that the space race was driven more by a thirst for political and military power, rather than based on scientific concerns, was also dramatized in “The Little People” (S3, e28), which frames the desire for manned space flight in particularly biting fashion. Having crash-landed on a distant planet, one of the crew members, William Fletcher, works on repairing their ship, while Peter Craig scouts the area and happens upon a tiny civilization. Craig quickly inspires fear in them by easily crushing several of their buildings, making him feel god-like in his power. When he returns to the ship, Fletcher announces that he has successfully repaired the damages and they can return to Earth. Craig, however, wants to stay on the planet in order to rule over the “little people” he discovered. After some arguing, Fletcher returns to Earth by himself, leaving Craig behind. After Fletcher leaves, though, an alien spacecraft soon lands on the planet, revealing a life-form much larger than Craig, making him the fearful, subservient subject now. The episode’s final twist at the end reveals the faulty objectives for power that the space race embodied and how instead of asserting man’s strength, his profound ego-fueled weaknesses become more apparent. In a similar manner, “People Are Alike All Over” (S1, e25) also features a crash-landing on a distant planet. The only surviving crewmember explores the surroundings and eventually comes across an alien civilization. He soon finds himself locked him up in a zoo-like cage for public display, revealing the darker meaning of the statement “people are alike all over,” and the colonial ambitions of the United States’ in space. In these episodes, Serling sought to reveal the real intentions and dangers behind space exploration, specifically manned space

flight, and how they were not necessarily the missions of science, peace, and knowledge they were being purported as.

Airing less than three years after the successful launch of Sputnik 1 by the Soviets and not even two years following the creation of NASA in the United States, “I Shot an Arrow in the Air” was filmed in the other-worldly locale of Death Valley, California. The episode begins at a rocket launch site with a view into the control room, full of technicians, flight controllers, and high-tech machinery. Serling introduces his show, first describing the rocket about to take flight: “Her name is Arrow One. She represents four and a half years of planning, preparation, and training, and a thousand years of science and mathematics and the projected dreams and hopes of not only a nation but a world. She is the first manned aircraft into space. And this is the countdown, the last five seconds before man shot an arrow into the air.” Following a seemingly successful launch into space, the camera cuts back to the control room with one flight controller writing “unreported” on a radar map, while two others discuss the progress of the mission and another nervously flips through his charts on a clipboard: “I still don’t understand how we could’ve lost them with all the monitors we have going.” To make matters worse, mission control soon realizes it not only lost sight of the rocket, but completely lost all contact with the crewmembers as well. As one of the flight controllers looks forlornly up at the stars in the night sky, he muses, “I shot an arrow into the air, it landed I know not where. Nursery rhyme for the age of space...Gentlemen, wherever you are, God help you.” Brass instruments play in a crescendo, foreshadowing more dramatic tension to come before the screen fades to black.

This particular episode of *The Twilight Zone* coming on the heels of the previous week’s “Third from the Sun,” which dealt with the idea of other life forms escaping to Earth, returned once again to the topic of space exploration. While these space-themed episodes collectively did

not necessarily seek to condemn outright the aspirations and curiosity to explore space, they did encourage viewers to reconsider, first and foremost, how space exploration was being framed socially and culturally in the United States. In other words, to rethink how the moon was being mass-marketed.⁹² Among the several tropes employed to market space exploration to the public was one already familiar to many Americans – the frontier myth. As De Witt Douglas Kilgore has recently explained in his work, *Astrofuturism: Science, Race, and Visions of Utopia in Space*, “The idea of a space frontier serves contemporary America as the West served the nation in its past: it is the terrain onto which a manifest destiny is projected....But it is also the space of utopian desire. Astrofuturist speculation on space-based exploration, exploitation, and colonization is capacious enough to contain imperialist, capitalist ambition and utopian, socialist hopes.”⁹³ And similar to the frontier of old, space represented a kind of racial rebirth for white Americans in particular, as any representation of other non-white races was basically non-existent in popular portrayals of space.

Television’s very first space-themed show, *Captain Video and His Video Rangers*, clearly had many plot similarities with popular westerns. The introduction to the show even sounded like it could have been written for a western, “Fighting for law and order, Captain Video operates from a secret mountain retreat...Captain Video asks no quarter, and gives none to the forces of evil,” but instead of a sheriff bringing justice and order to a frontier outpost, Captain Video brought morality and peace to a troubled, violent galaxy. In addition, *Captain Video*, which aired every weeknight at seven o’clock from 1949-1955, even included several minute

⁹² For a detailed exploration of this topic, refer to David Meerman Scott’s and Richard Jurek’s *Marketing of the Moon: The Selling of the Apollo Lunar Program* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014)

⁹³ Dewitt Douglas Kilgore, *Astrofuturism: Science, Race, and Visions of Utopia in Space* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 1.

scenes from old westerns in the middle of its productions.⁹⁴ The seemingly seamless aspects between westerns and space, coupled with the marketing possibilities of selling space blasters and other space-themed toys, helped to proliferate the theme of space exploration both on television and in the toy store. Following *Captain Video*, *Space Patrol* (1950-55) *Tom Corbett* (1950-55), and the radio program *Dimension X* (1950-51) soon followed, and represented but a few among several new space-themed shows of the fifties.

Early television writers, toy manufacturers, and marketers were not the only ones who saw this connection between westerns and space. Serious fans of science fiction did too, owing much to their chagrin. Recognizing what they viewed as the rampant degradation of the science fiction genre being sold as merely westerns with space rays, the very first issue of *Galaxy Science Fiction*, released in 1950, satirized this phenomenon. The magazine's back cover featured two excerpts side-by-side, one allegedly from a western and another from a science fiction story. The western excerpt read, "He spurred hard for a low overhang of rim-rock...and at that point a tall, lean wrangler stepped out from behind a high boulder, six-shooter in a sun-tanned hand. 'Rear back and dismount, Bat Durston,' the tall stranger lipped thinly. 'You don't know it, but this is your last saddle-jaunt through these parts.'" Directly next to it was the sci-fi passage, which read, "He cut out his super-hyper-drive for the landing...and at that point, a tall, lean spaceman stepped out of the tail assembly, proton gun-blaster in a space-tanned hand. 'Get back from those controls Bat Durston,' the tall stranger lipped thinly. 'You don't know it, but this is your last space trip.'"⁹⁵ In this way, while framing outer-space as a kind of new western

⁹⁴ David Weinstein, *The Forgotten Network: DuMont and the Birth of American Television* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004) 75.

⁹⁵ Back Cover, *Galaxy Science Fiction* No. 1, October, 1950.

frontier, helped to sell televisions, toys, and the space race itself, it also helped to solidify a niche market for “real” science fiction that was not polluted by westerns.

Aside from children’s television programming, what became known as “space operas,” arguably the most significant representation of space on American television in the fifties was Walt Disney’s “Man in Space.” Originally airing on March 9, 1955, “Man in Space” was both wildly popular and actually based on real science. It was also largely influenced by a series of space exploration issues published by *Collier’s* magazine in the early fifties, as several of the magazine’s contributors eventually worked on both projects. The periodical series began with a bang and declared “Man Will Conquer Space Soon” on its front cover and featured vivid illustrations as well as serious articles by rocket scientists, all making the case for space exploration. Two of the contributing authors in *Collier’s* were aerospace engineer Wernher von Braun and science writer Willey Ley, both of whom were featured in “Man in Space” and quickly became household names during the space race. Aside from Braun and Ley, Disney also hired animator Ward Kimball to create a program which served the dual purposes of promoting manned space exploration as well as his new theme park in California.⁹⁶

The hour-long program briefly detailed a history of rocket technology and how rockets could feasibly propel man into outer-space, but it did so using overt racial typecasting. Citing one of the first uses of rockets at the Battle of Kai-fung-fu in thirteenth century China, the animation depicted Asians with huge oversized teeth and tiny eyes, madly firing rockets at one another back and forth ceaselessly. The episode goes on, though, to describe European contributions to rocket technology in utterly peaceful terms, including the V-2 rockets, which

⁹⁶ “Man in Space” broadcast on *Disneyland*, March 9, 1955 (ABC)

were used by Nazi Germany numerous times to bomb civilian targets during WWII. While the science may have been accurate, the historical and social complexity regarding the use of rocket technology was not. In seeking to promote space exploration, the social message of Disney's production was clear – the Western world only uses rockets for peaceful purposes and the East will only use rockets to perpetuate war and violence. The clear racial and geographical delineation of what became part of Disney's "Tomorrowland," once again fit seamlessly with the cowboys and Indians of Disney's "Frontierland," each representing one of the four themes at Disney's new California park.

"Man in Space" was not just a success with home audiences - President Eisenhower quickly became an enthusiastic fan. After viewing the program in the White House, Eisenhower called Disney's studio the following day to request a copy and proceeded to show the short film to Pentagon officials.⁹⁷ Merely three years later, NASA was created with its chief objective being the very same as the Disney special – to see man in space. And while Disney studios went on to successfully produce other space-themed programs in the fifties entitled "Man and the Moon" and "Mars and Beyond," "Man in Space" continued to be shown to audiences, but in abbreviated form alongside film screenings of *Davy Crockett and the River Pirates*. The connection made by Disney was again made clear, just as it had been on other television programs – "Tomorrowland" i.e. space, is the "Frontierland" of the twentieth century and just like the frontier of old, it is up to American pioneers like Davy Crockett to ensure peace and order. Indeed, as Alan Nadel has succinctly explained, Disney provided a place for America to integrate "its history and destiny, its technology and its geography, its family and industry... where all the significant elements of

⁹⁷ Jim Korkis, "Man in Space" in *USA Today*, December 28, 2011.

that unprecedented integration were white."⁹⁸ Whether it was America's past or future, the Alamo or outer space, Disney made sure any signs of either racial integration or oppression would be completely absent.

By the time John F. Kennedy delivered his acceptance speech to be his party's nominee at the Democratic National Convention in 1960, space exploration already seemed almost inextricably linked to the American frontier. Standing at the podium in Memorial Coliseum in Los Angeles, Kennedy, like so many others before him, summoned frontier mythology to rouse the nation: "I stand here tonight facing west on what was once the last frontier. From the lands that stretch three thousand miles behind us, the pioneers gave up their safety, their comfort and sometimes their lives to build our new West. They were not the captives of their own doubts, nor the prisoners of their own price tags. They were determined to make the new world strong and free -- an example to the world, to overcome its hazards and its hardships, to conquer the enemies that threatened from within and without."⁹⁹ In citing the United States' past success in bringing freedom to the western frontier, Kennedy described what now could be termed the "New Frontier." He declared: "Beyond that frontier are uncharted areas of science and space, unsolved problems of peace and war, unconquered problems of ignorance and prejudice, unanswered questions of poverty and surplus."¹⁰⁰ In this way, Kennedy defined this new frontier as not just space exploration, but included challenges relating to social and economic injustice as well.

⁹⁸ Alan Nadel, *Television in Black-and-White America: Race and National Identity* (Lawrence KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005) 84.

⁹⁹ John F. Kennedy, Democratic National Convention Acceptance Speech, Memorial Coliseum, Los Angeles, California July 15, 1960.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

However, by grouping all these challenges together under the title “New Frontier,” it did not necessarily mean these very separate issues would be dealt with equal vigor. Indeed, as the nation would soon realize, these supposedly joint issues of space exploration, poverty, and social prejudice were far from symbiotic, and would prove to be more mutually exclusive than not in how they were managed.¹⁰¹ While Kennedy was certainly not solely responsible for deprioritizing these other aspects of his New Frontier, political lobbies and social and fiscal conservatives in Congress certainly did not help, a speech he delivered merely four months into his presidency provided more than a clue as to where his new administration’s priorities primarily lie. Speaking to a joint session of Congress, Kennedy now described the nation’s lunar aspiration in very different terms. A manned space flight no longer represented an exclusively peaceful venture, but was in fact “part of the battle that is now going on around the world” and described how “no single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind.” To his credit, however, Kennedy did explain how putting Americans on the moon will demand “a major national commitment of scientific and technical manpower, materiel and facilities, and the possibility of their diversion from other important activities where they are already thinly spread.”¹⁰² While social issues were once seen to have a symbiotic relationship with manned space flight, Kennedy was now alluding to having to sacrifice them.

Conspicuously lacking in Kennedy’s speech, however, were any scientific perspectives or judgements of his recently formed Committee for Space. Indeed, the Wiesner Report, composed by Jerome Wiesner of MIT and several other scientists which made up the President’s Committee for Space, expressly criticized Project Mercury, which had begun under Eisenhower

¹⁰¹ For more information on this topic see Michael Beschloss, *The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev, 1960-1963* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991) and Seymour Harris, *Economics of the Kennedy Years, and a Look Ahead* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

¹⁰² John F. Kennedy, Speech delivered before a joint session of Congress, May 25, 1961.

and ran until 1963. According to their report, the project, owing much to its discredit, merely “strengthened the popular belief that man in space is the most important aim of our...space effort.” In the report, Wiesner and the other committee members explained in no uncertain terms how “a crash program aimed at placing a man into orbit at the earliest possible time cannot be justified solely on scientific or technical grounds.”¹⁰³ The report not only criticized the science behind the project, but also the unnecessary risk of death in the endeavor. By way of speeches as well as policy, it became clear that the new administration would hastily place the irresistible potentialities of prestige and public relations before science and safety.¹⁰⁴ In many ways, the space race became yet another element of Kennedy’s prioritization of foreign policy issues. The fact that several international events in the very first months of his administration, including the failed Bay of Pigs coup attempt as well as Yuri Gagarin’s successful voyage to outer space, meant that the President most likely viewed the potential lunar landing through a kind of foreign policy lens - landing on the moon was the best means to recuperate the international prestige of the U.S. and its foreign policy.

A year and a half later, Kennedy delivered his much more well-known moon speech at Rice University in Texas, but noticeably left out the realistic economic appraisal he had offered to Congress. Speaking to a regional audience, Kennedy was able to brush aside the national economic picture in favor of a local one, as he emphasized job creation in Houston as a result of the space program. In a similar manner, Kennedy’s words also belied the complexity of issues involved in the lunar project, stating that the nation would undertake this objective for the same reason Rice University plays the University of Texas in football – simply “because it is hard.”

¹⁰³ “Report to the President-Elect of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Space,” January 10, 1961, NASA History Office, pp. 16-17.

¹⁰⁴ For more information on this topic refer to Walter A. McDougall’s *The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age* (New York: Basic Book Publishers, 1985).

And instead of the moon being prey to “a hostile flag of conquest,” the United States, just like the pioneers of old, will come bearing “a banner of freedom and peace...and instruments of knowledge and understanding.”¹⁰⁵ Once again, Kennedy returned to this classic motif of a free and peaceful frontier.

In the coming years, space exploration did indeed take front and center, even to the detriment of these other social issues once alluded to by Kennedy. In this way, the “New Frontier” would in practice come to embody, almost exclusively, space exploration. And as historian James Patterson explained, the Kennedy administration “devoted only sporadic attention to domestic affairs and...his administration, hamstrung by Congress, accomplished little of significance in the realm of social legislation. In this respect...there were no new frontiers here.”¹⁰⁶ This particular episode of *The Twilight Zone* dramatized many of these issues wrapped up in America’s lunar ambitions, tackling the space-as-frontier mythology, as well as the notion that American pioneers are the inherent purveyors of peace and freedom.

As “I Shot an Arrow in the Air” continues, the astronauts find themselves on a hot, dry, rocky, and desolate terrain when the Colonel in charge of the mission sets to write the mission’s first log in his book: “First entry, log, Arrow One, Colonel R.G. Donlin commanding. We have crash landed on what appears to be an uncharted asteroid, cause of malfunction and ultimate crash unknown. There was an explosion. The electrical system went out. That’s all any of us remember...any of us being flight officers Corey and Pierson and navigator Hudak, who has been seriously hurt, and myself. The rest of the crew – dead. There is very little left of the aircraft. The radio is gone. The bulk of the supplies have been destroyed in the crash. And as of

¹⁰⁵ John F. Kennedy, Address at Rice University on the Nation’s Space Effort, September 12, 1962.

¹⁰⁶ James Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 468.

this moment, there is little certainty that we have been tracked and our whereabouts known...”

Just then flight officer Corey snatches the log book from Colonel Donlin, telling him that “this is no time to write your memoirs.” The colonel, reprimanding Corey’s insubordination, angrily tells him that they are still a crew and still need to follow protocol and command. As Donlin tends to the injured Hudak, giving him some water to drink, Corey protests once again, claiming that Hudak is going to die anyway and the men should conserve the mere five gallons of water they have left. As the men unpack their tools to dig graves for their dead crewmembers, Pierson calls attention to the sun looking very similar as it does from Earth, concluding that wherever they landed must be on an asteroid in the same orbit as Earth’s. After Hudak breathes his last breath and adds to the mission’s death count, Pierson catches Corey trying to steal the water at Hudak’s side, leading to a fight – “For the record Corey, there’s just three of us now, and the big problem is going to be to stay alive, I mean, the three of us – but if I catch you filching just once more, just once, I’ll kill you!” and Corey quickly retorts that the same applies for him.

Right away, the episode makes it clear that these space pioneers are not necessarily the living embodiments of peace, knowledge, and understanding – neither resembling Captain Video, nor a Disneyfied Davy Crockett. Already faced with several casualties and potentially even more due to the desperate lack of resources, the crashed crew illustrates some of the complicating factors involved with manned space flight. First and foremost, Serling explores the fact that when it comes to human survival, lofty ideals of peace and freedom only go so far, especially when resources are desperately insufficient, reflecting in many ways what Amitai Etzioni outlined in his scathing indictment of the space race, *The Moon-Doggle*. Etzioni’s book, published in 1964, argues among many other things, that just as much, if not more “could be achieved on the moon by robots, who do not eat or drink; who require no return ticket; and who

can be sent up regardless of the safety margin.”¹⁰⁷ By obsessively pursuing manned space flight through a “cash-and-crash” approach, rather than by satellites or robots, the U.S. was spending approximately ninety-eight percent more than it really needed to, while also unnecessarily risking human lives and taking away resources from other equally important projects.

This particular episode of *The Twilight Zone* also clearly comments on the under acknowledged barrenness and poverty on Earth, particularly with regard to the United States where resources are supposedly abundant. While the American frontier described by television shows, Walt Disney, and the President at the time made it seem like an enviable place to live, bursting with peace and freedom, it quickly becomes apparent in this episode that the new frontier, much like the old, is actually a place prone to violence, desperately lacking certain resources. In this way, while the mythological frontier was seemingly inextricably tied to space exploration, Serling illustrates how the actual American frontier, as well as the nation as a whole, truly is connected to the space race with regard to resource management and distribution. This very issue was raised by the Nobel Prize winner in physics, Polykarp Kusch, when he testified before the Senate Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences in 1963. Kusch deplored what he saw as the short-sighted funneling of resources away from earthly needs to put men on the moon, and even specifically mentioned water resources as a woefully overlooked issue: “I think a real challenge to our technology and science is to develop sources of water and techniques...which would halt the drop in the water table, and perhaps restore it to previous levels. I think we are under a moral obligation not to bequeath to our successors an arid continent.”¹⁰⁸ And while Kusch advocated for more attention be paid to other scientific fields,

¹⁰⁷ Amitai Etzioni’s *The Moon-Doggle: Domestic and International Implications of the Space Race* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 14-15.

¹⁰⁸ Polykarp Kusch quoted in Etzioni’s *Moon-Doggle*, pp. 8-9.

such as oceanography, his critiques were equally as relevant to the largely forgotten need to address a variety of other economic and social issues throughout the United States and the world – the now abandoned fragments of the New Frontier.

After Corey and Pierson each explore a several mile radius of the terrain, nighttime falls on the mysterious celestial rock. When Corey returns but Pierson does not, the colonel angrily tells Corey that he ordered them to stick together. After seeing Corey hurriedly gulping water down from his canteen, Donlin questions him how he came back with even more water than when he set out. Corey explains how he took Pierson's water because he found him face-down on the ground dead. Donlin, remaining skeptical of Corey's credibility, orders Corey to show him the whereabouts of Pierson's body. The men head out with the colonel, gun-in-hand, following behind Corey.

Along their way, the men stop to take a brief water break. Corey, pretending to tie his boot laces, reaches for a rock as he is clearly giving thought to killing his commanding officer. Before he can, though, the colonel orders him to keep moving and they make their way down to the valley where Pierson is supposedly lying dead. When they reach the spot, Pierson is nowhere to be seen. "Well this is where he was. I swear this is where he was...he must have crawled away," Corey says. The colonel, in disbelief, exclaims, "You said he was dead...you were so sure he was dead, Corey...did you do anything for him at all? Did you check him? Did you do anything for him, Corey, or did you just steal his water and make a beeline back?!" Corey only continues to insist that he genuinely thought Pierson was dead when he saw him lying there in the valley.

In dramatizing a space mission gone wrong, Serling invites the home audience to question the notion that humans, Americans or otherwise, are aptly suited to spread peace

throughout the galaxy. Once again, the course of events in this episode reflects an observation later articulated by Etzioni: “As man moves deeper into space, he is not just advancing as an explorer or entrepreneur, he is also projecting his international problems into a new environment.”¹⁰⁹ The fact that the space race was unquestionably part of the Cold War, despite efforts to market the mission as being above politics, meant that space itself would be subject to human “baggage,” particularly the mismanagement and fight for resources. The fact that the episode’s characters are already turning against each other with both suspicion and firearms, illustrates the absence of humanitarianism in manned space flight, and instead, the predominance of militarism and a budget largely backed by the Department of Defense.

Colonel Donlin persists on ahead, repeatedly calling out for Pierson, eventually finding him lying on his back with blood on his forehead, seemingly from Corey smashing him with a rock. Pierson, clearly on the verge of death and struggling to speak, draws three intersecting lines in the sand with his finger, two horizontal and one vertical. Unsure of what the symbol means, Donlin makes his way up the mountain to try and see what Pierson might have been trying to tell them. But before he makes it to the top, Corey picks up the colonel’s gun that he left behind and explains how two men can live for five days with the resources they have but one could live for ten. He fires the gun at Donlin and kills him instantly. Unfortunately for Corey, the canteen lying next to Donlin’s corpse is completely empty as the bullet penetrated it before penetrating Donlin, emptying out all the water. Corey, now dialoguing with the colonel’s dead remains, tells him, “you brought the book to the wrong place, you brought protocol, the chain of command, and the numbers, and none of them fit here...this is a jungle where only the tough animals survive, and they don’t do it according to the rules. You know your trouble colonel? You were looking for

¹⁰⁹ Etzioni, 114.

morality in the wrong place.” Although Corey still is unaware that he is on Earth, the mere fact that he thinks he is in some other part of the universe most likely incapable of sustaining life, the desperate needs of man become even more pronounced and evident. As a result, explorers like Corey become especially vulnerable and potentially destructive, even when there are good intentions at first. In this way, the negligence, manipulation, and selfishness regarding both resources and our fellow man on earth, will not be cured by exploring space, but will only be all the more intensified.

Corey makes his way up the mountain and takes one last look at the two men’s bodies he killed. Serling’s voiceover comes in: “Now you make tracks, Mr. Corey. You move out and up like some kind of ghostly Billy club was tapping at your ankles and telling you that it was later than you think. You scabble up rock hills and feel hot sand underneath your feet and every now and then take a look over your shoulder at a giant sun suspended in a dead and motionless sky like an unblinking eye that probes at the back of your head in a prolonged accusation...Mr. Corey, last remaining member of a doomed crew, keep moving. Make tracks, Mr. Corey. Push up and push out because if you stop – if you stop, maybe sanity will get you by the throat, maybe realization will pry open your mind and the horror you left down in the sand will seep in. Yeah Mr. Corey, yeah, you better keep moving. That’s the order of the moment. Keep moving.”

Corey’s constant need to keep moving while he absorbs all the resources around him, reflects the hurried, strenuous pace of the United States’ own mission to propel man onto the moon. As Corey staggers along, the camera becomes increasingly shaky, reflecting both Corey’s physical exhaustion and unstable mental state. He looks over the edge of the mountain, begins laughing hysterically, and finally recognizes what Pierson was trying to draw – telephone poles. The camera pans, revealing telephone wires, a tour bus driving by below, and a sign for Reno,

Nevada –finally revealing the men never made it to outer space but merely crash-landed right back on Earth. “Practical joke perpetrated by Mother Nature and a combination of improbable events. Practical joke wearing the trappings of nightmare, of terror, of desperation. Small human drama played out in a desert ninety-seven miles from Reno, Nevada, U.S.A., continent of North America, the Earth, and of course – *The Twilight Zone*.”

As this episode illustrates, putting men in space did not mean leaving behind the baggage on Earth. Instead, like the men in this episode, manned space flight could seek the outer reaches of space but as long as fighting for resources, military strength, and power remained primary concerns on Earth, explorers would always crash right back into them no matter where they landed. Despite all the political speeches, Disney specials, and children’s shows, Serling sought to dramatize how the space race really was never primarily about utilizing resources wisely or being scientifically sound and practical or spreading peace. Indeed, NASA’s current website openly admits now that the landing on the moon was “first and foremost political.”¹¹⁰ Yet, one must again question political effectiveness here and who exactly is defining what is, in the words of Kennedy, “impressive,” particularly as it relates to the Cold War and American foreign policy. While Kennedy proclaimed that space exploration has a profound “impact...on the minds of men everywhere, who are attempting to make a determination of which road they should take,” there are many reasons to doubt such a claim.¹¹¹ Indeed, as Etzioni, among many others at the time, pointed out: “Heading the list of values of the developing nations are...economic, social, and political progress,” especially in severely impoverished countries. Moreover, because much of the third world was non-white, they are also very concerned with our race relations: “Nothing we

¹¹⁰ Paul D. Lowman, Jr., “Our First Lunar Program: What Did We Get from Apollo?” October 17, 2007. http://www.nasa.gov/centers/goddard/news/series/moon/first_lunar_program.html

¹¹¹ Kennedy, Address before a Joint session of Congress, May 25, 1961.

can do in outer space will substitute for the impression we give by our failure to accept the colored people of our country. If we are really concerned with the ‘impression’ we make on other nations...we must succeed in introducing reforms in this country, both on economic and social fronts...”¹¹² In this way, the forgotten aspects of the New Frontier which once alluded to such issues, looked very similar to the rocky, desolate terrain incidentally explored by American astronauts. By using space as a kind of extreme version of white flight, the United States of the sixties, neglected these social issues which would require even more struggle and desperate demonstrations before Washington would take another look at their own unforgiving desert.

The use of the frontier image with regard to the space race was at best misguided and premature, at worst, it was a gross mischaracterization. In a practical sense, the “settling” of the historical frontier was, to a large extent, about gaining resources and making them accessible to Americans back east. As David Potter pointed out, with regard to the nineteenth century frontier, “If we are to appreciate the links with the past, we must recognize...that one of the key principles was...the constant endeavor of government to make the economic abundance of the nation accessible to the public...In the early nineteenth century the major form in which abundance presented itself was the fertility of unsettled land. For a people of whom 90 percent followed agricultural pursuits, access to abundance meant opportunity to settle the new lands...it became clear that access to soil did not mean access to wealth unless it was accompanied by access to market...the market was the source of wealth to which access was needed.”¹¹³ Potter concluded that the “frontier ceased to operate as a major force in American history not when it disappeared – not when the superintendent of the census abandoned the attempt to map a frontier

¹¹² Etzioni, 158.

¹¹³ David Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954) 123-124.

boundary – but when the primary means of access to abundance passed from the frontier to other focuses in American life.”¹¹⁴ In this way, the supposedly “new frontier” never truly even opened in the first place in that it had not yet proven to have the economic potential western lands once carried. Indeed, American cities could arguably be more accurately described as the new frontier in that they offered more practical, economic potentials for most Americans than western lands or the moon in the twentieth century. The moon was never presented in a practical way as the “New Frontier” in that it did not seem to hold, at least not yet, much economic opportunity for the general public at large. Indeed, just as Wallace Reid, a WWII veteran remarked with regard to the cost of war, the same could be said with armed space flight: “When you and I divide the cost of childbirth into the cost of firing one gun for eight hours, we find that the country could pay for bringing three hundred babies into the world with the money it spent in that one day.”¹¹⁵ And merely one year after the successful moon landing, a young Gil Scott-Heron released his first studio album and struck a similarly critical, rather than celebratory tone in his song “Whitey on the Moon.” He sang,

A rat done bit my sister Nell
(With Whitey on the moon)
Her face and arms began to swell
(And Whitey's on the moon)
I can't pay no doctor bill
(But Whitey's on the moon)
Ten years from now I'll be payin' still
(While Whitey's on the moon)
The man just upped my rent last night
(Cause Whitey's on the moon)
No hot water, no toilets, no lights
(But Whitey's on the moon).¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 160.

¹¹⁵ Wallace Reid, “A Marine on the Cost of War,” *Purple Testament*, 305-306.

¹¹⁶ Gil Scott-Heron, “Whitey on the Moon,” first appeared on *A New Black Poet - Small Talk at 125th and Lenox* (Flying Dutchman/RCA, 1970)

Indeed, rather than serve as a frontier bursting with the potential to increase the amount of accessible resources to the public, manned space flight was perhaps more accurately depicted by both Scott and Serling as a kind of Death Valley for national resources.

“Brain Center at Whipple’s”

If “I Shot an Arrow into the Air” explored the frontier of space exploration, “Brain Center at Whipple’s” looks at the frontier of technology, specifically with regard to the advent of computers. In a related way, “From Agnes with Love” (S5, e20) tells the story of a computer programmer who becomes the object of the computer’s romantic infatuation and a kind of prisoner to the machine. Serling concludes that “machines are made by men for man's benefit and progress, but when man ceases to control the products of his ingenuity and imagination he not only risks losing the benefit, but he takes a long and unpredictable step into... *The Twilight Zone*.” Another episode, “A Thing about Machines” (S2, e4), features a food critic named Bartlett Finchley who lives alone and is constantly having trouble with his appliances and machines. He continually calls upon repairmen to fix his unruly machinery, but the problems continue to worsen as his own appliances order and chase him out of his own house. Eventually, Finchley’s car takes on a life of its own and chases him until he falls into his pool and drowns. In all these episodes, the possibilities for machines to actually exert more control over humans, than humans exerting more control over machines, is dramatized with horrifying results.

On the night of May 15, 1964, *The Twilight Zone*’s “Brain Center at Whipple’s” touched upon this theme as well. The episode opens with Wallace V. Whipple, the owner of a manufacturing corporation, and William Hanley, the plant’s chief engineer, viewing the 1967 year-end report on a projector screen. Intended to be disseminated to the families and stockholders of the Whipple Corporation, the short film stars Whipple himself, who describes his

corporation as one that “only takes steps forward.” The film subsequently shows the Whipple Corporation’s assembly lines and various plants throughout the country, citing how even just one plant impressively employs 34,827 men. After discussing the Whipple Corporation’s supposedly laudable employment numbers, he walks over to introduce his stockholders to a new piece of machinery, the X-109B14, a “modified, transistorized, totally automatic assembly machine...” He boasts how this new piece of technology will eliminate 61,000 costly jobs, seventy-three outdated machines, 81,000 man hours per eleven workdays, and 4,000,000 dollars in expenditures for employee insurance, hospitalization, welfare, and profit participation each year. Within a mere six months, he declares, Whipple’s factories will be completely mechanized and automated, operating from a “brain center.”

When the short film ends, Whipple stands back to take a moment to admire his audio-visual creation, stating that the film “speaks for itself.” Hanley, noticeably underwhelmed, merely responds that “it does indeed” and asks him if he really expects to automate the plants within six months’ time. After Whipple responds that it could be even sooner, he explains how a lot of items around the factory will be going in the trash heap, such as time clocks, as workers will no longer be punching in and out. After Hanley protests that these changes will result in a lot of unemployment for his workers, Whipple, noticeably unbothered, responds, “That, unfortunately, is progress, Hanley. You know you’re a solid man when it comes to assembly line planning, but when it comes to the aforementioned progress...you’re a foot-dragger.” Whipple walks over to his new machine, addressing it as “sweetheart,” and excitedly says how they will be spending so much time together. Meanwhile, Hanley stands in the background, hands in his pockets, with a look of worried disgust as he observes Whipple playing with this foreign contraption while Serling introduces the episode: “These are the players, with or without a

scorecard: in one corner, a machine; in the other, one Wallace V. Whipple, man. And the game? It happens to be the historical battle between flesh and steel, between the brain of man and the product of man's brain. We don't make book on this one, and predict no winner, but we can tell you that for this particular contest there is standing room only – in *The Twilight Zone*.”

In this particular episode, Serling explores the social impacts of technology, another kind of postwar American “frontier.” And just as the frontier was used as an image of American opportunity and ingenuity in terms of territorial expansion and space exploration, technology seemingly also represented another kind of “untapped frontier” bursting with new possibilities. While several different segments of the population, including manufacturers, marketers, and the defense industry, celebrated nearly any kind of technological innovation that could be sold as a consumer good or used for national defense, a substantial amount of uneasy criticism could be heard from various fiction writers and industrial workers at the time. Indeed, the topic of automation served as the subject matter for Kurt Vonnegut's first novel *Player Piano* (1953) and much of Philip K. Dick's early works, while also creating enough of a national stir to prompt two separate congressional hearings on the topic of automation in the fifties alone. Like *The Twilight Zone*'s Wallace V. Whipple, many business executives, such as the Vice President of Ford, welcomed in the new age with a kind of calm confidence: “Automation is just another normal step in our continuous technological progress. Certainly, such progress will create changes. But progress in itself is change - a change always for the better.”¹¹⁷ The impact that automation had on workers and the general public, however, proved to be much more complex than a mere “step forward.”

¹¹⁷ Statement of D.J. Davis, Vice President of Ford Motor Company, in “Automation and Technological Change: Report of the Joint Committee on the Economic Report to the Congress of the United States,” January 5, 1956 (Washington: The United States Government Printing Office, 1956) 58.

Like so many other issues impacting the United States during the early Cold War, automation technology could be traced largely back to World War II. As *Electronics*, the industry-trade magazine explained, the field of electronics during wartime had undergone “a period of extraordinary creativity and growth. Under the stimulus of a multi-billion dollar flow of funds, it changed from a timid consumer-oriented radio industry into a heroic producer of rugged, reliable military equipment.”¹¹⁸ The emergence of the digital computer, which was initially designed for measuring and calculating ballistics and to analyze atomic bombs, was arguably the most significant of these wartime developments. In 1944, Franklin Roosevelt, already looking forward to peacetime, wrote a letter to Vannevar Bush, the Director for the Office of Scientific and Research Development during the war, inquiring as to the potentialities of scientific innovation for civilian life in the future. Recognizing that the war itself would be won or lost largely because of technological innovations and projects, including the Manhattan Project of which Bush was a part, the President optimistically stated: “New frontiers of the mind are before us, and if they are pioneered with the same vision, boldness, and drive with which we have waged this war we can create a fuller and more fruitful employment and a fuller and more fruitful life.”¹¹⁹ Although Bush’s response did not arrive before President Roosevelt passed, it was received by President Truman in July the following year. His report, entitled *Science: The Endless Frontier*, struck a similarly optimistic tone and explained how the “pioneer spirit is still vigorous within this nation. Science offers a largely unexplored hinterland for the pioneer who has the tools for his task. The rewards of such exploration both for the Nation and the individual are great. Scientific progress is one essential key to our security as a nation, to our better health,

¹¹⁸ *Electronics*, April 17, 1980, 153.

¹¹⁹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Letter to Vannevar Bush. Office of Scientific and Research Development, November 17, 1944.

to more jobs, to a higher standard of living, and to our cultural progress.”¹²⁰ While Bush’s report went into much greater detail as to how scientific research should be conducted and funded in the future, the emphasis placed on jobs by both his response and Roosevelt’s initial inquiry were indeed instructive – among the most important aims of science and technology was in providing work for the general American public. Bush qualified his statements, though, adding that science, “by itself, provides no panacea for individual, social, and economic ills. It can be effective in the national welfare only as a member of a team, whether the conditions be peace or war.”¹²¹ In this way, Bush reminded the President that science and technology should never just be pursued as ends in and of themselves, but remain in cooperation with the team of humanity.

In this way, Bush’s qualification points out how both political and private business rhetoric celebrating “technological progress” could potentially obfuscate as much as illuminate issues at hand. And while almost any kind of state regulation could be seen as a suspiciously socialistic overreach in the context of the Cold War, continual government funding of major private industries was for the most part above suspicion. In 1964 alone, the same year this episode aired, a whole two-thirds of research and development costs in the electronic equipment industry, including that of GE, Westinghouse, RCA, AT&T, Philco, and IBM, was financed by the federal government.¹²² But by aligning technology with the mythological frontier, rhetoricians concealed the central role the federal government played in the development of both. It also enabled Cold War pundits the means to have lengthy discussions without having to mention actual political or corporate policies. The development, promotion, and sale of technology could be seen as inherent patriotic good for the nation, while also sustaining the

¹²⁰ Vannevar Bush, *Science: The Endless Frontier*, A Report to the President by Vannevar Bush, Director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, United States Government Printing Office, July 1945.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Edwin Mansfield, *The Economics of Technological Change* (New York: Norton, 1968) 56.

belief that free market capitalism existed in the United States. In this way, the pervasive celebration of technological innovation foreshadowed assertions that market forces are inherently good in relation to society. Although both technological development and market trends were profoundly shaped by state policy throughout the Cold War and after, isolating them from private and public sector decision-making, gave them a seemingly natural, if magical, allure.

In their respective letters, President Roosevelt and Vannevar Bush each proudly mention the impressive historic record of science to create new industries and lines of work, such as automobile manufacturing. However, no mention was made with regard to the fact that industries themselves did not necessarily share these same goals of universal employment – a fact that Roosevelt’s unpopular predecessor, Herbert Hoover, learned the hard way. Instead of job creation being business owners’ consistent and primary goal, they could be expected to principally seek to increase their own profits, while limiting expenditures. In the view of corporations, then, workers could be seen as more of a burden, an expense, and a liability, rather than an asset. And while federally-funded wartime manufacturing created many new job opportunities for Americans in the forties, the increasingly automated manufacturing plants after the war posed a whole new set of questions and dilemmas for future generations. What continually persisted without much serious challenge, though, was the close relationship between private industry and federal funding, as well as the continual promotion of new technology as a benefit to society in general.

“Brain Center at Whipple’s,” however, sought to examine this notion that the technological frontier of postwar America was a good in and of itself, although new forms of technology were constantly touted as such. Rather, the technological frontier would only be as “good” as its ability to improve the standard of living for average Americans. In a similar

manner to *The Twilight Zone's* treatment of space, the postwar technological frontier looked ominously ambivalent – it could help or seriously hinder the distribution and creation of new wealth and opportunities, depending on how it was being managed. In this way, technology was not offered up as some kind of Promised Land or as the inherent representation of “progress,” as Whipple described it. Instead, Serling encouraged his viewers to consider technology in terms of its ability, both potential and real, to create work opportunities, wealth, and to raise the standard of living for the general public, not just CEO’s.

As the episode returns, Whipple tells Hanley that he is “holding on tight to this 19th century,” while Hanley responds that it is not the nineteenth century he is hanging onto, but principles of loyalty and labor. Whipple coldly retorts that if Hanley feels such remorse over the changes, he should have a sign made for his desk stating, “Mr. Walter Hanley, plant manager in charge of regrets.” Hanley argues, though, that by replacing men with machines he will be exchanging “efficiency for pride...craftsmanship, what a man feels when he makes something.” Whipple scoffs at such a statement, stands up from his desk chair and gets right in Hanley’s face: “What the devil can I do with pride?! Can I, bottle it, wrap it, produce it? I’m not selling pride, I’m selling product.” After Hanley mentions how Whipple’s father ran the plant for forty years in an efficient manner but also with “goodwill” toward his employees, Whipple again scoffs at Hanley’s remarks, stating that while his father doubled the size of the plant, his competitors, who perhaps were less concerned with the “goodwill and welfare” of his employees, quadrupled theirs. Whipple says that other factories were able to outpace his father’s because they were more willing to mechanize their factories and also did not have “plant managers who went off into a crying jag every time a pink slip was attached to a time clock.” After Whipple discusses with his

foreman, Dickerson, how his workforce will be laid off in four months, two technicians arrive to install the new machinery in the factory.

Now that the computers are set up and operable, Hanley and Dickerson can do little but look and reflect upon the steel and blinking lights that signal the end of a lot of careers. Dickerson breaks the silence and asks Hanley, “Ever notice how it looks like it had a face? An ugly face. A miserable ugly face. Whipple, he thinks it’s a machine. It’s not a machine, it’s an enemy. It’s an opponent. I swear we’ve got to hate a thing like this!” Undoubtedly feeling helpless as to the plant’s future as well as his own, Dickerson ends up at a local bar and drinks himself into a stupor. With slurred speech and outstretched hands, he asks the bartender if he knows what these are, “pair of hands,” the bartender simply replies. “You know what else they are...they’re obsolete, they’re off the market. They’re like wooden wagons trying to roll down a freeway. Flesh and bone and muscle and nerve, but that don’t cut mustard anymore,” slamming his fists down on the bar. After telling the bartender that he is going to turn the machine into mere “nuts and bolts,” Dickerson enters the plant in his drunken state, set on destroying Whipple’s new profit-boosting device. Before he does so, however, Whipple is informed of his presence and confronts Dickerson, reprimanding him for breaking and entering. After Dickerson states that he has worked there for thirty years and has rights at the factory, Whipple, not missing a beat, tells him bluntly, “You’re drunk, disorderly, and trespassing on private property, and therefore subject to arrest!” After Dickerson asks his boss who will be there to mourn for him at his own funeral, Whipple ignores the question and instead gleefully describes all the advantages his machine has over men such as Dickerson, specifically that it does not age or need paid vacations, reflecting what one of Kurt Vonnegut’s characters expressed in his first novel *Player*

Piano, “He would make a good lamp post if he'd weather better and didn't have to eat.”¹²³

Dickerson shouts back in his gravelly voice that “men have to eat and work...you can't pack 'em in cosmoline like surplus tanks or put 'em out to pasture like old bulls! I'm a man! And that makes me better than this hunk of metal! You hear me?! Better!” Dickerson picks up a lead pipe and starts pounding away at the newly installed computer, causing it to burst into flames. The security guard, unsure of how to handle the situation exactly, asks Whipple what to do, but before he offers an answer, Whipple grabs the security guard's pistol and fires a round at Dickerson. The grimacing factory veteran collapses, addressing the battered machine as he falls: “You see, it took more than you to beat me. It took man,” alluding to the fact that is not so much technology that dehumanizes and devalues man, but other human beings and how they handle technological change.¹²⁴

The climactic confrontation between Dickerson and Whipple dramatizes both the gradual disempowerment of workers, small businesses, and labor unions due to the simultaneous trends of automation and corporate decentralization. Among many corporations transitioning during this period, Ford Motor Company, opened its first automated plants in the fifties, beginning with the Brook Park Plant outside of Cleveland, Ohio in 1952. Recognizing the dramatic shift in labor relations this represented, the United Auto Workers held a convention in March 1953 in order to discuss the impacts of automation on their line of work. The union's resolution declared that if automation was “improperly used, for narrow and selfish purposes” it could “create a social and economic nightmare in which men walk idle and hungry—made obsolete as producers because the mechanical monsters around them cannot replace them as consumers,” calling attention to the

¹²³ Kurt Vonnegut, *Player Piano* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952).

¹²⁴ This violent part of the scene has been deleted in syndicated format, both on online streaming services as well as television reruns of the episode.

need for businesses like Ford to sustain national consuming power.¹²⁵ Meanwhile, in Detroit, Ford's main River Rouge plant went from employing over 100,000 workers in the thirties to merely 30,000 by 1960. As automotive labor historian Stephen Meyer has pointed out, workers at the River Rouge plant "were among the industry's most well-organized, racially and ethnically diverse, and militant. When Rouge workers walked out on strike, the company's entire manufacturing operations crashed to a halt."¹²⁶ In order to avoid more confrontations and controversies, and also to invest in more fully automated factories, Ford shuffled its operations throughout the country, and eventually, to foreign countries throughout the second half of the twentieth century. By 1990, the River Rouge plant's workforce had shrunk to just a little over 6,000.¹²⁷ And while automation did create new positions such as machine operators, their pay at times was less than assembly jobs, although these new workers were part of drastically increasing productivity rates by operating the machines. As Meyer pointed out, an operator was paid \$1.75 per hour and the setter about \$1.85 in Cleveland's new Brook Plant in the fifties, but these were actually lower than the wage rates for some of the machining and assembling jobs in Detroit's River Rouge plant.¹²⁸ In this way, increased productivity and new machinery did not benefit all equally. And as Paul Goodman pointed out at the time, "American society has tried so hard and so ably to defend the practice and theory of production for profit and not primarily for use that now it has succeeded in making its jobs and products profitable and useless."¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Stephen Meyer, "An Economic 'Frankenstein: UAW Workers' Response to Automation at the Ford Brook Park Plant in the 1950s." http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Labor/L_Casestudy/L_casestudy4.htm.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Thomas J. Sugrue, "From Motor City to Motor Metropolis: How the Automobile Industry Reshaped Urban America" http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview5.htm

¹²⁸ Meyer, "An Economic Frankenstein."

¹²⁹ Paul Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd*, 26

To be sure, the impact of automation was not only felt in the automotive industry, but many others as well. Speaking before Congress, James Carey, Secretary-Treasurer of the International Union of Electrical Workers, called attention to how new technologies were impacting electrical manufacturing. Carey cited that in the part of the industry which produces electrical generators, transmitters, distributors, and industrial apparatuses, the number of production workers declined 11 percent and nonproduction workers by 2 percent. Moreover, in the electrical appliance division of the industry, production worker employment dropped 13 percent.¹³⁰ Carey also called attention to the fact that while man-hour output at Westinghouse increased by fifty percent since 1949, wages increased less than half that amount when accounting for inflation. Carey pleaded, “Will business take the lion's share of the benefits of technological progress, as it did in the 1920's, or will society receive a share? Wage and salary increases are an important part of the answer. But if society, as a whole, is to receive the benefits of sharp increases in man-hour output, industry will have to share the benefits of technological progress with consumers through reduced prices.”¹³¹ As for the growing obsolescence of certain positions, Carey advocated that it was the responsibility of the companies themselves to retrain workers for different jobs in automated factories and/or offices: “The cost of retraining such workers, and of maintaining their incomes while they are being retrained, should be considered a regular part of the investment cost of changing over to automation.”¹³² Companies like Westinghouse, however, opted to relocate many of their operations to, among other places, the southern United States because of cheap labor and “right-to-work” laws banning union

¹³⁰Statement of James B. Carey, Secretary-Treasurer, CIO, and President, International Union of Electrical Workers, in “Automation and Technological Change: Report of the Joint Committee on the Economic Report to the Congress of the United States,” January 5, 1956 (Washington: The United States Government Printing Office, 1956) 224.

¹³¹ Ibid, 230-31.

¹³² Ibid, 231.

organization. Following these Congressional hearings and further labor unrest, one resolution materialized in Washington - the Manpower Development Training Act of 1962. This piece of legislation called on companies to retrain workers for other positions instead of simply laying them off. Federal funds to this end, however, as historian James Patterson has noted, “[M]ainly subsidized officials and private interests who provided the training” and “had at best a marginal impact on unemployment.”¹³³

As the episode returns, Whipple asks Hanley if the technicians are downstairs repairing the X-109B14 machine that Dickerson damaged. After confirming that they are, Whipple then shows Hanley an even newer piece of technology he has invested in – a “tape-controlled seven axis,” otherwise referred to as a “sentry.” This machine is designed to oversee plant operations, collecting data on man hours, cost hours, product rejects, etc. While Whipple giddily states that it is “the most sophisticated machine” he’s ever encountered, Hanley only inquires as to how many men will lose their jobs because of it. Whipple disingenuously responds, “Oh well this should please you Hanley, only one, just one...it replaces you.” After Hanley states emotionlessly that the only purpose of him coming to Whipple’s office in the first place was to give him his notice, Whipple coolly responds that he expected as much, knowing Hanley as a “reasonable man” and guarantees Hanley a generous severance payout and pension. Hanley thanks him but offers to give him something as well, delivering a strong back-handed slap to Whipple’s face: “That’s for you, Mr. Whipple, from me. It’s for your lack of sensitivity, your lack of compassion. Your heartless manipulation of men and metals. You can take my severance pay, my pension, and your good-bye speeches and feed them into your machine. Because when I walk away from you, I walk away clean. And that, Mr. Whipple, is one hell of a trick!” As Hanley leaves the office, he

¹³³ Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 467.

soon finds out that even walking away clean means surrendering to Whipple's technology one last time, as he cannot even open the office door without having to scan his I.D. card in the newly installed security device.

The scene is followed by a montage, interspersing clips of manual laborers eating in the cafeteria with Whipple in his office tweaking machinery. As Whipple flips one of the switches on his machines, it cuts to an empty cafeteria and a vacant parking lot, quickly followed by a close-up of Whipple twirling his gold pocket watch. The meaning of the juxtapositions is clear. The obsession with profit margins and technological efficiency is costing people their livelihoods and possibly even their lives. As one of the technicians, a young African-American man, comes by to check in with Mr. Whipple, he states that the incessant equipment checks Whipple has him doing are superfluous. Rather than concur with the technician, Whipple threatens that he is merely employed "for the moment," then demonstrates one of his other machines. This piece of technology can take dictation perfectly, making secretaries obsolete as well as "powder rooms...coffee breaks...work stoppages due to various and sundry inconveniences, such as maternity and that sort of thing." In disbelief, the technician counters, "Inconveniences like maternity? You'll have to forgive me....but if we keep up with this sort of thing we're going to have wonderful products but mighty few people to buy them." Impervious to the technician's counseling, Whipple simply responds that he is not concerned with such matters but merely focused on providing efficiency. The technician states that although the plant can boast a certain level of efficiency, it lacks people, laughter, and everything that makes people feel connected to others. Instead, the plant stands as a lonely, desolate place devoid of life and human vitality. In a kind of rebellious act against the ideals of corporate white America, he tenders his resignation and advises Whipple to run an equipment check on himself before making his final exit. Now

alone again in his office, Whipple tends to the machines he has become infatuated with, only this time something goes wrong. When he flips a switch or pushes one of the buttons, the voices of his former employees can be heard coming through the machine: “Did it ever occur to you, you might be trading efficiency for pride?” “When you’re dead and buried, who do you get to mourn for you?” “I think it’d be a good idea if you ran an equipment check on yourself!” All the machines start to malfunction, buzzing and flashing, with the office door opening and slamming shut, barring Whipple from escaping the repeating, cacophonous electronic chaos.

This scene highlights not only the potential plight of working men in the age of automation, but women as well with explicit reference to “maternity leave.” Indeed, one of the most vocal advocates for working class women at the time was Myra Wolfgang, nicknamed the “Battling Belle of Detroit,” who took issue with Betty Friedan’s brand of feminism and industry alike. Wolfgang proclaimed that the Friedan-endorsed ERA did not go far enough, particularly for full-time working women who had to work in order to just survive.¹³⁴ Wolfgang helped to form the Federation for the Advancement of Women, while also supporting the Network for Economic Rights. Both institutions’ chief objectives included voluntary overtime, child care, maternity protection, welfare reform, and improved labor standards. In Wolfgang’s words, “We, who want equal opportunity and responsibility and equal status for women, know that it is frequently necessary to obtain real equality through a difference in treatment rather than an identity in treatment.”¹³⁵ In this way, working class women also had to be concerned about the supposed advantages automation brought, particularly as it related to health care, child care, and family leave.

¹³⁴ Dorothy Sue Cobble’s *The Other Women’s Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005) 12-13.

¹³⁵ Myra Wolfgang, Testimony before the U.S. Senate, ERA Hearings, May 6, 1970, 52-55.

In the following scene, Whipple walks into the same bar where his now-deceased foreman Dickerson drank himself into a stupor before attacking the plant's machinery. As Whipple takes a seat, Hanley, his former plant manager, is seated on the opposite end of the bar. As he makes small talk with Hanley, asking how his retirement is going, it becomes clear that Whipple, with an unshaven face and loosened necktie, is not quite himself. Whipple soon reveals that he now has been laid off from the plant: "It's not right, Hanley. It's not right. Cold, dispassionate, impersonal...they chuck a man out right in his prime, chuck him out like he was some kind of a part...said that being alone with the machines had warped me. That was the expression they used, 'warped!' It's not fair, Hanley, it's not fair! A man has value! A man has worth! They just snap their fingers, and they bring in a replacement...it isn't fair the way they diminish us."

Whipple had officially become a casualty of his own philosophy and further reflected another historical development, namely that not just manufacturing positions were being automatized, but white-collar office positions as well. Whipple was the personification of Howard Coughlin's declaration before Congress: "There will be serious problems caused by the introduction of automation in offices. Many individuals who have spent their lives acquiring certain skills and have come to believe implicitly in their own indispensability, are in for a rude shock. They will see machines do in seconds work that takes them days and weeks to accomplish. They will see machines replace the jobs they and their coworkers have come to feel are their permanent niches in the office world. A lot of people will lose their jobs. A lot of individuals will be forced to acquire new skills. There will be many new responsibilities placed

on the employers of our country.”¹³⁶ Whipple, having also been deemed “warped” by working alongside machines, reflects what UAW critic Hyman Lumer observed, namely that “the task of keeping an eye on a multitude of instrument panel lights and watching for the faulty performance of tools and machines is one which can be stepped up to the point where it becomes as nerve-racking and exhausting as the hardest physical work.” Backing up his claims with a Yale University study, he proclaimed that the “new machines have eliminated drudgery, but the strain of watching and controlling them makes the workers ‘jumpy.’”¹³⁷ Not only then did automation present problems for those laid off in industrial production, it also created problems for those who were hired. The psychological strain and stress coupled with the lack of human interaction meant that the burden of adapting to this completely new technological frontier would indeed be more on humans, not on machines.

As the camera pans to the window toward the Whipple Manufacturing Corporation plant across the street, it reveals a robot occupying Whipple’s former office, twirling a gold watch just like the former executive. Serling offers his closing remarks: “There are many bromides applicable here – too much of a good thing, tiger by the tail, as you sow so shall ye reap. The point is that too often man becomes clever instead of wise, he becomes inventive but not thoughtful – and sometimes, as in the case of Mr. Whipple, he can create himself right out of existence. Tonight’s tale of oddness and obsolescence from *The Twilight Zone*.”

While postwar corporations such as Ford and Westinghouse excitedly welcomed in the possibilities of this new age of automation, it is clear that working people did not have reason or

¹³⁶ Statement of Howard Coughlin, President, Office Employees International Union, AFL, in “Automation and Technological Change: Report of the Joint Committee on the Economic Report to the Congress of the United States,” January 5, 1956 (Washington: The United States Government Printing Office, 1956) 217.

¹³⁷ Meyer, “An Economic Frankenstein.”

even the ability to always share in this excitement. And in the context of the Cold War, those concerned for the rights of working class Americans were particularly vulnerable to being treated as suspect and espousing Marxian causes. And to be sure, while the age of automation had not yet occurred, Marx himself did comment on how the “instrument of labour, when it takes the form of a machine, immediately becomes a competitor of the workman himself. The self-expansion of capital by means of machinery is thenceforward directly proportional to the number of the workpeople, whose means of livelihood have been destroyed by that machinery.”¹³⁸ But in this particular episode of *The Twilight Zone*, as well as among unions and labor organizers in the United States, it was not so much the fact that automation was, in and of itself, the problem. The vast majority of labor advocates recognized that technology was here to stay, like it or not. But what needed to be more deeply considered were the corporate and political responses to these technological changes. Union leaders urged employers to share with labor the gains in productivity resulting from automation, such as Dick Greenwood who declared, “At this point, the objective is not to block the new technology, but to control its rate and manner of introduction, in order that it is adapted to labor’s needs and serves people, rather than our being servile to it or its victims. It can go either way, and it’s headed the wrong way right now.”¹³⁹ The wrong way Greenwood referred to was how the burden of a rapidly changing economy and labor force was placed more on the public to simply try to stop the bleeding of working class unemployment, or as Philip Wylie put it, “Business was able to kick around and decimate the people and their needs with virtually no punishment, whatever the result.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume One: A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Modern Library, 1906) 470.

¹³⁹ Dick Greenwood, Special Assistant to the International President, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, “Starvin’ in Paradise with the New Technology,” in David Noble’s *Progress Without People: New Technology, Unemployment, and the Message of Resistance*.

¹⁴⁰ Wylie, *Generation of Vipers*, 223.

And while many commentators of the day asserted that technology would create more jobs just like mechanization did in the early 1900s, this was soon shown to be a gross miscalculation. While mechanization in the 20s opened up more opportunities for man to be involved with the making of finished products and not just one extracting raw materials, this spread wealth in different ways. But because one increasingly required access to extremely expensive computer technology in order to be a competitive producer during the postwar period, this severely limited the number of American producers and the amount of people who could be actively involved with production, including small businesses and laborers. As the authors of the Port Huron statement pointed out, “Automation brings unemployment instead of mere leisure for all and greater achievement of needs for all people in the world -- a crisis instead of economic utopia. Instead of being introduced into a social system in a planned and equitable way, automation is initiated according to its profitability...Technology, which could be a blessing to society, becomes more and more a sinister threat to humanistic and rational enterprise.”¹⁴¹

The dual Cold War interests of asserting national superiority with regard to space and technology are both depicted as inherently flawed in these episodes of *The Twilight Zone*. While manned space flight seemingly offered political prestige on the Cold War’s grandest stage, it did not prioritize public concerns, or even scientific ones, in its conduct. Rather than serving as a kind of “new frontier” of possibilities for the public, federal funding was narrowly funneled into supporting the needs of a few men in space, rather than humans on Earth. Space exploration behaved more like a corporation than a scientific institute – it sought primarily to outdo its competition, the Soviets. Moreover, by channeling funds to this end, the United States seriously limited its potential for scientific discoveries in outer space and in other critical fields, such as

¹⁴¹ Students for a Democratic Society, Port Huron Statement, August 1962.

oceanography. And while new computer technology carried promises of asserting economic strength, *The Twilight Zone* explored how economic productivity matters little if it mainly results in laying off workers and shrinking the number of American consumers. In this way, Serling illustrated how human personalities and egos were unnecessarily front-and-center in space exploration, although humans merely served to complicate missions and make them more costly and dangerous. Meanwhile, the disembodied intelligence and production potentials offered by automation technology displaced the human element from the production/consumption cycle. Similarly, by forcing humans arbitrarily into the spotlight of outer space, the United States worked to keep scientific understanding of the rest of the universe in relative darkness. And while space exploration unnecessarily forced humans into the picture, automation technology was forcing them out in a way that neglected public needs. Although automation technology seemingly carried enormous potentials for humans everywhere, such as giving them cheaper access to finished goods and allowing them more leisure time with the ability to follow pursuits other than work, the introduction of new computer technology took more power away from ordinary men and women by separating them from production processes and severely limiting their ability to benefit from new, increasingly efficient technologies. In the words of Wylie, “Starting with the thesis that competition is the essence of democracy...the businessman undertook two main lines of bastardization of that truth. First...was the elimination of competition wherever possible and by all means imaginable. Second, was the establishment of the notion that business competed only with *itself* and never with any other requirement of mankind.” By businesses defining their conduct and responsibilities as only competing with other businesses, they arbitrarily forced the welfare of its workers and the general human population out of the equation. As a result, businesses could more easily justify whatever actions

they took, having shirked most responsibilities, other than out-producing and eventually eliminating their competition. In making humans the focal point of space and by making computer technology the focal point of production and labor, the general human population, along with its needs and desires, was forced to increasingly become spectators rather than contributors to economic and productive processes and formed another part of the postwar American nightmare in *The Twilight Zone*.

Chapter 3

Duck, Cover, and Accuse: Cold War Paranoia Remakes the American Landscape

Although there were plenty of reasons for Americans to celebrate the end of WWII, the postwar era ushered in a host of new challenges for the nation and world alike. Ed Murrow, reflecting on this somewhat ambivalent postwar landscape, declared, “Seldom if ever has a war ended leaving the victors with such a sense of uncertainty and fear, with such a realization that the future is obscure and that survival is not assured.”¹⁴² This questionable survival and obscure future were largely a result of the very forces that brought the war to a close – American nuclear technology and Soviet power. While the Soviets proved to be by far the most critical force in defeating Nazi Germany, the United States’ nuclear power, which brought the Pacific War to an end by decimating the civilian populations and infrastructure of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, foreshadowed some of the ominous moral dilemmas to come. While these dual features of Soviet strength and nuclear technology ruthlessly brought the war to a close, they also introduced unprecedented quandaries and possibilities for future devastation and destruction. In 1949 the United States no longer possessed a monopoly on nuclear technology following the Soviets’ successful test that year. As both superpowers developed hydrogen bombs throughout the 1950s, the victorious alliance between the two nations during WWII seemed increasingly like a distant memory.

Within the United States, national nuclear safety programs attempted to provide a sense of security for Americans, just as hardline anti-Communist policies and politics worked to guarantee the survival and purity of America’s brand of consumer capitalism. Arguably, no two

¹⁴² Ed Murrow, quoted in Paul Boyer’s *By the Bomb’s Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), p. 7.

features of these respective phenomena exemplified these fears more clearly than nuclear fallout shelters and McCarthyism. While McCarthy's tactics and nuclear fallout shelters intended to increase security for Americans, Serling sought to illustrate that the sense of security provided by both these supposed solutions was unfounded in many ways. Moreover, the false sense of security offered by McCarthyism and bomb shelters could actually endanger the lives and collective well-being of Americans all the more. In order to illustrate this, Serling showed how the claustrophobic, constrictive conditions of fallout shelters were also reflected in the repressive and restrictive politics endorsed by the supporters of McCarthyism. Rather than ensuring security, "The Shelter" (S3, e3) and "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street" (S1, e22) argue how the dual resolutions offered by fallout shelters and McCarthyism all but guarantee that the United States will become an intellectually narrower, politically and socially claustrophobic nation, rather than a strong, robust one. In this way, Serling encouraged postwar Americans to more actively consider their individual role in either dismantling or sustaining a free and democratic society.

"The Shelter"

In the third season of *The Twilight Zone*, "The Shelter" aired on September, 29, 1961. Along with this episode, *The Twilight Zone* dramatized nuclear fears in "Third from the Sun" (S1, e14), depicting a family's attempt to escape to Earth from another planet in order to avoid nuclear catastrophe on their home planet. The episode concludes with an ominous open-ending, as it is clear to the audience that the family is merely headed to another planet that is also in danger of being destroyed by nuclear weapons. The episode "Time Enough at Last" (S1, e8) satirized a bookworm's lonesome existence, having survived a nuclear explosion. When the attack occurs, the episode's main character, Henry Bemis, who works as a banker, miraculously

survives the explosion having been in one of the bank's vaults at the time the attack occurred. Realizing he now will be finally left unbothered to read, Bemis excitedly plans his reading schedule, but when he steps on his pair of glasses, his literary-filled hopes are immediately dashed. In these episodes, the attempts to avoid nuclear war through escape, security, or seclusion are depicted as largely futile, as Serling illustrates that the best way to avoid nuclear disaster arguably is to work towards the peaceful coexistence of mankind and to help ensure nuclear weapons will not be used at all.

In a similar vein, "The Shelter" dramatizes the inadequacies of fallout shelters. The episode begins in a suburban home where a surprise birthday party is taking place for Dr. Bill Stockton. After finishing dinner, Jerry, one of the guests at the party, stands up to give a toast, declaring the guests' unanimous love and affection for their "man with the little black bag." While thanking him for his medical service, another guest sarcastically adds how they also owe a debt of gratitude for all the noise and chaos resulting from the doctor having a fallout shelter recently constructed in his basement. The guests all laugh and drink to Jerry's heartfelt speech, but immediately thereafter, the doctor's son, Paul, comes rushing into the dining room explaining that the television just went out after an announcer instructed everyone to turn on their CONELRAD stations. Dr. Stockton, with a distressed look on his face and his after-dinner coffee in hand, goes right to turn on the radio and hears a chilling announcement: "Four minutes ago, the President of the United States made the following announcement, I quote: 'At 11:04 Eastern Standard Time, both our distant early warning line and ballistics early warning line reported radar evidence of unidentified flying objects flying due southeast. As of this moment, we have been unable to determine the nature of these objects, but for the time being, in the interests of national safety, we are declaring a state of yellow alert. The civil defense authorities request that

if you have a shelter already prepared, go there at once. If not, use your time to move supplies of food, water, and medicine to a central place. Keep all windows and doors closed. We repeat, if you're in your home, go to your prepared shelters or to your basement.” The guests, without saying a word, scatter and run back to their respective homes while jets fly overhead. Serling introduces the episode: “What you're about to witness is a nightmare. It is not meant to be prophetic, it need not happen, it's the fervent and urgent prayer of all men of good will that it never shall happen. But in this place, in this moment, it does happen. This is *The Twilight Zone*.”

This particular episode clearly dealt with Cold War fears and paranoia regarding nuclear war, fears which were steadily on the rise throughout 1961. The reemerging Berlin Crisis once again threatened to oust the Western powers from Berlin and give the Soviets sole control over the city. While both sides dug in their heels, Kennedy delivered a speech in late July denouncing Khrushchev's plans, asserting American legality to be there, and reiterating U.S. commitment to the inhabitants of West Berlin. In the same speech, Kennedy also soberly discussed the prospect of nuclear war. After expressing his responsibility to let citizens know “what they should do and where they should go if bombs begin to fall,” Kennedy announced his resolution, “Tomorrow, I am requesting of the Congress new funds for the following immediate objectives: to identify and mark space in existing structures--public and private--that could be used for fall-out shelters in case of attack; to stock those shelters with food, water, first-aid kits and other minimum essentials for survival; to increase their capacity; to improve our air-raid warning and fallout detection systems, including a new household warning system which is now under development; and to take other measures that will be effective at an early date to save millions of lives if needed.” Kennedy continued, striking a more optimistic tone, that in “the event of an attack, the lives of those families which are not hit in a nuclear blast and fire can still be saved--if they can

be warned to take shelter and if that shelter is available. We owe that kind of insurance to our families--and to our country...the time to start is now...With your help, and the help of other free men, this crisis can be surmounted. Freedom can prevail--and peace can endure.”¹⁴³

In tackling the very real potential of nuclear war and the fear of one, Kennedy offered one clear resolution to American citizens – fallout shelters. Moreover, this clear assertion that nuclear security meant having access to a shelter, created such a stir that a national debate would take place throughout local and national media. Several aspects of this heated debate would be at the crux of Serling’s episode, reminding home audiences that while they cannot necessarily dictate American foreign policy, they could dictate and control how they handle the ever-increasing threat of nuclear war in their homes and neighborhoods. In this episode of *The Twilight Zone*, Serling illustrates how placing security above all else and defining it simply as having access to a shelter, could potentially have disastrous results when put into actual practice.

When the episode returns, Dr. Stockton, his wife Grace, and their son work feverishly to gather water, food, and other supplies down to their fallout shelter. When their son runs upstairs to get a tool box, the husband and wife have a moment to discuss the sudden and dire situation privately. Bill tells his wife that even if the object turns out to be a bomb, there is no guarantee that it would land near them. Grace responds, “But if it does Bill, New York is only 40 miles away. And New York’s going to get it. We know that. So we’ll get it too. All of it. The poison, the radiation, the whole mess. We’ll get it.” Her husband tries to assuage her fears saying that they will be safe in the shelter and have plenty of food and water to last them for several weeks. Clearly not comforted by her husband’s words, Grace retorts, “Then what? We crawl out of here

¹⁴³ John F. Kennedy, “Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Berlin Crisis,” July 25, 1961.

like gophers to tiptoe through all that rubble up above? The rubble and the ruin and the bodies of our friends? Bill, why is it so necessary to survive? What's the good of it? Wouldn't it just be better, and easier, just quicker if we just..." Grace begins to sob as her husband explains that their twelve-year-old son is the real reason why they need to survive. Grace wipes the tears from her eyes as Paul comes down the stairs.

In this scene, Grace articulates what Serling himself expressed regarding shelters: "We've been talking, my wife and me about the possibility of building a shelter and we were struck with the moral and ethical problem what would happen if there were an alert sounding...it's my feeling now that if we survive what do we survive for? What kind of a world do we go into? You know if it's rubble and poison water and inedible food and my kids have to live like wild beasts, I'm not particularly sure I want to survive in that kind of a world."¹⁴⁴

And while this viewpoint is dismissed by Bill Stockton in "The Shelter," many public figures and intellectuals expressed similar concerns at the time. President Eisenhower, for example, claimed that if he was in a shelter when nuclear war broke out he would merely walk out, not wanting "to face that kind of a world and the loss of my family."¹⁴⁵ Political leaders were not the only ones commenting on the grim prospects either, as Gerard Piel of the Scientific American claimed, that "the firestorms of a thermonuclear war would work an irreversible disruption of the social and moral fabric of Western Civilization."¹⁴⁶ Geneticist Bentley Glass reflected that "life would be very primitive for the survivors for a long time to come," adding that if "America survived at all...[w]ould the more fortunate lands take pity on the country that

¹⁴⁴ "Bob Crane Interviews Rod Serling, Executive Producer, Writer, Actor, and Host," *The Bob Crane Show*, KNX-CBS Radio, Los Angeles, CA, December 11, 1961.

¹⁴⁵ Eisenhower quoted in Walter Goodman, "The Truth about Fallout Shelters," *Redbook* 18, no. 3 (January 1962), 74.

¹⁴⁶ Gerard Piel, "The Illusion of Civil Defense," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 17, no. 2 (February 1962), 7-8.

first produced and used the atom bomb, and later engaged in the accelerating arms race?”¹⁴⁷

Biochemist Albert Szent-Gyorgyi predicted that American democracy would not prevail if such a nuclear catastrophe occurred and instead “we will have here only a crude, barbaric dictatorship of half cripples.”¹⁴⁸

Bill, on the other hand, gives voice to the more optimistic pro-shelter enthusiasts of the day, including the Kennedy Administration and the Office of Civil Defense who took to developing a national fallout shelter program. Striking a very similar tone to Bill, Steuart L. Pittman, the assistant secretary of defense, called on Americans to have “the courage to face a disaster far enough ahead to have a chance in the crisis” and “to do all they can to take care of the people or children they look out for.”¹⁴⁹ Similarly, in September 1961, *Life* magazine featured a dramatic cover layout replete with a man in a civilian fallout suit alongside big bold letters, “HOW YOU CAN SURVIVE FALLOUT.” The article therein fantastically declared that no fewer than ninety-seven out of a hundred Americans could be saved in a nuclear attack if they took cover in fallout shelters, an estimate that was later renounced by the magazine’s editors in a later article.¹⁵⁰ The same issue also included a letter from President Kennedy stating how the “government is moving to improve the protection afforded you in your communities through civil defense. We have begun...a survey of all public buildings with fallout shelter potential, and the marking of those with adequate shelter for fifty persons or more.”¹⁵¹ In this way, just as

¹⁴⁷ Bentley Glass, “The Biology of Nuclear War,” in *The Fallen Sky: Medical Consequences of Thermonuclear War*, ed. Saul Aronow (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963), 104.

¹⁴⁸ Szent-Gyorgyi quoted in Joseph Roddy, “The Big March for Peace,” *Look* 26, no. 14 (July 3, 1962), 14.

¹⁴⁹ House Subcommittee, Civil Defense – Fallout Shelter Program (1963), 3059.

¹⁵⁰ “A New Urgency, Big Things to Do – and What You Must Learn,” *Life* 51, no. 11, September 15, 1961, 96-97.

¹⁵¹ “A Message to You from the President,” *Life*, September 15, 1961

Kennedy's Berlin speech had done, *Life* magazine was simultaneously promoting shelters in both the public and private sectors.

To be sure, these views were not limited to the OCD, the Kennedy Administration, contractors, and popular middle-brow magazines, they were also articulated by public intellectuals. Roger S. Cannell, of the Stanford Research Institute, claimed that shelters would enable Americans to “rebuild our civilization” and served “to justify the faith placed in us by our own families and by the peoples of the free world.”¹⁵² In all these iterations of pro-shelter discourse, the individual human will and that of the nuclear family to survive, are connected to not only the survival of the United States, but as Herman Kahn argued, the very survival of “Western ideals and institutions.”¹⁵³ Shelters would not merely provide sanctuary to families, but they would guarantee the survival of American ideology. In this manner, the Stocktons' son not only represents the future of their family, but also of American democracy in a world ravaged by nuclear war. The Stocktons will soon find out, however, that their shelter preparations for their family's security do not necessarily guarantee survival and may even jeopardize it.

There is a knock on the Stocktons' door. Jerry, the same friend who had given the toast at the party, frantically explains that he does not have a basement and pleads with Bill to let his family stay in their shelter, “Bill, you've got to help me! You've got to keep my family alive!” Bill, however, does not budge an inch and adamantly retorts, “When that door gets closed and locked, it stays closed and locked...I'm sorry, Jerry, as God as my witness, I am sorry, but I built that for my family!” Jerry, grabbing desperately onto Bill's shirt asks, “What about mine? What'll we do? Just rock on the front porch while we burn to a crisp?” To which Bill replies,

¹⁵² Rogers S. Cannell, *Live: A Handbook of Survival in Nuclear Attack* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1962).

¹⁵³ “Coffins or Shields?” *Time*, February 2, 1962, 15.

“That’s no concern of mine. Right now it’s my family I have to worry about...I kept telling you, Jerry, all of you, get ready, build a shelter. Forget the card parties and the barbecues for maybe a few hours a week...and make the admission that the worst was possible. But you didn’t want to listen. None of you wanted to listen...So now you’ve got to face something far worse!” Bill runs into his shelter, slamming the door and exclaiming, “It’s out of my hands! It’s got to be God! It’s got to be God!” One by one, all of the families that were at the party earlier come to the doctor’s house demanding to be let into his shelter. When his neighbor Marty is not allowed entrance, he rebukes Bill, telling him he may survive but he will also have blood on his hands: “You’re a doctor! You’re supposed to help people!” But Bill stubbornly refuses time and again.

This particular scene dramatizes what Eisenhower’s civil defense director Leo Kogh revealed when he testified before Congress in 1960, namely that many owners did not want their shelters to be made “public knowledge and, therefore, have everyone in the neighborhood rush in and take over.”¹⁵⁴ Indeed, this kind of awareness from shelter owners themselves foreshadowed some of the moral dilemmas soon raised by shelter critics. Among the many derisive metaphors for shelters emerged two particularly powerful ones. The first compared shelters to the Maginot Line, which not only reflected the inefficacy and false sense of security of shelters, but also subtly implied the fact that the barrier could not guarantee safety from one’s neighbors either.¹⁵⁵ The second dominant metaphor was that of a cave. And while many critics of the time argued cave-like shelters were, on a practical level, akin to “burial vaults” or coffins, others raised more psychological concerns. P. Herbert Leiderman and Jack H. Mendelson, for example, alleged that taking cover in a shelter seemed like a way to turn back the evolutionary clock: “It is one matter

¹⁵⁴ House Subcommittee, *Civil Defense* (1960), 47.

¹⁵⁵ Curtis LeMay in House Subcommittee, *Civil Defense* (1960), 156-157.

for man to have evolved from living deep in a Paleolithic cave to the city apartment or the garden home in the suburb, but an entirely different matter to consider whether he can successfully return to the cave.”¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, Erich Fromm and Michael Maccoby sardonically questioned if “this troglodytic life” was “the fulfillment of the American Dream.”¹⁵⁷ Striking a similar tone, Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, questioned whether Americans might resort to exhibiting “the morality of moles or other underground creatures, slithering in storm cellars.”¹⁵⁸ And the governor of New Jersey at the time, Robert B. Meyner, argued that “when primitive man left his cave and began to live in the light, he was meant to travel onward and upward; not to circle back.”¹⁵⁹ The Stocktons’ neighbors, however, would eventually do just that - circle back in order to overrun the Stocktons’ Maginot Line and gain entrance into the Cold War cave known as the fallout shelter. And in doing so, they would also increasingly exhibit the barbaric behavior popularly associated with our cave dwelling ancestors.

As the neighbors are now in a collective state of increasing panic, they all discuss what course of action to take. While one says that they should all pool their things and stay together in a basement, another declares that they should break down the door to the fallout shelter. The group’s distress intensifies while Marty states that maybe they should draw lots so at least one family could stay in the shelter. After Marty pleads that he has a three month old baby, his neighbor Frank screams back at him, “You shut your mouth, Weiss! That’s the way it is when

¹⁵⁶ P. Herbert Leiderman and Jack H. Mendelson, Some Psychiatric Considerations in Planning for Defense Shelters,” in *The Fallen Sky: Medical Consequences of Thermonuclear War*, ed. Saul Aronow (New York: Hill and Wand, 1963), 52.

¹⁵⁷ Erich Fromm and Michael Maccoby, “The Case against Shelters,” in *No Place to Hide: Fact and Fiction about Fallout Shelters*, ed. Seymour Melman (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 78.

¹⁵⁸ “Civil Defense: The Sheltered Life,” *Time*, October 20, 1961, 21.

¹⁵⁹ Robert B. Meyner Bomb Shelters Will Not Save Us!” *Coronet* 48, no.5 (September 1960), 68.

the foreigners come over here! Pushy, grabby semi-Americans!” Marty, seething in anger with clenched teeth, shouts back, “Why, you garbage-brained idiot!” and the two men nearly come to blows, but Jerry intervenes to stop the ensuing fight.

Here, “The Shelter” depicts another prevalent social feature of the time - xenophobic rage. Even though Marty Weiss presumably had his U.S. citizenship, the fact that he is the first to be denied shelter by Bill and the first to be insulted and attacked by Frank, exemplifies the common haste to associate immigrants with questionable loyalty and a sense of entitlement, even though all the other neighbors are desiring the same thing as Marty. This rage, which resulted in several pieces of legislation, was partially due to the fact that popular rhetoric and the state department alike linked immigrants and any subtle suggestion of “foreignness” to Communism during the postwar period. Although immigrants such as Klaus Fuchs and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were found guilty of leaking intelligence to the Soviets, other immigrants who were instrumental in developing the space and hydrogen bomb programs, such as Werner von Braun, were given less critical consideration. Before the Cold War even began, the Second Red Scare was beginning to take shape in the 1930s and 40s as right-wing politicians attacked New Deal liberals with charges of communism. In 1938 the House Committee on Un-American Activities began its operations, interrogating anyone suspected of having socialist leanings and in 1940, the Smith Act was passed, requiring all U.S. residents who were not citizens to register with the federal government and be fingerprinted. It also allowed the U.S. government to deport any individuals who at any time were affiliated with the Communist Party.¹⁶⁰ Eventually, the Immigration Act of 1952 served to solidify many of these measures, forbidding immigrants who were ever affiliated with the Communist Party from entering the country, while also establishing

¹⁶⁰ James Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 179-80.

a preference system for nationalities, making Eastern Europeans among the least favored. In protest, President Truman vetoed the Immigration Act and declared, “Today, we are ‘protecting’ ourselves as we were in 1924, against being flooded by immigrants from Eastern Europe. This is fantastic...We do not need to be protected against immigrants from these countries—on the contrary we want to stretch out a helping hand, to save those who have managed to flee into Western Europe, to succor those who are brave enough to escape from barbarism, to welcome and restore them against the day when their countries will, as we hope, be free again.”¹⁶¹ Truman’s veto, however, proved unsuccessful as both the Senate and the House voted to overrule it.

Nuclear fears could not only exacerbate personal animosities toward unwanted neighbors and immigrants, they also created extraordinary complications for whole cities and urban communities. Indeed, for many cities, such as Las Vegas, NV with its close proximity to Los Angeles, authorities were concerned regarding what the city might do during and after a nuclear attack with “a swarm of locusts” coming from southern California who might “pick the valley clean of food, medical supplies, and other goods.”¹⁶² Even though Las Vegas was in reality dependent on Los Angeles for much of its food supply, J. Carlton Adair, who served as the head of Las Vegas’ civil defense agency, supported the creation of a 5,000 person militia to protect the city from potential Angelino invaders. While a variety of plans were proposed to build fallout shelters for urban residents, including even moving cities entirely underground, the fallout shelter program as a whole was less focused on city dwellers, leading John Kenneth Galbraith to sardonically state that the program was a “design for saving Republicans and sacrificing

¹⁶¹ Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton University Press, 2002), 195

¹⁶² *Los Angeles Times*, August 1, 1961

Democrats.”¹⁶³ Part of the reason for this anti-urban bias was, according to pro-shelter advocate Bernard Brodie, a result of “the ever-recurrent suspicion that they would probably be of no use...the case for the shelter against radioactive fallout in the county is much easier to make.”¹⁶⁴ Indeed, if a major city, such as New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago, was hit, the fallout from such a nuclear attack would be the least of the city’s concerns. In the end, instead of massive fallout shelters being constructed for the urban populations of America’s cities, public buildings already in existence, such as schools, churches, and government and business offices, were designated to serve as the temporary shelters for urban populations and stocked with supplies. Of the 160 million sites that were designated as such, most were located within urban areas that had little to no chance of surviving a direct hit.¹⁶⁵

Far from being an air-tight solution, however, the designation of public buildings for shelter use not only raised concerns regarding their effectiveness, but also their potential availability to minority populations. Giving voice to such fears was Langston Hughes, whose story “Radioactive Red Caps,” dramatized how segregationist practices could potentially impact access to shelters. Simple, the main character, states, “If I was in Mississippi, I would be Jim Crowed out of bomb shelters...By the time I got the N.A.A.C.P. to take my case...the war would be over, else I would be atomized...Down there they will have some kind of voting test, else loyalty test, in which they will find some way of flunking Negroes out. You can’t tell me them Dixiecrats are going to give Negroes free rein of bomb shelters.”¹⁶⁶ While Kennedy eventually turned focus away from private shelters, the prospect of public shelters, particularly for

¹⁶³ Galbraith quoted in Spencer R. Weart, *Nuclear Fear* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) 256.

¹⁶⁴ Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959) 212-213.

¹⁶⁵ Kenneth D. Rose, *One Nation Underground: The Fallout Shelter in American Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 206.

¹⁶⁶ Langston Hughes, “Radioactive Red Caps,” *The Best of Simple* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997) 211.

marginalized groups, also presented a host of other problems stemming from the social inequalities of the time.

As the episode continues, the group eventually comes to the decision that they want to break down the shelter door with a steel pipe serving as a makeshift battering ram. One of the neighbors cries out to Bill, “You’ve got a bunch of your neighbors outside who want to stay alive! Now you can open that door and talk to us and figure out with us how many can come in there or you can just keep on doing what you’re doing, and we’ll bust our way in there!” After Bill once again refuses, Frank proposes gathering some heavy pipe from a nearby house, but is quickly rebutted by another neighbor who says that will only get another unwanted person involved and “who cares about saving him? No, if we do that, if we let all those people know that we have a shelter on our street, we’d have a whole mob to contend with. A whole bunch of strangers!” Another neighborhood woman reinforces the group’s increasingly tribal mindset, “What right have they got to come over here? This isn’t their street! This isn’t their shelter!” Jerry, however, sensing the irony involved in this discussion now says, “Oh, this is our shelter, huh? And on the next street, that’s another country... You idiots, you fools, you’re insane - all of you!” After saying that everyone is acting like a mob and “a mob doesn’t have any brains,” Marty expresses his support of Jerry’s thinking only to be met with more xenophobic rage from Frank who delivers a right cross to Marty’s face. Now with Marty knocked down, the rest of the group rushes off to fetch some piping. Staccato, dissonant music accompanies their anger-fueled mission. The white suburban mob furiously and repeatedly crashes the shelter door, and just when they manage to break through, an announcement comes through on the CONELRAD station: “The previously unidentified objects have now been definitely ascertained as being satellites. Repeat, there are no enemy missiles approaching...we are in no danger. The state of

emergency has been officially called off.” The neighbors breathe a collective sigh of relief but are noticeably ashamed and embarrassed for their drastic actions.

This climactic scene, with the neighbors literally choosing to ram their neighbor’s door down, touched upon another controversial issue of the shelter debate - the relationship between shelter owners and their neighbors. An article entitled “Gun Thy Neighbor?” published in *Time* magazine in August 1961, exposed some of the troubling implications of shelter survival. Beginning with the words of a Chicago suburbanite, the article read, “When I get my shelter finished, I’m going to mount a machine gun at the hatch to keep the neighbors out if the bomb falls. I’m deadly serious about this. If the stupid American public will not do what they have to do to save themselves, I’m not going to run the risk of not being able to use the shelter I’ve taken the trouble to provide to save my own family.”¹⁶⁷ While the article also included the views of Reverend Hugh Saussy of Holy Innocents Episcopal Church in Atlanta, who stated, “If someone wanted to use the shelter, then you yourself should get out and let him use it. That’s not what would happen, but that’s the strict Christian application.”¹⁶⁸ Other religious leaders, however, disagreed with Saussy’s exhortation, claiming that the reverend was wrongly implying “that we must love our neighbor, not as ourselves, but more than ourselves.” This view, articulated by Father L. C. McHugh, was featured in the Jesuit publication *America* in its September 1961 issue. In it, McHugh also implored that one should “think twice before you rashly give your family shelter space to friends and neighbors or to the passing stranger,” and if some neighbors do attempt to break in, they could be “repelled with whatever means will effectively deter their assault.” He concluded by somewhat choosing to defer his spiritual authority, stating that

¹⁶⁷ “Gun Thy Neighbor?” *Time*, August 18, 1961, 58.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

ultimately the choice to have a firearm in order to break up “traffic jams” at one’s shelter door is for the individual to decide.¹⁶⁹ But the implications were clear – those who had shelters could practically find themselves playing God and determine who gets to survive and who does not. In this way, the seemingly noble responsibility of protecting one’s family had some potentially very ignoble social implications when put into practice.

As the neighbors realize that there is no nuclear threat, some begin to attempt to make amends with one another. Frank approaches Marty, explaining “I just went off my rocker...I didn’t mean any of those things I said to you. We were all of us so scared, so confused.” Jerry proposes that they can raise money to cover the damages they all exacted on Bill’s house and Marty recommends they throw a party the next day in order to get back to “normal.” Bill, though, clearly distressed after the madness he just went through mutters, “Normal? I don’t know what normal is. I thought I did once. I don’t anymore.” After one of his neighbors reiterates that they would pay for the damages done to his house, the doctor responds, “Damages? I wonder if any one of us has any idea what those damages really are...maybe one of them is finding out...the kind of people we are just underneath the skin...a lot of naked, wild animals who put such a price on staying alive that they’ll claw their neighbors to death just for the privilege. We were spared a bomb tonight, but I wonder if we weren’t destroyed even without it.”¹⁷⁰ Serling’s closing narration, “No moral, no message, no prophetic tract. Just a simple statement of fact - for civilization to survive, the human race has to remain civilized. Tonight’s very small exercise in logic from *The Twilight Zone*.”

¹⁶⁹ L.C. McHugh, “Ethics at the Shelter Doorway,” *America*, September 30, 1961, 824-26.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

In an interview with Bob Crane, Rod Serling was asked about the reaction amongst viewers at home. Serling responded, “We had 1300 letters and cards inside of two days. I think we hit some kind of a nerve...I used the show, I wrote it because I felt number one it had great immediacy.” As historian Kenneth Rose has explained, “What is clear is that at the height of Cold War tensions Americans *talked* a great deal about fallout shelters, but relatively few Americans actually *built* fallout shelters.”¹⁷¹ And while the National Fallout Shelter Survey persisted through the sixties, identifying 160 million spaces that could be used for public shelters, private shelter numbers were estimated to be a relatively meager 200,000 by 1965. While Rose cites many reasons for this, including the development of ICBMs, the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963, and the increasing focus paid to Vietnam, he also claims that shelter critics won the “metaphor war.” These metaphors, relating shelters to caves with the potential to transform Americans into cave-dwelling barbarians, clearly had an impact as well. This particular episode of *The Twilight Zone*, taking place at the peak of these debates over shelter morality, dramatized several aspects of this national debate.

While the Office of Civil Defense, the Kennedy Administration, and numerous private contractors all worked to promote shelter construction, *The Twilight Zone* once again encouraged home viewers to consider that dominant national agendas do not necessarily line up with their own or their families. In a similar manner to Herbert Marcuse, who explained, “Life as an end is qualitatively different than life as a means,” Serling urged his viewers to question the point of their lives beyond mere survival.¹⁷² And while Kennedy cited Epicurus’s declaration that “a man who causes fear cannot be free from fear,” his resolution in encouraging Americans to construct

¹⁷¹ Rose, *One Nation Underground*, 202.

¹⁷² Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 17.

shelters was misleadingly simple as the national debate over shelter morality soon showed. In contrast, Serling's "The Shelter" dramatized the views once articulated by George Kennan, "Are we to flee like haunted creatures from one defensive device to another, each more costly and humiliating than the one before....concerned only to prolong the length of our lives while sacrificing all the values for which it might be worthwhile to live at all?"¹⁷³ Serling showed that more important than human life, were the values, morals, and ideals for which humanity strives. Without them, life arguably would be hardly worth saving.

"The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street"

While "The Shelter" exposed the moral fallout that could result from overreliance on shelters, "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street," attempted to expose the destructive effects political scapegoating could have on American society. In a related way, the episode, "Four O'clock," featured a political fanatic, named Oliver Cringle, who obsessively sought to expose anyone, including health care professionals, with seemingly questionable backgrounds. His plan to eventually shrink everyone that he deems evil in the world ironically results in himself shrinking down to miniature size in the end. "He's Alive" (S4, e4), which features Peter Vollmer, a neo-Nazi politician on the rise, dramatically shows how certain political tactics, such as the scapegoating of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, ensures the continued "survival" of Adolf Hitler. After Vollmer's racist rage is largely met with public derision, he gains increasing popularity after the ghost of Hitler instructs him to have one of his deputies purposefully assassinated by one of the other members. Having manipulatively victimized his cause and himself, Vollmer's neo-Nazi politics gain traction until he eventually murders one of his own

¹⁷³ House Subcommittee No. 3 of the Committee on Armed Service, *Civil Defense – Fallout Shelter Program*, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963, 3040.

family members and is shot and killed by a police officer. In both of these cautionary tales, the accusatory bullies find themselves “hoisted by their own petard,” as their tactics and politics are revealed to be profoundly misguided and unjust.

In a similar manner, “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street,” dramatizes the social repercussions that result from an unsuspecting community falling prey to a feverish obsession with finding a scapegoat. Originally airing on March 4, 1960, the episode begins with a picturesque suburban neighborhood slowly coming into focus, accompanied by Rod Serling’s opening narration: “Maple Street, USA, late summer. A tree-lined little world of front porch gliders, barbeques, the laughter of children and the bell of an ice-cream vendor. At the sound of the roar and the flash of light, it will be precisely six forty-three PM...This is Maple Street on a late Saturday afternoon. Maple Street—in the last calm and reflective moments before the monsters came.” As two men are washing a car, a sudden burst of light appears overhead. They presume it to be a meteor initially, but the residents soon discover something peculiar – all the electricity, phone lines, portable radios, and car engines are completely nonfunctional. Pete Van Horn, one of the town residents who had been doing some woodwork in his front yard, decides to check another street nearby to see if they too are without power. As he leaves, the camera focuses closely in on something he is carrying in the pants of his overalls – a hammer, an allusion to the hammer and sickle of the Soviet flag. This deliberate object placement and camera focus serves as the first major clue that Serling is exploring McCarthyism and postwar anti-communist paranoia with this particular episode.

The neighborhood quickly huddles together to plan what the next course of action should be. One of the neighbors, Steve Brand, decides he will take a drive downtown, but as he turns the key in the ignition, he finds that he cannot start his car. Not to be deterred, Steve and his

neighbor Charlie decide to walk downtown to see if they can figure out what is causing the outage. As they leave, Tommy, one of the neighborhood boys, mysteriously protests that “they don’t want us to leave...that’s why they shut everything off,” eventually claiming that it was a spaceship that flew by. The young boy’s idea is initially scoffed at, with one resident remarking, “He’s been reading too many comic books or seeing too many movies or something.” Charlie and Steve, seemingly convinced of this diagnosis, start toward downtown once more, but Tommy persists, “You might not even be able to get to town. It was that way in the story. Nobody could leave...except the people they’d sent down ahead of them. They looked just like humans...they sent four people – a mother and a father and two kids who looked just like humans but they *weren’t*.” A hush falls over the residents as the camera slowly pans over their somber, worried faces. In an attempt to break the mood and silence, Steve jokingly remarks that they will need to “run a check of the neighborhood and find out which ones of us are really human.” Soon thereafter, another Maple Street resident, Les Goodman, attempts to start his car repeatedly without success, but when he walks over to join the rest of the neighborhood, his car inexplicably starts up. The group of neighbors immediately start to be suspicious of Les: “How come his car just up and started like that?” asks one of the neighbors. “He never did come out to look at that thing that flew overhead. He wasn’t even interested, adds another.” “He always was an oddball, him and his whole family,” says a third.

The group ultimately decides to question Les, as the camera focuses down on their legs, moving in unison, rushing to meet him. Steve suddenly protests, though, and implores the group, “Wait a minute! Now let’s not be a *mob*!” As Les stands in his front yard, he explains that, just like the rest of the group, he has no idea how his car started on its own. Sensing Les’ confusion, Steve brings Les up to speed, explaining that the general consensus is there may be a family on

Maple Street that is not quite what they appear to be, but rather, “monsters from outer space.” As Les defends and asserts his humanness, his car mysteriously starts up again once more, while a neighbor expands the line of questioning: “How do you explain...well, a couple of times I’ve come out on my porch and I’ve seen Les Goodman here in the wee hours of the morning standing in his yard just looking up at the sky...as though he were waiting for something...as though he were looking for something.” Les, disgusted by these mounting charges against him, says that the only thing he is guilty of is insomnia and moves toward the group of neighbors, causing them to recoil and retreat: “You scared, frightened rabbits, you. You’re sick people...and you don’t even know what you’re starting here...you’re starting something here that...you should be frightened of...you’re letting something begin here that’s a nightmare!”

This opening scene sets the stage for the core issues explored in “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street.” Here, in Aesopian form, the alleged monsters from outer space serve as an obvious metaphor for the threat of Communist infiltration in much the same way Arthur Miller’s 1953 play, *The Crucible*, used Puritan New England to explore the witch-hunting tactics of McCarthyism. The notion of monsters disguising themselves as a normal suburban family was reflected in the popular belief that Communists would likely be doing the same in order to subvert the United States. The extreme usage of these ideas, although derisively referred to as “the paranoid style” by Richard Hofstadter, permeated contemporary forms of popular culture and politics alike. Furthermore, statements regarding Communism bore striking resemblance to World War II propaganda, such as Hoover’s declaration, “Communism, in reality, is not a political party. It is a way of life—an evil and malignant way of life. It reveals a condition akin to disease that spreads like an epidemic; and like an epidemic, a quarantine is necessary to keep it

from infecting the nation.”¹⁷⁴ Just as he had seen the Japanese dehumanized as representing diseased lice, Communism was not a political idea worthy of debate, rational rebuttal, or coexisting with, it was an epidemic that needed to be wiped out.

Following the passage of one of the most significant pieces of anti-Communist legislation, the McCarran Internal Security Act of 1950, the federal government required official registration from the Communist Party, its members, and its front groups. Additionally, the act created the Subversive Activities Control Board, which was responsible for investigating persons suspected of having Communist ties. The act also warned that one common “device for infiltration by Communists is by procuring naturalization for disloyal aliens who use their citizenship as a badge for admission into the fabric of our society.”¹⁷⁵ In addition, the act explained how “Communist organizations...are organized on a secret, conspiratorial basis and operate to a substantial extent through organizations, commonly known as ‘Communist fronts,’ which in most instances are created and maintained, or used, in such manner as to conceal the facts as to their true character and purposes and their membership.”¹⁷⁶ In this way, the “monsters from outer space” in this episode reflect these two core fears and suspicions - alien immigrants and the mysterious, secret nature of Communist front organizations.

Despite President Truman’s strong opposition and veto of the McCarran Act, Congress enacted the bill into law in 1950. For Truman, the Internal Security Act would not actually weaken Communist efforts. Rather, the President claimed, it “would...help the Communists in their efforts to create dissension and confusion within our borders.” And while the idea of requiring Communist organizations to publicly register themselves sounds “simple and

¹⁷⁴ J. Edgar Hoover, “Speech Before the House Committee on Un-American Activities,” March 26, 1947.

¹⁷⁵ Subversive Activities Control Act, 1950

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

attractive,” he claimed that “it is about as practical as requiring thieves to register with the sheriff.” Additionally, he noted how the act could have the somewhat indirect, long-term result of severely constricting open and honest political expression within the nation’s borders. He explained how the new “provision could easily be used to classify as a Communist-front organization any organization which is advocating a single policy or objective which is also being urged by the Communist Party... Thus, an organization which advocates low-cost housing for sincere humanitarian reasons might be classified as a Communist-front organization.” He added that it “is not enough to say that this probably would not be done. The mere fact that it could be done shows clearly how the bill would open a Pandora’s box of opportunities for official condemnation of organizations and individuals for perfectly honest opinions which happen to be stated also by Communists. The basic error of these sections is that they move in the direction of suppressing opinion and belief. This would be a very dangerous course to take....because any governmental stifling of the free expression of opinion is a long step toward totalitarianism.”¹⁷⁷ Truman’s veto of the bill, however, was roundly defeated by both chambers of Congress.

The concerns expressed in Truman’s veto were not only overridden by Congress, but were being forcefully drowned out by innumerable writers and voices at the time. One of the most outspoken was James F. O’Neil, who headed the American Legion for nearly thirty years. Writing in *The American Legion Magazine*, O’Neil beseeched his readers, “Never forget the fact that Communists operating in our midst are in effect a secret battalion of spies and saboteurs parachuted by a foreign foe inside our lines at night and operating as American citizens under a

¹⁷⁷ Internal Security Act, 1950, Veto Message from the President of the United States, September 22, 1950, in *Congressional Record*, 81st Cong., 2nd sess., 15629-32.

variety of disguises...”¹⁷⁸ And while these disguises could take many forms, some veneers were more common than others: “Hence Communists always appear before the public as ‘progressives.’ Yesterday they were 20th century Americans, last week they ‘defenders of all civil liberties,’ tonight they may be ‘honest, simple trades unionists... These artful dodges and ingenious dissimulations obviously make it difficult for the average trusting citizen to keep up with every new Communist swindle and con game.”¹⁷⁹ Indeed, the paranoid suspicion that anyone could be a Communist in disguise was also expressed by the head of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, who claimed, “The open, avowed Communist who carries a card and pays dues is no different from a security standpoint than the person who does the party’s work but pays no dues, carries no card, and is on the party rolls. In fact, the latter is a greater menace because of his opportunity to work in stealth.”¹⁸⁰

Even though Truman seemed more privy than Congress to some of the potential dangers of the McCarran Act, two Executive Orders enacted by Truman helped to set many of these developments in motion. The first, Truman’s Executive Order 9835 in 1947, established a federal loyalty oath program and called for extensive background checks of all government employees. The order also allowed the FBI to further investigate an individual if the initial background check seemed inconclusive. And while the initial order permitted investigation if “reasonable grounds” existed for suspecting disloyalty, Executive Order 10241, passed in April 1951, replaced “reasonable grounds” with “reasonable doubt.” In this way, the reformed version of the loyalty program put even more of the burden on the individual to prove his/her innocence, rather than the panel to prove his/her guilt. These loyalty programs were not just limited to the state

¹⁷⁸ James F. O’Neil, “How You Can Fight Communism,” *American Legion Magazine*, August, 1948, 43.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 16-17.

¹⁸⁰ J. Edgar Hoover, testimony, House Committee on Un-American Activities, *Hearings on H.R. 1884 and H.R. 2122*, 80th Cong., 1st sess., March 26, 1947.

department. Indeed, as Ellen Schrecker has explained, the procedures developed under these executive orders “became standard within other federal agencies, state and local governments, and private institutions,” reflecting “both the legitimating power of the federal government and the fundamental assumptions that all these programs shared.”¹⁸¹ This presumption of guilt over innocence, however, resulted in five hundred people out of the first 7,667 who were investigated was a result of mistaken information related to someone else.¹⁸² As Schrecker has pointed out, mistaken identity was just one issue which created complications, as pleading the Fifth Amendment also became “automatic grounds for dismissal within the federal government and...major corporations.” Moreover, “[n]on-Communists and even anti-Communists could lose their jobs if they seemed too feisty and individualistic.” As one attorney recalled, “you couldn’t say ‘I did these things because I thought they were right and I still think they’re right.’ Because if you did that you’d be dead.”¹⁸³

In this episode, the tide of suspicions, accusations and presumption of guilt rather than innocence, is clearly already setting in on Maple Street. Exaggerated fears regarding any seemingly unusual behavior, such as Les’ insomnia-driven star-gazing, are suddenly cause for major concern. But what is also already evident is the dangerous, simplistic completeness of the explanation provided by Tommy coupled with its uncritical acceptance by the neighborhood. Indeed, the fact that the explanation for the outage was provided by a comic book, yet not given much more thought by anyone, further symbolizes some of the troubling aspects of anti-Communist scapegoating – the way it arrested critical thinking. Despite the widely held belief, expressed in Hoover’s statement, “I...fear for the liberal and progressive who has been

¹⁸¹ Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 274.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 274-275.

¹⁸³ Schrecker, 284-285

hoodwinked and duped into joining hands with the communists,” Serling illustrates how the very opposite can likely happen - how paranoid, irresponsible accusations and the accusers behind them can be duped and subsequently jeopardize security, both on a local level and a national one.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, the gullibility of Maple Street’s residents is shown not in their naive subscription to progressive notions regarding the protection of human rights, instead, it is expressed in their unwavering belief that one of them has to be guilty.

Although Truman supported and strengthened the federal loyalty program, his criticisms of the McCarran Act became increasingly relevant as the 1950s wore on and McCarthyism gripped the nation ever more tightly. Truman claimed that we “would make a mockery of the Bill of Rights and of our claims to stand for freedom in the world,” and force people to avoid “saying anything that might be construed by someone as not deviating sufficiently from the current Communist propaganda line.” And “since no one could be sure in advance what views were safe to express, the inevitable tendency would be to express no views on controversial subjects.” Consequently, he foresaw one major result – the reduced “vigor and strength of our political life – an outcome that the Communists would happily welcome, but that free men should abhor.” Truman concluded that we will “destroy all that we seek to preserve, if we sacrifice the liberties of our citizens in a misguided attempt to achieve national security.”¹⁸⁵ In the second half of this episode, Serling would explore what these sacrifices might entail.

As night falls on Maple Street, most of the residents remain outside in their front yards. While Charlie drinks a beer, he shouts across the street at Steve, warning him that he is not “above suspicion” himself and should be careful who he is seen with. Here, Charlie appears

¹⁸⁴ Hoover, “Speech Before the House Committee on Un-American Activities,” March 26, 1947.

¹⁸⁵ Truman, Speech on the Veto of the McCarran Internal Security Act, September 22, 1950.

increasingly to directly mirror McCarthy in his aggressive accusations based on “guilty by association” charges. Immediately thereafter, one of the other residents mentions how Steve’s wife has been “doing some talking” about his late-night habits. Steve, clearly growing tired of the mounting absurd allegations, retorts, “Let’s get it all out. Let’s pick out every idiosyncrasy of every man, woman, and child on this whole street. And then we might well set up some kind of a kangaroo court. Now, how about a firing squad at dawn...?” As Don explains that he has heard about Steve working on a radio set in his basement, Charlie steps forward with his hands in his pockets and appears more self-assured as accusations against Steve accumulate. Charlie smugly asks Steve who he talks to on his radio set and Steve replies with biting sarcasm, “I talk to monsters from outer space, I talk to three-headed green men who fly here in what look like meteors!” After Myra, Steve’s wife, explains that he has simply been working on HAM radio set and that they could see it for themselves, Steve objects, claiming they do not have to show the neighbors anything unless they obtain a search warrant.

Steve’s frustration continues to build as he rebukes the group’s accusatory attitude: “Don’t tell me who’s safe and who’s a menace... You’re all standing out here all set to crucify somebody! You’re all set to find a scapegoat. You’re all desperate to point some kind of a finger at a neighbor...the only thing that’s gonna happen is that we’re gonna eat each other up alive!” His neighbors fall silent, seemingly reprimanded for the time being. The momentary silence is soon interrupted by the sound of footsteps. Someone is walking down Maple Street but no one can see who it is because of the darkness. Tommy suddenly cries out, “It’s the monster!” and Don rushes off, coming back with a shotgun. Steve protests bringing a gun into the situation, but Charlie welcomes it. The camera reveals to the viewing audience that the figure approaching is Pete Van Horn, the man with a hammer in his jeans and went to check on a nearby street earlier.

As he walks down the street, the camera once again focuses on the pants of his overalls, revealing one more time the hammer he carries at his side. Blinded by his own fear, Charlie fires the gun, killing Pete instantly as his body collapses down onto the unforgiving pavement of the street where he lived.

Charlie's unfounded eagerness in this scene not only reflected McCarthy's accusations, it also closely resembled one of the most popular fictional characters of the day, Mickey Spillane's ruthless executor of justice, Mike Hammer. Somewhat like McCarthy, Hammer's character preferred to take matters into his own hands and implement justice his own way as he saw fit, rather than through established practice. As David Halberstam noted, Hammer was "the ultimate cold warrior, an Übermensch for frightened Americans who had heard tales of baby-eating Stalinists. Hammer's methods went beyond loyalty oaths, smears, and blacklisting. The evil of the Communists was battled with the only weapons Hammer possessed: a blast from his forty-five, a kick that shattered bone on impact, strangulation by Hammer's meaty hands."¹⁸⁶ And just like McCarthy did, Spillane capitalized on stoking Communist fears with his fourth Mike Hammer novel, *One Lonely Night*. In it, Hammer confronts a gang of Communist thugs who plan to take over the United States and in his typical chauvinistic fashion, the incorruptible hero monologues: "A Commie. She was a jerky Red. She owned all the trimmings and she was still a Red. What the hell was she hoping for, a government order to share it all with the masses? Yeah...Sure it's great to be a Commie as long as you're top dog. Who the hell was supposed to be fooled by all the crap...They're supposed to be clever, bright as hell. They were dumb as horse manure as far as I was concerned."¹⁸⁷ These types of statements shared striking similarity

¹⁸⁶ David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1993), 59.

¹⁸⁷ Mickey Spillane, *The Mike Hammer Collection, Volume 2: One Lonely Night, The Big Kill, Kiss Me Deadly* (New York: New American Library, 2001), 169.

with some of McCarthy's reflections, "If you want to be against McCarthy, boys, you've got to be a Communist or a cocksucker."¹⁸⁸ Without a doubt, however, the juvenile fantasies found in Mickey Spillane's books as well as the reckless views of McCarthy, were achieving enormous success. While Spillane had sold thirty million copies of Mike Hammer novels, the head of the Chicago Tribune's Washington bureau reflected "McCarthy was a dream story...I wasn't off page one for four years."¹⁸⁹ McCarthy, no doubt, appreciated the coverage.

While Charlie serves as a kind of embodiment of McCarthy and Spillane, the deceased Pete Van Horn dramatically symbolizes the fate of hammer-wielding labor unionists. Already in the thirties and forties, unions were working to divulge Communists among their rank and file. By the late forties, however, unions were succumbing to the increasingly popular practices of the time by not just cracking down on Communist Party members, but anyone who remotely aligned with the party's political stances. In the fall of 1949, under increasingly anti-communist pressure, the Congress of Industrial Organizations moved to entirely expel the single largest union within it – the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE). Its November 1949 resolution decisively declared, "We can no longer tolerate within the family of CIO the Communist Party masquerading as a labor union. The time has come when the CIO must strip the mask from these false leaders whose only purpose is to deceive and betray the workers...In the name of autonomy they seek to justify their blind and slavish willingness to act as puppets for the Soviet dictatorship..."¹⁹⁰ The resolution, however, did not cite any actual evidence of Communist infiltration or name any specific individuals who were instruments of the Communist

¹⁸⁸ Halberstam, 54

¹⁸⁹ Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 243.

¹⁹⁰ Resolution on Expulsion of the UERMWA and Withdrawal of Certificate of Affiliation, Report to the 11th Constitutional Convention of the Congress of Industrial Organizations by the Committee on Resolutions, November 1949, Walter P Reuther papers, UAW President's Office, box 62, folder 15, Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.

Party. Instead, the accusations centered on a few abstract political deviations from the prevailing stances of the CIO. These UE deviances, which also incidentally coincided with the Soviet line, included its denouncement of the Marshall Plan and criticism of NATO as a “warmongering” institution. A third problem for the CIO was the UE’s support for the Progressive Party and Henry Wallace in the 1948 election.¹⁹¹ The CIO, once victims of red-baiting, were now doing the red-baiting themselves, and incidentally foreshadowed the sharply declining influence and ever more prevalent image of unions as inherently semi-communistic institutions.

When the Maple Street crowd descends on the corpse, to their shock, they discover the mysterious deceased figure is their neighbor, Pete Van Horn. Charlie repentantly pleads with the others that he did not realize who he was: “How was I supposed to know he wasn’t a monster or something? I was only trying to protect my home.” Just then, the lights turn on in Charlie’s house and the suspicions of the crowd now shift to Charlie, who calls the situation a “gag.” Steve angrily grabs Charlie’s shirt collar and tells him that a man lying dead in the street is far from being a gag. Charlie runs from the crowd and they all give chase after him, picking up rocks and throwing them as they run after their neighbor-turned-murderer. Charlie, with a bloodied forehead and in sheer desperation and fear, suddenly says he knows who the monster is and accuses Tommy of being the monster. The crowd soon descends into madness, with each resident accusing someone different of being the monster. With glass shattering, guns firing, and bricks flying, the conditions at Maple Street could hardly be more different than the serene, peaceful setting it once was.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

The camera slowly zooms out on the neighborhood, eventually revealing two men from outer space next to their ship witnessing the chaos from above: “Understand the procedure now? Just stop a few of their machines and radios and telephones and lawnmowers, throw them into darkness for a few hours, and then sit back and watch the pattern...they pick the most dangerous enemy they can find, and it’s themselves. All we need do is sit back and...let them destroy themselves.” As their ship ascends to the reaches of outer space with Maple Street in the throes of violent chaos below Serling offers his closing narration: “The tools of conquest do not necessarily come with bombs and explosions and fallout. There are weapons that are simply thoughts, attitudes, prejudices to be found only in the minds of men. For the record, prejudices can kill, and suspicion can destroy. And a thoughtless, frightened search for a scapegoat has a fallout all of its own for the children and the children yet unborn. And the pity of it is, that these things cannot be confined...to *The Twilight Zone*.”

Apart from the thousands of Americans who either lost their jobs, were blacklisted, or were wrongfully accused during the Second Red Scare, the impact on political discourse and debate could not be confined to either *The Twilight Zone* or to the fifties. While McCarthy would be publically reprimanded by President Eisenhower and censured by Congress in 1954, the same could not necessarily be said regarding his tactics, which clearly left a more lasting imprint on American politics. Character assassinations, homophobic and sexual slander, and unfounded accusations *could* and *did* work, especially with the help of an uncritical popular press. George Kennan, the author of the famous long telegram and the original concept of containment, took account of these political changes occurring in the United States throughout the 1940s and 50s in his memoir and lamented, “What the phenomenon of McCarthyism did...was to implant in my consciousness a lasting doubt as to the adequacy of our political system and public opinion...that

could be so easily disoriented by this sort of challenge....I could never recapture, after these experiences of the 1940s and 1950s, quite the same faith in the American system of government and in traditional American outlooks that I had had.”¹⁹² The paranoid associations constantly made in publicized HUAC hearings could indeed rob a person’s individuality and human rights from them if they were effectively associated with, among other things, the progressive dupe. This was perhaps most clearly and succinctly illustrated when McCarthy deliberately referred to Democratic Prudential Nominee Adlai Stevenson as “Alger,” alluding to Alger Hiss, who had recently been imprisoned on accusations that he was spying for the Soviets. If a politician could effectively associate a political opponent with treason, even if it was simply based on the first letter of their first name, the tactic could prove highly effective with a national audience listening.

During the very heart of the Second Red Scare, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court William O. Douglas, tried to articulate what the political climate was quickly becoming in the nation where he served. In an article entitled “The Black Silence of Fear,” Douglas wrote,

I think one has to leave the country, go into the back regions of the world, lose himself there, and become absorbed in the problems of the peoples of different civilizations. When he returns to America after a few months he probably will be shocked. He will be shocked not at the intentions or purposes or ideals of the American people. He will be shocked at the arrogance and intolerance of great segments of the American press, at the arrogance and intolerance of many leaders in public office...He will find that thought is being standardized, that the permissible area for calm discussion is being narrowed, that the range of ideas is being limited, that many minds are closed...This is alarming to one who loves his country. It means that the philosophy of strength through free speech is being forsaken for the philosophy of fear through repression.¹⁹³

¹⁹² George Kennan, *Memoirs: 1950-1963* (Boston: Pantheon, 1972), 228.

¹⁹³ William O. Douglas, “The Black Silence of Fear,” *The New York Times Magazine*, January 13, 1952.

Douglas went on to lament how the Communist threat within the country has been “magnified and exalted far beyond its realities” and “irresponsible talk by irresponsible people has fanned the flames of fear” because of accusations being so carelessly made. In this postwar political climate, “character assassinations have become common” and “suspicion has taken the place of goodwill.” Formerly, Douglas noted, we “could debate with impunity along a wide range of inquiry” and “could safely explore to the edges of a problem, challenge orthodoxy without qualms, and run the gamut of ideas in search of solutions to perplexing problems.” In the past, “we had confidence in each other,” but at present, “suspicion grows until the orthodox idea is the safe one” and “everyone who does not follow the military policymakers is suspect. Everyone who voices opposition to the trend...takes a chance...Good and honest men are pilloried. Character is assassinated. Fear runs rampant...This fear has stereotyped our thinking, narrowed the range of free public discussion, and driven many thoughtful people to despair.”¹⁹⁴ Douglas finally concluded, “Once we narrow the range of thought and discussion, we will surrender a great deal of our power...Our weakness grows when we become intolerant of opposing ideas, depart from our standards of civil liberties, and borrow the policeman’s philosophy from the enemy we detest.”¹⁹⁵ Like the Stocktons in their shelter, millions of Americans risk banishing their minds and politics to the recesses of a dark cave out of fear.

Douglas’ assessment of the political climate of postwar America bore striking resemblance to Serling’s in “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street.” Ultimately, the nightmare that Americans needed to more actively consider was not a Communist takeover, but how political debate was being increasingly overwhelmed by unfounded character assassinations, ad-

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

hominem attacks, and the cessation of critical, constructive thought. Although at the episode's conclusion, there were indeed "monsters from outer space" seeking to manipulate things on Maple Street by causing the power outage, it was less a direct result of the outage and more a result of the neighborhood's reaction – an all-consuming fear and panic resulting not just in careless character assassinations, but actual assassination. The most susceptible to deception were not, as the American Legion, John Birch Society, and J. Edgar Hoover asserted time and again, those willing and able to deviate slightly from the orthodox norm. Instead, it was the citizens who willingly, uncritically, and completely believed in the truth of the advertisement, the groundless political smear, and the children's comic book story they are being told - those who used it as a weapon in the South against the NAACP, Martin Luther King Jr., and the advancement of Civil Rights, those who used it as a weapon against granting equal rights to women and the gay community, and those who used it against organized labor, and finally, those who used it to deny crucial political discussion, which might resolve complex issues, from ever having a chance to take place. These, in fact, were the harmful "dupes" that endangered our communities, our political processes, our nation, and our minds, leading Ellen Schrecker to conclude, "McCarthyism did more damage to the Constitution than the American Communist Party ever did."¹⁹⁶

Just as the morals of the neighborhood in "The Shelter" decline as the residents descend into the basement where the shelter is located, the growing paranoia on Maple Street is accentuated by the darkness which envelops the neighborhood. In both episodes, the false security offered by fallout shelters and the scapegoating perpetrated by McCarthyism, leave each

¹⁹⁶ Ellen Schrecker, "Comments on John Earl Haynes", *The Cold War Debate Continues: A Traditionalist View of Historical Writing on Domestic Communism and Anti-Communism*, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Volume 2, Number 1, Winter 2000.

neighborhood worse off than it ever was before. By focusing solely on security and survival, the residents of each of these picturesque American neighborhoods create an uncivil nightmare and leave behind the very American principles which are actually worth fighting for – self-expression, democracy, respect, and inclusiveness. In seeking to deal with particular symptoms, of e.g. Communist sympathies and radioactive fallout, both neighborhoods spread the diseases of fear, distrust, and greed that have far more destructive consequences in the long run. Just as Bill wonders out loud, many American feared if their country could be the same again if such fear-mongering tactics become the norm. In this way, the forms of Cold War security popularly offered in social and political arenas were rendered false and served to make up yet another nightmare for postwar Americans living in and out of *The Twilight Zone*.

Chapter 4

Cold War Childhood: Containment or Entanglement?

In Elaine Tyler May's seminal study of the postwar return to domesticity, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, May convincingly argues how the nuclear family served as the quintessential form of domestic containment, enclosing a wide array of Cold War fears related to nuclear war, Communism, and sexuality: "In secure postwar homes with plenty of children, American women and men might be able to ward off their nightmares and live out their dreams. The family seemed to be the one place where people could control their destinies and perhaps even shape the future. Of course, nobody actually argued that stable family life could prevent nuclear annihilation. But the home represented a source of meaning and security in a world run amok. Marrying young and having lots of babies were ways for Americans to thumb their noses at doomsday predictions."¹⁹⁷ Just as raising a family and owning a home in the suburbs represented the epitome of the American Dream, it also helped to ensure that American capitalistic priorities would take precedence amongst the populace. As developer William Levitt once remarked, "No man who owns his own house and lot can be a Communist. He has too much to do."¹⁹⁸

Just as family life was at the heart of marketing campaigns, offering guarantees to housewives, for example, that certain products will help them be more attentive mothers, it was also *the* focal point for numerous popular television programs. Shows like *Father Knows Best* (1954-60) and *Leave it to Beaver* (1957-63) romantically depicted domestic life and traditional

¹⁹⁷ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008) 26.

¹⁹⁸ Levitt quoted in May, 153.

gender roles. They also generally showed that when problems did ever arise, they were easily resolved by everyone simply knowing and returning to one's proper place. Consistently, conflicts within television families were simplistic and lacked any complexity or moral ambiguity. Compromises were easily arranged, and order restored without too much trouble. In the *Father Knows Best* episode "Woman in the House" (S2, e5), for example, Virge, the wife of one of Jim Anderson's old friends, comes to stay with the family. Her lifestyle habits are quickly shown to be undesirable and unfeminine, though, as she smokes cigarettes, talks about Franz Kafka's writing, and dresses in a semi-bohemian fashion. While tension mounts between her and the Andersons, particularly with Margaret, Jim's wife, the feuding eventually dissipates in the end when Virge chooses to embrace her traditional feminine roles - helping care for the children and making mashed potatoes.¹⁹⁹ In this way, family conflicts, as well as conflicts with others, were easily solved when everyone simply knew their place and cheerfully liked it.

In a rapidly changing postwar world, however, with new middle class values, white collar jobs, suburban living, and childhood consumerism suddenly dominating the lives of Americans, problems and answers did not come quite as easily as it did to the Andersons and Cleavers. Most married women, for example, soon found they could not simply stay at home and take care of their children, but had to work as well. And even though the suburbs were a child-centered living environment, the stresses that came from having to raise children according to middle class values and provide them with entertainment, fun, and a rising tide of consumer goods, proved to be overwhelming, anxiety-ridden tasks for parents. Caught between these popular portrayals of idealized, simplistic, traditional family life, and the actual complex world, having a family and raising children was perhaps not the clear-cut answer to contain Cold War issues, but served to

¹⁹⁹ "Woman in the House," *Father Knows Best*, originally aired on September 28, 1955 (CBS).

complicate them all the more. In fact, as parents soon found out for themselves, children prodigiously learned to manipulate certain social and consumer pressures in a variety of ways, further complicating certain aspects of family life in unprecedented fashion. In short, parents were quickly finding out returning to traditional values and “simpler times” was not a feasible option in the real world of postwar family life. In both “It’s a Good Life” (S3, e8) and “Living Doll” (S5, e6) *The Twilight Zone* captures, in horrifying fashion, the dual pressures felt by parents regarding proper parenting etiquette and the burden of having to deal with their children as increasingly influential consumers. As prominent education writers, Grace and Fred Hechinger, noted, “The permissive philosophy of child-rearing and the rushing of adolescent social development had opened the floodgates of material generosity” and in “a society which judges prestige very largely by outward appearance, what an adolescent owns automatically turns into a yardstick of the entire family’s place in the sun.”²⁰⁰ And just as national containment policies throughout the world led to increasingly complex and seemingly irresolvable conflicts, family life, beset with pressures to live and attain “the American Dream,” frequently proved to be a dubious means to practice containment at home. Just as likely, raising children in the postwar era turned out to be an increasingly elaborate entanglement.

“It’s a Good Life”

During its five season run, *The Twilight Zone* included several episodes which portrayed some of the more challenging aspects of family life and childhood. Among these, Reginald Rose’s “The Incredible World of Horace Ford” (S4, e15), showed how inaccurate certain portrayals and memories of childhood can be. When toy designer Horace Ford returns to life as a

²⁰⁰ Grace and Fred M. Hechinger, *Teen-Age Tyranny* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Crest Books, 1962) 127.

boy, he is ridiculed, beaten up, and bullied. Eventually, he comes back to adulthood but his perception of childhood has drastically altered, having realized that childhood is not the time of simple innocence he remembered it as. With “It’s a Good Life,” Serling similarly sought to show how childhood is not necessarily a time of innocence and purity, but one filled with manipulation, power struggles, and mind games.²⁰¹ Originally airing on the evening of November 3, 1961, the episode begins with Serling announcing that “tonight’s story...is somewhat unique and calls for a different kind of introduction.” He describes Peaksville, Ohio as the only remaining town after the rest of world vanished mysteriously. The relatively few inhabitants include Mr. and Mrs. Fremont, Aunt Amy, as well as a monster who bears the responsibility for the rest of the world’s disappearance. As the camera cuts between shots of a rural village, showing farmhouses, barns, and broken-down cars, Serling states that the monster had taken away the automobiles, the electricity, and the machines simply “because they displeased him and...moved an entire community back into the dark ages – just by using his mind.” Fearing the displeasure and wrath of the monster, Peaksville’s inhabitants are continually forced to “think happy thoughts and say happy things.” If they do not, the monster might “wish them into a cornfield or change them into a grotesque, walking horror.” Consequently, the camera shows two residents walking back through the town and abruptly smiling after realizing the monster’s proximity. Finally, Serling introduces the audience to the monster himself: “His name is Anthony Fremont,” as the camera cuts to a red-haired, freckle-faced six-year-old boy in overalls playing on a fence. Serling warns his viewers, however, that although he has “blue,

²⁰¹ This episode was written by Serling but based on Jerome Bixby’s short story “It’s a Good Life,” which appeared in *Star Science Fiction Stories* No. 2 edited by Frederik Pohl, Ballantine Publishers, 1953.

guileless eyes...the mind behind them is absolutely in charge. This is *The Twilight Zone*,” and the screen fades to black.

In customary fashion, this episode of *The Twilight Zone* features a monster rather unlike the fantastic depictions seen in *Godzilla* (1954), *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), and other science fiction classics of the era. Rather, the monster is one of us, one of our species, and what’s more, the monster is depicted as arguably the most innocent and uncorrupted of humans – a young child. The subject material of this particular episode relating to family dynamics, childhood, and the anxiety of child-rearing was likewise the focus of millions of Americans mid-twentieth century. And while childhood development certainly proves to be a constant concern for every generation, the fact that in the decades of the fifties and sixties, the United States experienced the highest birth rate in its history makes it especially critical.

Furthermore, during this exact same period Dr. Benjamin Spock’s how-to guide for parents entitled *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, first published in 1946, became a consistent bestseller throughout the postwar period, turning Dr. Spock into an international celebrity. The enormous popularity of Spock’s book reflects the physical reality of a rapidly increasing national birth rate as well as the psychological preoccupation and worry that came along with it. To put it simply, children not only took up an unprecedented amount of physical space in postwar American homes, but an unequalled amount of mental and psychological space. The burgeoning field of childhood psychology and the general population’s fascination with it shared similar roots with the birth rate - economic affluence and a general rise in income. These economic developments not only meant the financial ability to support children, but it also meant that families were having to worry less about basic needs and sustenance, and about more nebulous concerns for their children, such as providing fun and

fostering emotional stability. As Martha Wolfenstein explained, “A recent development in American culture is the emergence of what we might call ‘fun morality.’ Here fun, from having been suspect if not taboo, has tended to become obligatory. Instead of feeling guilty for having too much fun, one is inclined to feel ashamed if one does not have enough.”²⁰² As parents sought to uphold the new standards of middle class living and fun morality, they increasingly sought out guidance from experts like Spock, whose book, resting on millions of home bookshelves throughout America, symbolized to varying degrees the psychological unrest in the hearts and minds of young American parents and the search for a resolution to their anxieties.

While Spock’s book helped to ease the mind of many young parents, not all his readers had their confusion and worry over child-rearing so easily dispelled. Many readers of his book struggled to know just how to apply Spock’s guiding principles. Indeed, while Spock’s book arrived at a time when strict and severe discipline would soon be outmoded, Spock believed parents had taken certain instruction to an extreme and out of context, so much so that he updated and revised his book in 1957 and several more times thereafter. In his second edition, published in 1957, Spock implores in a somewhat defensive tone, undoubtedly stemming from a decade of parents’ letters and criticisms: “The most important thing I have to say is that you should not take too literally what is said in this book. Every child is different, every parent is different...Remember that you know a lot about your child and that I don’t know anything about him.”²⁰³ He goes on to explain that when he first wrote *Common Sense* general attitudes were much more “inflexible” and “strict.” In the ensuing years, however, the general consensus on child-rearing shifted dramatically, with great help from Spock himself. He states in his 1957

²⁰² Martha Wolfenstein, “The Emergence of Fun Morality,” *Journal of Social Issues* vol. 7 no.4, fall 1951, 15.

²⁰³ Benjamin Spock, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* 2nd ed. (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1957) 1.

edition that “nowadays there seems to be more chance of a conscientious parent’s getting into trouble with permissiveness than with strictness. So I have tried to give a more balanced view.” Acknowledging this fact, Spock declares that “if you are an old reader of this book, you’ll see a lot has been added and changed, especially about discipline, spoiling, and the parents’ part.” While Spock still maintained his stance on many things, such as showing a child plenty of affection, many of these revisions in the 1957 edition carefully qualify certain instructions in regards to discipline and reward.²⁰⁴ In this way, not only did the largest increase in the U.S. birth rate in history shape *The Twilight Zone’s* “It’s a Good Life,” but also the increased psychological anxiety over childcare, along with the reading and misreading of Doctor Spock.

The episode begins with a young man named Bill riding up to the Fremont house to deliver groceries on his bike, a direct result of Anthony rendering the automobile obsolete. As he gets off his bike, he greets Aunt Amy who sits on the front porch and Anthony who is playing in the yard in front of the house. Bill makes a point to comment how good it is to see Anthony and how much “we all love you,” further adding what a good day it is. When Aunt Amy states that it is in fact a “terrible, hot day,” Anthony’s face turns sour and only smiles again when Bill insists that “I wouldn’t say that, no sir! It’s just fine...it’s a real good day!” When Bill asks Anthony what he’s doing, emphasizing “it’s real good whatever it is,” Anthony replies “I made a gopher with three heads.” After Bill praises his efforts, Anthony says that he’s through playing with the animal he created and decides to kill it, exposing his severe sadistic tendencies for the first time as he yells, “Gopher, you be dead!” Bill once again merely praises his actions and smiles. Once inside the house, Bill unloads the various groceries for Mrs. Fremont and mentions how they no longer have any soap, undoubtedly the result of Anthony’s dislike for soap and wishing it out of

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 1-2.

existence. Mrs. Fremont, Anthony's mother, is clearly exhausted from the circumstances she finds herself in and begins to confess, with quivering lips, that she once hoped that an animal with sharp teeth Anthony created would have bitten her son when he was outside, but Bill cuts her off and says he needs to get going before she's allowed to finish expressing her disquieting thought.

In these opening scenes, "It's a Good Life" plays upon the idea that a more traditional, pre-modern environment is more desirable for families by depicting Peaksville as a town that has largely returned to pre-modern conditions. In this episode, the more "natural" and "uncivilized" sensibility is represented to an extreme in Peaksville with its utter lack of modern industry and technology as Serling shows the literal results of parents who revert back to a pre-modern form of raising a family. In this way, *The Twilight Zone* shows how the uncivilized nature of Peaksville makes it highly undesirable, especially for the parents. They lack the ability to travel or drive an automobile, they lack modern forms of entertainment such as record players, and they have minimal food options. Anthony's ability to make his own schedule and force the adults to cater to his whims and desires, cripples his parents as well as the residents of the town in general. By discarding elements of modernity, such as technology and schedules, Anthony gains more tyrannical power and authority over his family and everyone else in the village.

Right away, the dynamics between the six-year-old Anthony and the local residents in the community are also clearly established. Everyone, including his own family and the local grocer, must unwaveringly accommodate Anthony's wishes and constantly shower him with acclamation and praise for his choices, no matter how cruel, destructive, or unreasonable they are. Everyone lives in constant fear of upsetting him, and as a result, his parents and fellow residents withhold reproaching him at all costs. It is a kind of authoritarian family environment

in reverse, with the adults having to willingly bend and submit to Anthony's every whim. Indeed, "It's a Good Life" captures what served as a preoccupation for childhood experts and Americans alike – the potential threat of tyranny. For both professionals and laymen, the conditions of childhood and the family were crucial to ensure that tyrants were not allowed to sprout on American soil. To this end, *The Authoritarian Personality*, a work co-written by Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson, and Nevitt Sanford in 1950, sought to unearth what led individuals to have more fascist and prejudiced views in life. In their numerous surveys, children who were raised in families characterized by strict, threatening authority figures, harsh discipline, black and white thinking, and inflexible traditions frequently proved to be a precursor to making one more pre-disposed to fascist-leaning views later in life.²⁰⁵ Much like the parents and adults in this episode, they describe children from such families thus: "On the surface theirs is a stereotyped, rigid glorification of the parents, with strong resentment and feelings of victimization occasionally breaking through on the overt level in the interview material"²⁰⁶ While *The Authoritarian Personality* revealed a predictable, yet resentment-filled glorification of authority among certain children, it is clear in this episode that the adults are the ones forced to have stereotyped respect for Anthony on the one hand, and loads of buried resentment, lying just beneath the surface, on the other. The authoritarian personality, with all its destructiveness, serves as the focus of "It's a Good Life."

While many parents eventually blamed a strawman version of Spock's seemingly-lenient advice for creating spoiled, rebellious children, Spock's intentions and actual advice were quite the opposite. Indeed, Spock was characterized by many critical parents and pundits as

²⁰⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson, Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950) 346-358.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 357.

encouraging too much leniency and license, even some placing the blame for the sixties' youth rebellion and failure in Vietnam on his parenting advice. Norman Vincent Peale famously criticized Spock's philosophy: "Feed 'em whatever they want, don't let them cry, instant gratification of needs."²⁰⁷ Nowhere in Spock's writing, however, did he call for this kind of instant gratification or over permissiveness, and it became obvious by the late sixties to those who seriously looked into his work, that criticisms such as Peale's were wholly unjustified and grossly misguided. But for those frustrated by the failures of Vietnam and other foreign policy misadventures, Spock was a convenient scapegoat who caused, according to President Richard Nixon, a "fog of permissiveness" to set in on America's youth.²⁰⁸ Nixon, however, failed to seriously consider that, along with marketers, he himself had actually encouraged and idealized American indulgence on many occasions, such as the 1959 Moscow Kitchen Debate, not Dr. Spock. While Spock did call for mothers to avoid "cross-looks and scoldings," he also continually stressed the importance of discipline and rituals, encouraged mothers to be like a "friendly boss," and also never even completely ruled out the possibility of spanking a child, even though countless Americans falsely accused him of doing so.²⁰⁹ In the end, outspoken critics like Peale and Nixon, unable to bend the nation to their personal will, seemed to exude more of the childlike frustration Spock helped parents to manage among their progeny in their home.

In his work on Spock, William Graebner convincingly shows how the turmoil of the Great Depression, the rise of totalitarianism in Europe, and the trauma of World War II greatly shaped Spock's psychological views as well as his contemporaries. More than anything else, the

²⁰⁷ Thomas Maier, *Dr. Spock*, (New York: Basic Books, 2003) 321.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 323.

²⁰⁹ Spock, 254, 258.

evil of tyranny, which ostensibly caused the WWII, needed to be expunged at home and abroad, “at home” taking on a very immediate, literal meaning for Spock and parents. Simply put, the family needed to be made “safe for democracy;” not to the point where children were running the roost, but to the point where cooperation, conformity, and mutuality could thrive. As Graebner explained: “At the center of this unstable world was an unstable infant and child - fearful, frustrated, insecure, and potentially destructive in his aggressive tendencies.” Inspired by these growing concerns, Spock’s book can be seen as a very clear attempt to actually rid the nation of potential tyrants while yet toddlers. In order to do this, as Graebner states, Spock “sought to create a society that was more cooperative, more consensus-oriented, more group-conscious, and a society that was more knowable, more consistent, and more comforting.”²¹⁰ In “It’s a Good Life” Anthony clearly does not exude the qualities trumpeted by either Spock or Riesman’s concept of other-direction, which includes cooperation, compromise, and empathy. Simply stated, Anthony is the very antithesis of “the organization man.” In this way, “It’s a Good Life” taps into the fears of tyranny and the cravings for conformity that undergirded Spock’s decision to write *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Childcare* in the first place, not to mention the decision made by millions of Americans to purchase and regularly reference the book throughout their years of parenting. After years of being in pediatrics, Spock knew parents needed as much reassurance as they did outright instruction, evidenced by his famous opening supplication: “Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do.” For many readers of Spock, however, the tendency was to do the opposite, to question oneself and take certain instructions to an

²¹⁰ William Graebner, “The Unstable World of Benjamin Spock” in *Journal of American History* Vol 67 No 3 December 1980, pp. 612-613

extreme. Tapping into the fear and anxiety over how much permissiveness is too much, Serling's episode converts the possibilities into a parental nightmare.

In this way, Anthony's power is not just over his family and neighbors, but it can bend reality itself to Anthony's wishes when real-life presents obstacles to him experiencing immediate pleasure and instant gratification. Indeed, with his fantastical powers, Anthony can literally alter reality and the world around him. But another element in this episode is that reality, no matter what it is, must be interpreted as invariably positive by everyone else in order to preserve Anthony's smile. There cannot even be expressed differences of opinion or taste, as Aunt Amy illustrated when she stated that the day was "hot" and "terrible," but was quickly corrected. A consensus affirming the simple positivity of everything must be maintained, including something as basic as the weather, even if it means risking heat stroke or frost bite. This fact is reiterated when Bill runs over to the window in the last scene of the episode to find that it is now snowing outside. Mr. Fremont asks Anthony if he made it snow and after his son responds affirmatively, Mr. Fremont gets panicked, saying that the crops will be ruined, but then stops his practical line of thinking and instead praises Anthony for making it snow. "It's good you're making it snow. Real good. And tomorrow's going to be a real good day." In this way, Anthony alters reality to his liking and whatever the results are have to be discussed only in smiling, positive, affirming ways. Consequently, the residents of Peaskville arguably behave much like postwar marketers – willing to say and do anything in order to guarantee the appeasement of Anthony's anxieties, insecurities, and desires. Anthony, like postwar consumers, demand that television, among other things, cater to his dreams and desires even if it means curbing freedom of speech, causes harm to others, or results in the permanent disappearance of disagreeable or "controversial" people from the public sphere.

In addition to prohibiting honest and open discussion, or freedom of speech as it were, Anthony's well-being and happiness tyrannically suppresses freedom of thought as well, even when he is not around. This is evidenced when Mrs. Fremont and Aunt Amy converse on the front porch. Amy tells her that Anthony went into the barn even though she told him not to. Throughout his book, Spock continually emphasized the mere demeanor and state of mind of parents, Mrs. Fremont instructs Amy not to say that to the boy and that "it's real nice" he goes into the barn, adding "we mustn't think anything bad about him Amy." In a similar manner, Spock urged parents to not directly forbid their young children from doing certain things, much like Aunt Amy just did with Anthony: "I think of a Mrs. T., who...looked disapproving and said, 'Now remember, don't go near the radio.' Suzy hadn't been thinking of the radio at all, but now she had to...Mrs. T...makes an issue when there doesn't need to be any."²¹¹ Or his advice when young parents see their baby dropping food or toys deliberately: "Trying to scold a baby out of dropping things leads to nothing but the frustration of the mother."²¹² Amy, in response, quizzically looks at Mrs. Fremont and says that Anthony isn't even around to hear them. Mrs. Fremont with a concerned look on her face replies: "You know as well as I do that sometimes – sometimes he can hear what we're thinking no matter where he is. So you just keep thinking real nice things." As the scene ends, Amy, who is dripping sweat from her neck and forehead, unbuttons the top button of her dress saying that she hopes it cools off by the evening. Once again, Mrs. Fremont corrects her and says that it is not that hot but a real good day as she waves to Anthony in the distance. The camera focuses in on Mrs. Fremont's face, which shows her

²¹¹ Benjamin Spock, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1946) 212.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 214-215.

attempting to force a smile even though it remains clear to the viewer that her inner state is one of torment, exhaustion, and nervousness.

In the following scene, Anthony's sadistic side is conveyed even more. Mr. Fremont is shaving and getting dressed as Anthony walks into the bedroom. Anthony restlessly moves around the room eventually sprawling out on his parents' bed while he laments that no kids came to play with him today. His father replies "Well you remember the last time some kids came over to play, the little Frederick's boy and his sister?" After Anthony replies that he remembers having a good time with them, his father responds: "It's good you have a good time...It's just that...well Anthony, you, uh, you wished them away into the cornfield and their mommy and daddy were real upset." Soon thereafter, a dog can be heard barking outside in the distance – "that's Bill Soams' collie, that's that dog that comes around," Anthony says. When his father says that there are not many dogs around anymore because Anthony wished them away, his son replies: "I don't like them – they didn't like me. I hate anybody like that. I hate anybody that doesn't like me." After his father reassures him that everyone loves him, Anthony recalls an episode when he heard someone think that he "shouldn't wish away all the automobiles and things and electricity. They said it wasn't good that I did that...He shouldn't have thought those bad thoughts. That's why I made him go on fire." Anthony gets up from the bed, stands by the window and says that the dog outside does not like him and is a "bad dog." Anthony's eyes then open wide and the dog can be heard whimpering followed by silence. The father, with a somber look on his face, realizes that his son just killed another dog, and drops his head. He changes his demeanor quickly, however, when his distressed wife comes into the room, telling her "Isn't it a real good thing that he done that honey?" His wife trying to resist weeping, embraces him and concurs "It's a real good thing." For Spock, however, "a child is happier around parents who

aren't afraid to admit their anger, because then he can be more comfortable about his own," a fact he makes explicit in his second edition.²¹³

In this scene Anthony's utter incapability of playing and getting along with both other children, adults, and even animals is made frighteningly apparent. As Spock himself pointed out, "The spoiled child is not a happy creature even in his own home. Then, when he gets out into the world, whether it's at 2 or 4 or 6, he is in for a rude shock. He finds that nobody is willing to kowtow to him; in fact, everybody dislikes him for his selfishness... What makes him stop grabbing toys from other children as he grows older? Not the slaps that he might get from the other child or his parent... The thing that changes him is learning to love his regular playmates and discovering the fun of playing *with* them."²¹⁴ Dr. Gerald H.J. Pearson, who also authored several works on psychoanalysis and childhood in the mid-twentieth century, discussed what can happen when children are continually gratified: "These children have not learned to tolerate any anxiety, particularly that which arises when the immediate gratification of an instinctual desire is prevented by reality... it reverses the whole parent-child relationship..."²¹⁵ This reversal is clearly depicted in Anthony's relationship with his parents, who go out of their way to soothe and even avoid the possibility of Anthony having to deal with any kind of anxiety. Along with Pearson, childhood psychologist Erik Erikson similarly pointed out how important it is for parents to draw a distinction between fear and anxiety. While fears are based on real, recognizable dangers that can be dealt with rationally, anxieties are "diffuse states of tension which magnify and even cause the illusion of an outer danger, without pointing to appropriate avenues of defense or mastery."²¹⁶ For Anthony, the anxiety that comes with the faint possibility

²¹³ Spock, 2nd ed. 9.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 269.

²¹⁵ Gerald H.J. Pearson, *Psychoanalysis and the Education of the Child* (New York: Norton & Co., 1954), p. 81.

²¹⁶ Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1963) 406-407.

that another child, or even a dog, does not like him is unbearable, resulting in their immediate destruction. In this regard, Erikson continued by paraphrasing FDR, “We have nothing to fear but anxiety. For it is not the fear of danger, but the fear of the associated state of aimless anxiety which drives us into irrational action, irrational flight, - or, indeed, irrational denial of danger. When threatened with such anxiety we either magnify a danger which we have no reason to fear excessively – or we ignore a danger which we have every reason to fear. To be able to be aware of fear, then, without giving in to anxiety; to train our fear in the face of anxiety to remain an accurate measure and warning of that which man must fear – this is a necessary condition for a judicious frame of mind.”²¹⁷ In many ways, the characters in “It’s a Good Life” obsessively try to stamp out any and all causes of anxiety, while ignoring or downplaying those things which should be properly feared – Anthony’s tyrannical and destructive habits. By allowing Anthony’s unfounded and unpredictable anxieties to perpetually control the entire family, real destruction is able to occur more freely and ruthlessly.

The following scene shows everyone gathered for Dan Hollis’ birthday party, a friend of the Fremonts. Before they celebrate his birthday, however, the focus is once again on Anthony and what he wants. Both the Fremonts and all their friends, are gathered around the television for TV night. Not surprisingly, Anthony dictates what the group watches – a violent bloody battle between two triceratops dinosaurs. Although the town is evidently without electricity, Anthony can turn it on when he wants to, in this case, in order to watch TV. Anthony sits in the front right up close to the TV while everyone else is gathered behind him. As the camera pans among the faces, people either have a look of disgust or distress as they watch the battling dinosaurs on the screen. At the episode’s conclusion, Anthony declares “That’s all the television there is!” and the

²¹⁷ Erikson, 407.

guests praise Anthony's choice of entertainment. Mrs. Fremont then tells Dan's wife Ethel to give Dan his surprise for his birthday and the guests expectantly watch Dan unwrap the wrapping paper, eventually revealing a Perry Como long playing record. To his great excitement, Dan announces that he has not heard Perry Como in years and would love to hear some new music. Anthony, however, despises singing and does not want the record to be played. Several of the guests, including Dan, express that it is in fact a good thing he cannot listen to his birthday present, calling to mind Spock's imploring parents that "balance is achieved by...keeping for yourselves such other interests and pleasures as won't hurt him at all."²¹⁸ By shunning their own harmless enjoyment of Perry Como, the adults descend further into a state of futile martyrdom, while also failing to teach Anthony a vital life skill, to tolerate others and their different opinions and tastes. As Grace and Fred Hechinger expressed, "What worries us is not the greater freedom of youth but rather the abdication of the rights and privileges of adults for the convenience of the immature."²¹⁹

Afterwards, Mrs. Fremont asks their friend Pat Riley to play piano for everyone. Pat begins to play, but nervously says to Anthony, "It would be good if you told me what to play," to which Anthony responds "play anything." As Pat anxiously plays "Moon Glow" on the keys, Dan sits on the couch drinking the Peach Brandy he received as another one of his gifts. Realizing that Dan might be getting drunk, his wife Ethel implores, "Please for the love of heaven, don't say anything." Dan calmly responds "I'm not saying anything" but a moment later he thinks out loud how there are only five bottles of liquor left in the town. His internal frustration builds until he cries out that he cannot even play his Perry Como record and he throws

²¹⁸ Spock, 2nd ed. 6.

²¹⁹ Hechinger, *Teen-Age Tyranny*, ix.

his glass, shattering it in the fireplace. In an environment run by Anthony, the adults now are forced to wonder if they have what they need to live a mentally healthy and satisfying life. In the case of Dan, the answer is clearly negative, and he resorts to a childlike tantrum, relegated to utter powerlessness.

In Spock's second edition, he seems to have taken particular notice of this stress and emotional self-neglect among parents as he adds a section simply titled "Parents Are Human." Spock, undoubtedly somewhat surprised that he needed to state in explicit terms that parents "have needs," begins by explaining that "books about child care, like this one, put so much emphasis on all the needs that children have – for love, for understanding, for patience, for consistency, for firmness, for protection, for comradeship, for calories and vitamins – that parents sometimes feel physically and emotionally exhausted... They get the impression that they are meant to have no needs themselves. They can't help feeling that an author who seems to be standing up for children all the time must be critical of parents when anything goes wrong. It would be only fair if this book had an equal number of pages about the genuine needs of parents, the frustrations they constantly meet not only in the home but outside it, how tired they get, how much help their children could be if they were more considerate."²²⁰ Unwittingly, Spock may have helped to reveal a profitable market for self-help books for adults, having realized that adults need to be reminded of their basic emotional and psychological needs.

One of these needs for adults is that of leisure and entertainment, a fact illustrated by Dan distinctly wanting to listen to Perry Como. The fact that here too Anthony keeps Dan from enjoying his own birthday and entertainment preferences speaks to another significant

²²⁰ Spock, 2nd edition, 4.

phenomenon of the postwar period, namely the widening gap between adult and children's entertainment, most clearly seen in music. Perry Como, the choice of the older generation that was raised on big band style vocalists such as Frank Sinatra and Rosemary Clooney, undoubtedly sought to assuage the insecurity of many adults when he said self-assuredly on his television show in 1957, "Every fella with a guitar isn't a threat, ya know."²²¹ Gaining more Como-like courage and daring, Dan walks over to the piano and says "Don't play that Pat. That's not what I want you to play. Play this..." and he starts to sing "Happy birthday to me, happy birthday to me, happy birthday dear Danny..." The guests beg him to stop singing knowing the consequences if he persists. Dan, however, only gets more audacious and starts to sing "You Are My Sunshine," opposing Dan's previous nighttime mood piece "Moonglow." With years of dammed up anger and frustration starting to make Dan crack, the living room soon burst with pent-up adult rage. Dan points at Anthony, calling him a "dirty little monster" and a "murderer." He then dares Anthony: "You think about me. Go ahead Anthony. You think bad thoughts about me. And maybe some man in this room, some man with guts, somebody who's so sick to death of living in this kind of place and willing to take a chance will sneak up behind you and lay something heavy across your skull and end this once and for all!" Anthony points right back at Dan Hollis yelling "You're a bad man! You're a very bad man!" While Dan begs someone to take a lamp or a bottle to Anthony's head to no avail, Anthony finally performs the anticipated deed and turns Dan into a jack-in-the-box, his head bouncing back and forth on a toy spring. Dan has now made the transformation from an adult who simply wants to celebrate his birthday and listen to Perry Como to a child throwing a tantrum because he is powerless with Anthony around to finally morphing into a kid's plaything as he is now literally a toy. To finish off this latest

²²¹ *The Perry Como Show*, January 1957 (NBC).

expression of unbridled power, Anthony threatens Dan's now widow that if she thinks bad thoughts about him, he will do the same to her. Serling offers his closing thoughts, "No comment here, no comment at all. We only wanted to introduce you to one of our very special citizens, little Anthony Fremont, age 6, who lives in a village called Peaksville in a place that used to be Ohio. And if by some strange chance you should run across him, you had best think only good thoughts. Anything less than that is handled at your own risk, because if you do meet Anthony, you can be sure of one thing: you have entered *The Twilight Zone*."

While this episode does not necessarily propose specific child-rearing techniques or necessarily present an obvious pro-Spock or anti-Spock message, it plays upon the anxieties and worries of parents across America at the time. Spock, along with countless other Americans, were distressed by the industrial age and the demands it placed on parents and children alike. By encouraging parents to take a less authoritative approach to parenting and behave more like a "friendly boss," Spock arguably was trying to help parents foster qualities such as other-direction and cooperation which were becoming increasingly necessary in the postwar world and economy. But just as Spock, Pearson, and Erikson all cautioned parents to not allow their lives, behavior, and outlook to be controlled by the anxieties of postwar life, "It's a Good Life" horrifyingly shows why such advice was being offered to parents at the time. But misreading such advice and seeing family life as the solution to Cold War fears was similar to misreading foreign entanglements – they could result in complicating, rather than containing, the tensions of postwar American life.

"Living Doll"

While newfound concerns over discipline, fun, and parent-child dynamics were dramatized in "It's a Good Life," "Living Doll" shows the psychological complexity and

consumer pressures involved with postwar parenting. In a somewhat related sense, “Nightmare as a Child” (S1, e29) also explored the psychological challenges during childhood, as a woman is confronted by herself as a young girl. Once she figures out that she is in fact talking to her younger self, the woman is able to relive, and eventually find relief from traumatic experiences she went through as a young girl. In “Living Doll” the traumatic elements of childhood as well as the pressures on parents to provide consumer goods for their children are simultaneously explored. Airing on November 1, 1963, the episode famously depicted a talking doll named “Talky Tina,” which was based on the Mattel Corporation’s “Chatty Cathy,” the first mass-marketed pull-string talking doll, initially released in 1960. The episode begins with a young mother named Annabelle and her daughter Christie pulling up to their suburban home in a station wagon after a shopping excursion. As they get out of the car with several packages in hand, Annabelle instructs Christie to go right upstairs with her doll as she does not want it to be seen by Erich, Christie’s stepfather. As they enter the house, Erich is sitting at a desk balancing a checkbook and immediately enquires about the recent purchase. To his dismay, he discovers that Annabelle bought Christie another doll which he feels she does not need. Undeterred, Christie opens up the box revealing the hidden doll exclaiming “She’s alive daddy and her name is Talky Tina!” Erich disgustedly remarks how costly a doll like that must have been, but Annabelle tries to reassure him that she put it on the charge account. Meanwhile, Christie excitedly demonstrates all the doll can do – “She moves and she can talk and I just love her already!” After winding up the doll, Talky Tina suddenly comes to life, moving her hands, shaking her head, and saying “My name is Talky Tina and I love you very much!” Erich, noticeably unimpressed, prods Annabelle about the purchase price once again. After Annabelle states that she does not think that it is the price that is bothering him, Erich sardonically says, “Now we’ll get more of that

Freudian gibberish you've been getting from her doctor, huh?" Annabelle, firmly responds to his condescension that "it isn't Doctor Lubin's fault that she feels rejected," referring to Christie's therapist. After Erich yells at Christie to "shut that thing off," Christie leaves the doll, still in motion, on the sofa and runs up to her room in tears. Left alone now with the doll, Erich winds it up once more to see it for himself. To his surprise, Talky Tina strikes a very different tone, moving her arms and head again but this time ominously proclaiming: "My name is Talky Tina and I don't think I like you." Erich with a puzzled look on his face now, is accompanied by Rod Serling's opening narration: "Talky Tina, the doll that does everything, a lifelike creation of plastic and springs and painted smile... To Erich Streator, she is a most unwelcome addition to his household. But without her, he'd never enter *The Twilight Zone*."

Right from the outset, this particular episode of *The Twilight Zone* touches upon several important developments taking place at this time - the burgeoning market for children's consumer goods, the increasing availability of credit, and the ever expanding prominence of Freudian psychology in American minds. The dramatic rise in the birth rate during the decades following World War II, as well as the ever-expanding ability of Americans to purchase consumer goods, meant that manufacturers' efforts to churn out children's toys had enormous profit potential. In monetary figures alone, Americans spent a total of \$5.78 billion on toys and sporting goods in 1950, but by the end of the 1960s, this figure had ballooned to \$15.24 billion.²²² Just as women's fashion, automobiles, and home furnishings went through certain changes in order to encourage Americans to buy or replace products more frequently, so too did toys. But if toys could be a boon for marketers and provide companionship and fun for children,

²²² Department of Commerce, *National Income and Product Accounts, 1959-1988* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1992), II, 70, 75; Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1995), 491.

they could also prove to be a financial burden and terror for adults, illustrated in fantastical horrifying ways in this production of *The Twilight Zone*. Faced with these market changes and their children's growing consumeristic sensibilities, parents sought out assistance from new lines of credit and psychoanalysis to help them achieve balance both fiscally and psychologically. These supposed reliefs, however, could complicate the wallet, the mind, and the family, potentially forming a kind of nightmare as seen in this episode of *The Twilight Zone*.

“Living Doll” is not only based on an expanding children's consumer market, but a rapidly changing one as well. In generations past, toy manufacturers often appealed to parents even more than children, knowing that they had to convince parents that their product was worth purchasing. However, during the late fifties and early sixties with the advent of television, toy companies discovered they could market more directly to children. No longer having to make educational appeals (“this will help your child's brain develop”) or nostalgic appeals to parents (“remember when you played with ____?”), companies such as Mattel were increasingly empowered by television's visual power and their newfound ability to communicate more directly and fully with children, sometimes with no parent even present. Indeed, out of all major toy manufacturers, Mattel was the first to see and take advantage of television's marketing power.

In 1955 the owners of Mattel, Ruth and Elliot Handler, decided to sponsor a segment of Walt Disney's *Mickey Mouse Club* on ABC. The contract was for a full year and cost the Handlers \$500,000, equaling their company's net worth at the time. In generations prior, toy manufacturers typically only advertised around the holidays and counted on individual retailers to demonstrate and sell their products. With this new ABC contract, Mattel became the first toy

manufacturer to invest money in TV advertising year-round.²²³ With its slogan, "You can tell it's Mattel, it's swell," the company went on to increase its presence on television all the more. In 1959 Mattel began sponsoring *Matty's Funday Funnies*, which featured Mattel's boy mascot Matty Mattel, and allowed Mattel to promote its latest toys both during the show itself and during commercial breaks. Having already solidified its presence on television to promote its products, Mattel's success exploded with the release of Barbie in 1959 and Chatty Cathy in 1960. These new interactive toys, along with the secure TV spots which immediately introduced them to children, made Mattel's sales figures soar to \$100 million by 1965. While radio programs in the 1930s and 40s also featured ads for different products aimed at children, the ability to visually demonstrate toys in action and to show children playing with them, made TV a near irresistible marketing force. In a classic case of manufacturing desire, the medium of television "brought" new toys into the home before they were ever purchased, and as a result, transformed America's youth into unpaid in-home salesmen and saleswomen for toys. This is demonstrated in the mother's statement that the doll is one Christie had "her eye on for months." Now more than any previous time period due to repetitive TV ads, manufacturers like Mattel could count on children to close their sales.²²⁴ As marketing researcher Eugene Gilbert explained, "An advertiser who touches a responsive chord in youth can generally count on the parent to finally succumb to purchasing the product...Parents generally have little resistance or protection against youth's bombardments. Thus it becomes evident that the youth market is the one to reach. We, of course, do not mean to picture the parent as the downtrodden object at the mercy of its offspring; but it is not to be denied that a parent subjected to requests from the

²²³ "Mattel, Inc. History," *International Directory of Company Histories. Vol.61*. St. James Press (2000)

²²⁴ Gary Cross, *Kids' Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 162-171.

youngster who thinks he is in dire need of an item, witnessed on television, may find it easier to 'give in' rather than dispute rationally with a highly emotionalized child. This is not to say that we advocate merciless hammering by the advertiser through the child to make papa purchase thousands of unnecessary objects, but we do mean to reiterate again that the young person's influence is not to be underestimated."²²⁵

Just as marketing expanded and changed, so too did the toys themselves. Although dolls had been around for centuries, companionate dolls that could interact with children emerged as something new in the 1960s. Indeed, Chatty Cathy was the first in a series of successful dolls manufactured by Mattel that could talk. Among others were Matty Mattel and Sister Belle, who also served as the "hosts" of *Matty's Funday Funnies*, the same show sponsored by Mattel. One of the several advertisements Mattel ran in 1961 for Chatty Cathy promoted not only the doll's unique ability to interact with kids, but also its ability to consume and model seasonal fashions, just like a real boy or girl. Even one of the eleven utterances Chatty Cathy could say was "Please change my dress." While there were ten other phrases she could say, the advertisement Mattel ran in 1961 promoted most of all this fashion-consuming aspect of the doll:

Oh Chatty Cathy, Oh Chatty Cathy
Are Mattel's famous talking dolls
We pull her ring and you say eleven different things
"Let's Play House," "Please Change My Dress"
We can change her dresses, now goodness knows
Now we got a wardrobe full of pretty clothes
For nursery school, you're crisp and cool
For summer there's a play time set
In winter burrrrr, your collar fur
In the coldest season she can get
"I love you." You love your mama
And they love their sleepy time pajamas
"Tell me a story"

²²⁵ Eugene Gilbert quoted in Grace and Fred M. Hechinger's *Teen-Age Tyranny*, 147-148

The only story now left to tell
Is that Chatty Cathy's made by.... Mattel!²²⁶

In this way, the lifelike doll provided a friend who could not only play and speak with a young child, but even consume fashion trends with them. In a different promotional piece for the doll, a newspaper ad at the time struck an unintentional ominous tone, one fitting to *The Twilight Zone*, when it proudly proclaimed: “You never know what adorable Chatty Cathy will say.”²²⁷ Erich Streater and the home viewing audience were about to find out.

As the episode continues, the doll's maliciousness and Erich's anxieties become increasingly evident. As he winds up the doll one more time, it announces, “My name is Talky Tina and I think I could even hate you.” Erich, in disgust, flings the doll across the room smashing it against the wall before it falls to the floor. As Tina lies on her back, her eyes spring eerily open and she strikes an even more threatening tone with Erich, one unprompted by any winding this time, “My name is Talky Tina, and you'll be sorry.” Immediately thereafter, Annabelle descends down the stairs after tending to her upset daughter, and sees the doll laying on the floor. Realizing her husband has just violently thrown her daughter's toy across the room, Annabelle looks at him with worried, confused eyes, “Why Erich?” to which he simply responds that he didn't like what it said. Erich then picks up the doll, wanting to prove its malicious nature to his wife, but the doll only says “I love you” instead. After Annabelle confesses that she may not be able to tolerate Erich's anger toward Christie anymore, Erich merely mocks Annabelle's love for her daughter, stating that because he is only her stepfather, he is “incapable of loving children because we can't have any of our own,” revealing his impotency. Sensing Erich's

²²⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-sYQ8_2v_Q

²²⁷ *The Times Picayune*, New Orleans, LA, October 24, 1963, p. 40.

passive aggression, Annabelle responds in a hopeful tone that he could love Christie if he only gave her a chance.

Here Erich's sexual impotence and inability to procreate is mirrored by his powerlessness regarding what toys his step-daughter Christie ultimately brings home. And although Annabelle brought her to get the doll, the sale was largely performed by the marketers who advertised the product to Christie and the creditors who financed the exchange. Purchases such as this one partially reflected the vision of advertising agent Charles H. Brower when he gave the following exhortation to creditors: "If we are to break the present economic log jam, you installment-credit bankers and we in advertising must do it by working together."²²⁸ If the ability to advertise on television made marketing a talking doll much easier, the increased availability of credit made selling much easier and more lucrative than ever before. Credit not only freed up consumers' abilities to purchase things when they wanted but also temporarily relieved them of the psychological pressure and stress that can come with deciding whether to purchase a new product or not. As one marketing researcher pointed out at the time, credit "removes the air of finality inherent in a cash transaction. In a sense, the credit buyer makes up his mind to buy while he is still paying for the item."²²⁹ In other words, credit helps to delay both the actual purchase as well as the deliberate mental choice to do so. The mental stress and conclusiveness of a cash transaction is exchanged for peace of mind via deferred payment, but it comes at a cost with interest. That cost, however, also remains more concealed, reflected in the fact that Annabelle never says how much the doll actually cost, but repeatedly says she merely "put it on

²²⁸ Packard, *The Waste Makers* (New York: Ig Publishing, 1960) 152.

²²⁹ *Ibid*, 153.

the account.” Just as the doll offered Christie a kind of psychological comfort, so too did purchasing on credit for Annabelle and American consumers alike.

And although Christie and her mom seemed happy about their trip to the department store, Erich’s discomfort and anxiety became readily apparent as he demanded to know how much the doll cost while balancing a checkbook at a desk. Despite certain comfort and flexibility offered by credit to young families, the spousal exchange illustrates how credit simultaneously added a new layer of complexity to personal finances and married life. And the driving force behind these changes in credit were actually department stores themselves, as retailers learned that selling their products on revolving credit meant their customers bought even more products. Department stores found they not only sold more items when they made credit available, but their ability to charge interest on customers’ unpaid balances meant that stores could pursue credit expansion as an end in itself in order to increase profits. Original price tags now only represented a fraction of what retailers would make from selling a product as a doll that retailed for twenty dollars may end up costing thirty dollars or more by the time it was actually paid off.

To be sure, credit was not altogether new. Since the 1920s, 30-day credit accounts were offered to consumers, but obligated customers to make a payment within that time frame before making another purchase. Typically, these 30-day accounts were also only available at higher end stores.²³⁰ Revolving credit, on the other hand, was controlled by a credit manager who set credit limits based on each individual’s finances and allowed customers more flexibility in making payments by charging them somewhere around 1% interest on their unpaid balance. Beginning in the late fifties, however, option accounts began to replace both these 30-day credit

²³⁰ For further information on this topic, refer to Louis Hyman, *Debtor Nation*

accounts as well as the strictly budgeted revolving accounts. Option accounts at department stores did not set any individuated credit limits and therefore did not require personally meeting with a credit manager either – any customer could use these new option credit accounts. Consequently, managing debt and credit became the sole responsibility of the consumer. This shift in credit options also enabled women, particularly, to renegotiate their role in financial decisions, being freed from both the dictates of a department store credit manager as well as their husband’s personal monetary inclinations. One credit controller at the time explained the impact option accounts would have on customers in deliberately gendered terms when he simply stated that now “she becomes her own credit manager.”²³¹ In this way, credit could either help to renegotiate traditional gender roles when it came to personal finance, or in the case of Erich and Annabelle, it could create yet another source of tension and bickering in their marriage.

In the following scene, the family is sitting down to dinner while Christie pretends to feed her doll. After Annabelle states that Tina will be a good playmate for Christie, Erich retorts, exposing his Freudian insecurity over his own impotence, “Mm hmm. Lacking a brother or sister is that what you mean? That’s why you bought the doll isn’t it? Sort of a reminder?” Annabelle despairingly looks down and says “It hadn’t occurred to me, but if that’s what you want to think...” In these exchanges between Erich and Annabelle it becomes increasingly clear that neurosis and even psychosis are deeply impacting Erich. And for Freudian psychologists, Erich’s neurotic symptoms would be interpreted as serving “the purpose of sexual gratification for the patient” and a “substitute for satisfactions which he does not obtain in reality.”²³² In Mr. Steator’s case, with the satisfaction of pro-creation lacking, he is deluded to the point of thinking

²³¹ Charles Dicken, “Should the Credit Department Be Self-Supporting?” *Credit Management Year Book 1958-1959* (New York: National Retail Dry Goods Association, 1958), 92.

²³² Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* trans. Joan Riviere (London: Allen and Unwin, 1922) 251.

that his wife, step-daughter, and the recently purchased doll are all co-conspirators there to humiliate and emasculate him. Erich's antagonistic stance toward everyone, even Christie's new doll, once again bears resemblance to Freudian thinking regarding neurotic sufferers of expectant dread who "always anticipate the worst of all possible outcomes, interpret every chance happening as an evil omen, and exploit every uncertainty to mean the worst."²³³ For Erich, this meant that his wife's use of department store credit was a deliberate emasculating slight and her choice to specifically purchase a doll for Christie was a purposeful mockery of his impotence. In this way, Erich does not question these neurotic thoughts but accepts them as the truth. For Freudian psychologists, though, someone who readily accepts their neurosis without inspecting the underlying causes "has made a bad bargain," having "paid too heavily for the solution of the conflict; the sufferings entailed by the symptoms are perhaps as bad as those of the conflict they replace, and they may quite probably be very much worse."²³⁴ Erich Streator would soon discover just how much worse it could get.

While Erich indiscriminately dismisses psychology as "Freudian gibberish," his wife discounts his fantasies or considers them merely another expression of her husband's anger toward Christie and nothing deeper. Freudian thinking, however, theorizes that in order to reach a cure or resolution of neurosis, one must first "equate fantasy and reality and not begin with whether the...experiences under examination are the one or the other...this is clearly the only correct attitude to adopt toward these mental productions" because "they too possess a reality of a sort. It remains a fact that the patient has created these fantasies for himself, and this fact is of scarcely less importance for this neurosis than if he had really experienced what the fantasies

²³³ Freud, 332.

²³⁴ Ibid, 321

contain. The fantasies possess *psychical* as contrasted with *material* reality, and we gradually learn to understand that *in the world of the neuroses* it is *psychical reality which is the decisive kind.*²³⁵ For Erich and Annabelle, both would need to accept the seemingly absurd, but psychically real phenomenon that a scheming, malicious child's doll is in fact threatening Mr. Streator.

After the family finishes with dinner, Christie leaves to play with a friend and Annabelle cleans up, once again leaving Erich alone with the doll. Tina comes alive once more and tells Erich that she is beginning to hate him. Erich, wiping mashed potatoes from her plastic mouth, tells the doll that he is going to get rid of her. The doll looks back at him and quips, "You wouldn't dare," challenging him all the more. After Erich props the doll up onto the table, Tina says that Annabelle and Christie would both hate him if he attempted to get rid of her. Unbothered, Erich puts a cigarette in his mouth, lights a match, and brings it close into Tina's face. Erich is surprised when Tina says "Ow" and asks "so you have feelings?" to which Tina explains that everything has feelings. After Erich questions her if she could feel pain, Tina responds "not really, but I could hurt you." Erich grins and laughs as he remarks: "Threats from a doll!" When Annabelle comes back into the room, Erich accuses her of playing a trick on him by placing a walkie-talkie inside the doll and voicing it herself, which Annabelle dismisses as an absurd allegation. Now more determined than ever to bring his tormenter to justice, Erich goes out into the garage and disposes of Tina in the garbage can, placing the lid firmly on top of it. He turns off the garage light and heads back into the house, seemingly triumphant.

²³⁵ Ibid, 309.

As Erich sits on the couch, Christie asks him if he has seen her, with Erich pleading ignorance. While Christie and her mom both go to search for Tina, Erich relaxes, satisfied with his clandestine efforts but is quickly interrupted by a telephone ring. Erich picks up the phone and immediately hears a voice: “My name is Talky Tina and I’m going to kill you.” Erich hurriedly returns to the garage only to find that Tina is no longer in the garbage can. Now in a state of panic, he asks Annabelle what she did with the doll, thinking that she had found her in the garbage and hid her somewhere. Annabelle, confused by all these seemingly unbelievable accusations, says she did not do such a thing but finds it “dreadful” that Erich put her in the garbage. Now finally somewhat convinced of his wife’s innocence, Erich nervously describes the phone call with Tina threatening to murder him. Annabelle, baffled by all that she is hearing, can only tell him that she doesn’t know what to say. Erich then walks up the stairs to Christie’s room, finding Tina tucked into bed with Christie and snatches her, leaving Christie in tears. He proceeds straight back to the garage again, this time determined to end the feud with the doll once and for all by taking Talky Tina on a torture-filled tour of his workshop.

Their first stop is the vise. Erich places Tina between the metal slabs and twists the lever until her tiny plastic head is squeezed tight. Surprised that the doll is not writhing in pain, Erich says “I thought you said you have feelings.” Tina only giggles and mockingly replies, “I can stand it if you can.” Realizing that the vise alone will not suffice for killing this doll, Erich brings out “option B,” a blow torch, and attempts to light her on fire. But each time he lights the torch and pulls it close to her face, Tina simply blows out the flame. Increasingly frustrated, Erich loosens the doll from the vise and brings her to her next stop – the table saw. He flips the switch on and brings the whirring saw to her neck. Sparks fly as the blade makes contact with the doll’s neck, but Erich cannot seem to cut through it after repeated attempts. In the midst of his several

assassination-by-table-saw-attempts, Annabelle comes into the garage and asks Erich what he is doing. With the visual evidence proving sufficient to answer her question, she begs for him to stop, but Erich shoves her away, and Annabelle has little choice except to run off in a frightened and disturbed state. After his various failed attempts to destroy his step-daughter's toy, Erich's neurosis seems to reflect the Freudian conjecture that once "the disease has persisted for a considerable time it seems finally to acquire the character of an independent entity; it displays something like a self-preservative instinct; it forms a kind of pact...with the other forces in mental life, even with those fundamentally hostile to it."²³⁶ Erich finally reaches for a burlap bag and shoves the doll inside securing the top with a rope. He then throws the doll-filled bag in the garbage can and fortifies it by placing bricks on top of the lid, finally feeling successful.

Erich heads back upstairs only to find his wife packing her things to leave. After Erich tries to convince her once more that the doll really has been tormenting him, Annabelle can only tell him that he has become "a sick, neurotic stranger...filled with blind, unreasonable hate." Adding, "You better see a good psychiatrist." Erich sits down slowly on the edge of the bed, saying softly "I couldn't have imagined it." Annabelle picking up where she left off, says to Erich, "Tell him you tried to kill a doll." Realizing his relationship is on the brink of collapse, Erich tries to make amends by offering to give the doll back to Christie and heads back down to the garage to free Tina from her garbage can captivity. As he lifts her out of the bag, Tina says, "My name is Talky Tina and I don't forgive you." Erich can only plead with the doll, saying "Please shut up!" and turns off the lights, heading back upstairs to give the doll to Christie. With everyone in bed now, Erich lays on his back with his eyes open as he hears the mechanical movements of the doll somewhere in the hallway. He gets up to look for Tina, checking

²³⁶ Ibid, 321.

Christie's room first and then proceeds down the stairs. Suddenly, he trips on the doll causing him to somersault several times on his neck down the stairs to his death. Frightened by all the commotion, Annabelle, screaming, rushes to see what happened to Erich, finding both him and the doll at the bottom of the stairs. As she picks up the doll, it says its last words "My name is Talky Tina and you better be nice to me," showing how the mother now will be the one answerable to the toy, not the other way around. In shock, Annabelle drops the doll and Serling's closing narration comes on: "Of course we know dolls can't really talk and they certainly can't commit murder. But to a child caught in the middle of turmoil and conflict, a doll can become many things – friend, defender, guardian - especially a doll like Talky Tina, who did talk and did commit murder in the misty region of *The Twilight Zone*." Just as Talky Tina served as a representation of Erich's neurosis, the final scene reveals it as an embodiment of Annabelle's feeble strength against the forces of childhood marketing and consumerism. And while the doll, as Serling put it, served as a kind of "friend" and "guardian" to Christie, the fact that a consumer good was providing the little girl with companionship and security, and not her own family or friends, presents another dilemma to the home audience – if one allows consumer goods to fill in voids that should be met by people, what are the ultimate costs for parents and children? Just as children could learn to depend on a doll or other consumer good for their companionship, parents could become overly dependent on looking to the world of toys and gadgets to fill voids in their children's lives. It was up to everyday Americans to figure out if it was a deal worth making.

In both of these episodes, the predominant idea that the family was the best place to contain Cold War tensions is thrown into doubt. For millions of Americans who opted to raise families at this time, their worlds became more complex and disorienting, not less. Burdened with having to quickly adapt to suburban life, middle class parenting values, the pervasive

influence of television, and unprecedented levels of marketing and consumerism geared specifically toward children, parents could find that instead of minimizing the complicated aspects of postwar life, they increased it all the more in choosing to start families. By dramatically depicting the potential nightmares of childhood and family life, rather than simply showing another overly simplistic, unreal domestic fantasy that dominated television networks already, Serling sought to raise his viewers' ability to think critically and realistically about these important domestic issues. And instead of arguing that a simple return to pre-modern traditions would smooth family problems out or turning to the world of consumer goods would suffice, *The Twilight Zone* once again left these complex problems somewhat unresolved for the home audience to consider for themselves and their families. And in this same manner, Serling offered a critique of the simplistic, packaged resolutions offered by postwar advertisements and family sitcoms alike.

Chapter 5

White Collar Weariness: Postwar Work and Leisure Transformed

While manual laborers found pink slips in their mailboxes with increasing frequency during the postwar period, the promises of white collar positions served to entice millions of Americans who wanted the best chance at achieving the American Dream for themselves and their families. Indeed, the census of 1956 revealed that more people were employed in white collar work than manual labor for the first time in American history.²³⁷ While not all such jobs represented a rise in one's standard of living, by and large, Americans who took white collar jobs were making more money than their blue-collar predecessors and were able to buy more suburban homes, new automobiles and a host of other modern consumer goods. Without a doubt, white collar work made the good life possible for millions of Americans. Although postwar Americans enjoyed more income and the increased ability to consume more goods, it soon became evident to workers and social critics alike that the nature of most white collar work was alienating, dull, monotonous, bureaucratic, and did not provide the sense of fulfillment that working in production did or the sense of community that farming and other manual jobs once did. Instead of giving people a sense of their own craftsmanship or sense of service to other community members, many white collar jobs came with the primary benefit of increasing an employee's purchasing power. In this way, white collar work did not necessarily expand a person's sense of self or sense of community, but worked to merely increase their ability to consume more goods.

²³⁷ James Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 323.

In this context, Sloan Wilson's protagonist in the 1955 bestselling novel, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, remarked, "I really don't know what I was looking for when I got back from the war, but it seemed as though all I could see was a lot of bright young men in gray flannel suits rushing around New York in a frantic parade to nowhere. They seemed to me to be pursuing neither ideals nor happiness – they were pursuing a routine. For a long while I thought I was on the sidelines watching that parade, and it was quite a shock to glance down and see that I too was wearing a gray flannel suit."²³⁸ White collar culture seemingly swept over America and took it overnight, leading many critics, such as C. Wright Mills, to reflect on what it all meant for the United States. Indeed, Mills articulated in no uncertain terms,

By examining white-collar life, it is possible to learn something about what is becoming more typically 'American' than the frontier character ever was. What must be grasped is the picture of society as a great salesroom, an enormous file, an incorporated brain, a new universe of management and manipulation. By understanding these diverse white-collar worlds, one can also understand better the shape and meaning of modern society as a whole, as well as the simple hopes and complex anxieties that grip all the people who are sweating it out in the middle of the twentieth century.²³⁹

As one of the most significant features of the postwar period, the fast-moving, pill-popping, paperwork-filled world of white collar work necessarily found a place of residence in *The Twilight Zone*. With "Stop at Willoughby" (S1, e30), home audiences were treated to an unromantic look into the life of an ad executive, while "The After Hours" (S1, e34) showcased the self-alienating aspects of being a retail worker. With both episodes, Serling argued how human beings need work to be meaningful and allow for self-expression. When work becomes

²³⁸ Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955) 300.

²³⁹ C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951) xv.

merely a means to make money and buy consumer goods, individuals and communities become increasingly dehumanized in horrifying ways.

“Stop at Willoughby”

The Twilight Zone's episode entitled “A Stop at Willoughby” first aired on May 6, 1960. Along with it, “Nightmare at 20,000 Feet,” (S5, e3) starring William Shatner, also explored how white collar work can potentially lead to compromised psychological health. Having already suffered one nervous breakdown, Robert Wilson is traveling on an airplane with his wife when he begins to suffer another. Thinking he sees a gremlin on the wing, Wilson tries to warn his wife and the flight crew, but they merely think he is seeing things and give him a sedative to help calm him down. After the plane lands, damage wrought by the gremlin is clearly shown, as Wilson's supposed hallucinations are confirmed to be a reality. The main premise of the show and the disbelief of his wife and flight attendants, however, works effectively for the very reason that Wilson is a stressed-out salesman - his visions are easily dismissed by so many because of the stressful and psychologically demanding nature of his work.

In a similar way, “A Stop at Willoughby” dramatized white collar neuroses and begins with an office meeting in a New York City high rise, overlooking the city's skyline. Seven white men in designer suits are sitting around a conference table, waiting for another colleague, Jacob Ross, to arrive. These are ad men, both figuratively and literally positioned high above the city's nearly 8 million residents. The head of the advertising agency, Mr. Misrell, puffs on a cigar while the episode's main character, Gart Williams, nervously taps a pencil on his hand. After waiting over a half-hour for Mr. Ross, one of the secretaries comes into the meeting room, notifying the men of Ross' sudden resignation. Mr. Misrell erupts in anger as Ross' resignation means his firm is losing a lucrative advertising account with an automobile company and blames

the setback on Gart Williams, who had chosen to place Ross in charge of the account. Too furious to remain seated, Mr. Misrell stands up, snatches the cigar out of his mouth and articulates in a not-so-subtle-way how aggressive and belligerent their kind of work is: “Get with it, boy... This is a push business, Williams... A push, push, push business... you don’t delegate responsibilities to little boys... It’s push, push, push all the way, all the time, right on down the line!” After listening meekly to his boss’ verbal lashing, Mr. Williams retorts back, “Fat boy, why don’t you shut your mouth?!” and storms out of the meeting room. As he shuts the door behind him, Gart grabs his stomach, evidently suffering from some kind of stress related ulcer. Helen, Gart’s personal secretary, asks him if there is anything she can bring him, to which he replies cynically, “Yeah, a sharp razor and a chart of the human anatomy showing where all the arteries are.” He enters his office, closes the door, and turns off the lights, sitting down at his desk in film noir-like darkness. Serling’s opening narration introduces the home viewers to the dejected main character as he sits motionless at his desk: “This is Gart Williams, age thirty-eight, a man protected by a suit of armor all held together by one bolt. Just a moment ago, someone removed the bolt, and Mr. Williams’ protection fell away from him and left him a naked target. He’s been cannonaded this afternoon by all the enemies of his life. His insecurity has shelled him, his sensitivity has straddled him with humiliation, his deep-rooted disquiet about his own worth has zeroed in on him, landed on target, and blown him apart. Mr. Gart Williams, ad agency exec, who in just a moment will move into *The Twilight Zone* in a desperate search for survival,” and the screen fades to black.

This particular episode of *The Twilight Zone* clearly touches upon two of the most significant and enduring changes of the 1950s – the massive migration to the suburbs and the dramatically expanding job market for white collar work, particularly in advertising. Indeed, by

the close of the 1950s, the number of Americans performing white-collar work surpassed blue-collar jobs for the first time in U.S. history, while suburbs housed the majority of Americans by the end of the sixties. This now mostly white-collar and suburban America, saturated with advertising, spoke to the largely unprecedented affluence and social mobility afforded to Americans. And while the new suburban white-collar lifestyle was touted as the embodiment of the American Dream and embraced by millions of Americans across the country, *The Twilight Zone*'s "A Stop at Willoughby" exposed how this supposed dream could be more akin to a nightmare for some who realized what they were having to give up in order to enjoy modern amenities and executive status. In particular, the paper-pushing, product-selling, and daily commuting could prove to be more of a hindrance than a help when it came to fostering a sense of individuality and community. In this regard, Serling engages a subject touched upon by several contemporary critical works, particularly William Whyte's *The Organization Man*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, and David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, among several others. These critical works, along with "A Stop at Willoughby," raised concerns over how self-expression, identity, and community were often requisite sacrifices in order for one to partake in postwar American affluence. In this way, social mobility was not necessarily an inherently or entirely beneficial thing as "the individual, driven by the belief that he should never rest content in his existing station and knowing that society demands advancement by him as proof of his merit, often feels stress and insecurity and is left with no sense of belonging either in the station to which he advances or in the one from which he set out."²⁴⁰ In *Twilight Zone* fashion, Serling

²⁴⁰ David Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954) 105.

encouraged his audience for “Stop at Willoughby” to ponder the costs and rewards involved in the postwar American Dream.

In Freudian wish-fulfillment fashion, the episode continues by revealing Gart’s hidden subconscious desires in a dream he has while commuting back home. While the Connecticut-bound MTA train speeds through a dark, snowy evening, Gart suddenly finds himself on a vacated antique train. He opens his window, revealing a small, charming village filled with horse drawn carriages, children walking back from a fishing trip, and a man riding around on a penny farthing bicycle. The conductor walks down the train car announcing, “Willoughby, this stop is Willoughby!” only adding to Gart’s confusion. After Gart asks the conductor about Willoughby, he is only further puzzled when the conductor also mentions the date – the summer of 1888, mid-July. The smiling conductor describes the exotic location as a “really lovely little village, telling Gart, “you ought to try it sometime - peaceful, restful, where a man can slow down to a walk and live his life full measure.” Gart attempts to get off the train, but is startled and wakes up, finding himself back on a mid-twentieth century commuter train bound for his Connecticut suburb.

When Gart finally arrives at home after a long day of ridicule and commuting, he immediately pours himself a highball cocktail. As he takes his first drink, his wife Jane slowly comes down the stairs with a look of disgust on her face and asks Gart if he plans to spend his evening getting “quietly plastered and then sing all-colored songs?” Having heard about Gart’s outburst during the day’s meeting, she unsympathetically tells Gart to spare her his “little homilies” and asks if he wrecked his career, displaying a concern more for her husband’s employment status than his mental and emotional health. Gart responds sardonically that his boss “found it in that great, oversized heart of his to forgive. The somewhat obese, gracious gentleman will allow me to continue in his employ because he is such a human-type fella...with

a small, insignificant, parenthetical additional reason that if I were to go to a competitive agency, I might possibly take a lot of business with me,” emphasizing the fact that he is valued only for the profits he generates and not for who he is as an employee. After Gart desperately confesses to Jane that he is “tired and sick,” she quickly responds that she is “sick and tired of a husband who lives in a kind of permanent self-pity. A husband with a heart bleeding sensitivity that he unfurls like a flag whenever he decides the competition is a little too rough for him.” Gart sadly looks up from his drink, clearly feeling he is only appreciated for the revenue he generates either to the ad agency he works for or the woman he married, and says earnestly that “some people aren’t built for competition, Janie. Or big, pretentious houses they can’t afford, or rich communities they don’t feel comfortable in, or country clubs they wear around their neck like a badge of status.” After Jane asks him what he would prefer to his current life and occupation, Gart adamantly replies, “Any job at all where I can be myself!”

Jane and Gart’s exchange regarding the costs involved with obtaining middle class rewards casts doubt upon the pursuit of the American Dream as an end in and of itself. The mere fact that white-collar status, suburban living, and consumer spending were the supposedly key components to achieving a kind of dream life, belies the reality that not everyone’s dreams are the same, or even should be. But in a postwar America, where rewards were boasted everywhere and costs frequently muted, led to observations such as David Potter’s that if “the social pressures upon the individual to enter the competitive contest are, in some cases, literally intolerable, resulting in neurosis, is not this because society itself regards the rewards as irresistible and is determined to compel everyone to strive for them? It is a commonplace of gambling that the intentness of the players is in proportion to the size of the stakes, and the stakes of the American game have certainly contributed something toward giving it a greater

tenseness than some participants can bear.”²⁴¹ The middle class dream, while largely accessible to a white man in his thirties like Gart, may only lead to a wealthy form of depravity if it means giving up too much of one’s self. Gart clearly feels he is caught in a kind of social trap, one that William Whyte also described in his seminal work *The Organization Man* citing how “few things are more calculated to rob the individual of his defenses than the idea that his interests and those of society can be wholly compatible. The good society is the one in which they are most compatible, but they never can be completely so, and one who lets The Organization be the judge ultimately sacrifices himself...It is hard enough to learn to live with our inadequacies, and we need not make ourselves more miserable by a spurious ideal of middle class adjustment.”²⁴² Between his work and his home life, Gart seemingly cannot express any kind of individuality. The middle class adjustment for Gart is total – work, wife, home, and even his leisure time is dictated by a kind of all-encompassing and all-demanding middle class package.

The elements which make up the episode thus far, including Gart’s experiences at work, his commute, and his dream on the train, dramatize issues raised in David Riesman’s best-selling study from 1950, *The Lonely Crowd*. Dividing the evolution of the American character into different “directions,” Riesman characterized the nineteenth century, here allegorized by Willoughby, as “inner-directed” because of community values and tradition. In contrast, the postwar United States was increasingly “other-directed” because of the pressure to work within bureaucracies and adapt among different social groups. In this way, Riesman argued that while other-direction incentivized positive qualities such as empathy and adaptability, it sometimes meant losing the sense of self and community which inner-directed America offered. Gart clearly

²⁴¹ Potter 72.

²⁴² William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002) 397-398.

despises many of the features which make up his contemporary world of other-direction and literally dreams of living back in the nineteenth century when inner-direction reigned. For inner-directedness, Riesman explained how “the source of the direction is ‘inner’ in the sense that it is implanted early in life by the elders and directed toward generalized but nonetheless inescapably destined goals.”²⁴³ In this way, inner-direction created a strong sense of identity, but it was one that was largely crafted by one’s family, community members, and religious leaders. Riesman termed this internalized view of the world a “gyroscope,” meaning that one interpreted people and experiences through a kind of fixed, internal prism.

For the majority of postwar Americans who were other-directed, Riesman explained how they developed their character from a wider variety of sources, not just family and local community. Rather than internalizing a set of ideals early on in life from ancestors and community members, Americans in the fifties needed to “be able to receive signals from far and near; the sources are many, the changes are rapid. What can be internalized, then, is not a code of behavior but the elaborate equipment needed to attend to such messages...”²⁴⁴ This equipment, Riesman refers to as a “radar” and serves as the means to socially scan the wants and needs of others. Gatt, as an advertising executive, not only has to have this essential social radar to function bureaucratically, but his very job in marketing and advertising speaks to the demands placed on him to read and anticipate others by crafting advertisements which suit the perceived desires of the American public. In this way, Gatt’s very existence and livelihood is based on Riesman’s concept of an other-directed radar.

²⁴³ David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, revised edition (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001) 15.

²⁴⁴ Riesman, 25.

But Riesman's discussion of the postwar other-directed American, compared with the nineteenth century inner-directed one, also had many gendered implications. And just as there was considerable tension between Gatt and Jane, the perceived worlds of the nineteenth and twentieth century seem to involve fundamental concerns over gender roles as well. One of the first to point this out was historian David Potter whose 1962 article entitled "American Women and the American Character" pointed out how Riesman's generalizations, among many other scholars, were put "mostly in masculine terms." Compounding this was the fact that the pressure to socially conform historically has usually been greater with regard to women, who largely lacked the social access to a life of individual entrepreneurialism in the inner-directed nineteenth century.²⁴⁵ More recently, James Gilbert has explained how Riesman's *Lonely Crowd* "depicted the contemporary world – other direction – as a situation that particularly threatened masculinity. His lonely crowd was principally an assembly of vulnerable men described in words that launched a signal of distress over the feminizing changes in modern culture."²⁴⁶ And although the United States in 1888 also included congested urban centers and corporations, the romanticized individuality and community of Gatt's nineteenth century dream spoke to the longing for the days when men had to be less socially conformist and adaptable - when they had internal gyroscopes instead of radars.

This underlying gendered tension becomes increasingly apparent when Gatt goes on to describe himself as an average guy with a wife who "has an appetite." When Jane coolly asks her husband where he would be if it was not for her appetite, her husband sits down on the stairs and explains that he knows where he would prefer to be and tells her about his dream of Willoughby.

²⁴⁵ David Potter, "American Women and the American Character," *Stetson University Bulletin*, January 1962, pp. 1-6.

²⁴⁶ James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) 45.

With a rare smile on his face, Gart describes the town as a “Currier and Ives painting” filled with bicycles, bandstands, wagons, and serenity. Jane, however, is only repulsed by her husband’s simple, romantic dream stating, “You know what the trouble with you is, Gart? You were just born too late because you know you’re the kind of a guy that could be satisfied with a summer afternoon or an ice wagon being drawn by a horse! So it’s my mistake, pal, my error, my miserable tragic error to get married to a man whose big dream in life is to be Huckleberry Finn!” Jane walks upstairs while Gart only shrugs and says to himself, “Yeah, maybe.”

The conclusion of this spousal discussion further illustrates the gendered tension of postwar life in the United States and, specifically, how women were frequently seen as the main cause for the ills of excessive consumerism and suburban comfort. On the other hand, Jane does not appear entirely happy herself, showing a dissatisfaction that seems to go beyond this one isolated interaction with Gart. As to the source of her frustration, one could easily point to Gart’s anachronistic tendencies and a marital mismatch. But on an even more fundamental level, the consumer culture and pressures to keep up the middle class lifestyle emerge as possible culprits for Jane’s discontent as well. The economic pressures to work and to consume sow the seeds of dissatisfaction in both Jane and Gart, alienating them from themselves and one another, despite their dependence on one another. This spousal alienation reflected, among many things, one psychiatrist’s conclusions at the time regarding vicarious living, a common feature of living in a consumer society where desires are not necessarily your own, but represent what one is pressured to desire: “The most frequent manifestation of vicarious living is a particularly structured dependence on another person, which is often mistaken for love. Such extremely intense and tenacious attachments, however, lack all the essentials of genuine love – devotion, intuitive understanding, and delight in the being of the other person in his own right and in his

own way. On the contrary, these attachments are extremely possessive and tend to deprive the partner of a life of his own... The other person is needed not as someone to relate oneself to; he is needed for filling out one's inner emptiness, one's nothingness."²⁴⁷ Clearly, both Jane and Gart lack this delight and fulfillment in each other and even themselves, foreshadowing many of the critiques raised by Betty Friedan three years later when she stated, "The suburban house is not a concentration camp, nor are American housewives on their way to the gas chamber. But they are in a trap, and to escape they must... exercise their human freedom, and recapture their sense of self. They must refuse to be nameless, depersonalized, manipulated, and live their own lives again according to a self-chosen purpose. They must begin to grow."²⁴⁸ The work-consuming cycle that permeates Jane's and Gart's lives leaves them seemingly little room to express and expand their sense of individuality, and as a result, even limits their respective capabilities to love and support each other.

While this episode illustrated some aspects of the discontent housewife to a degree, it also showed how women were frequently blamed as if they themselves created the modern consumer culture of postwar America and thereby increased the stress levels of their husbands. Throughout the popular print culture of the time, particularly in women's magazines such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Coronet*, and *Ladies Home Journal*, wives were persistently singled out as the guilty parties for a husband's excessive stress and maladaptation to middle class life. Throughout the many discussions of this phenomenon emerged the trope of the "nagging wife." An article written by Mrs. Dale Carnegie entitled "How to Help Your Husband Get Ahead" also served as the title of a book she went on to write. In it she informs her readers how "wives have

²⁴⁷ Andras Angyal, M.D., "Evasion of Growth," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 110, No. 5, November, 1953, 358-361.

²⁴⁸ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 50th Anniversary edition (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2013) 372.

been trying to influence husbands by nagging since the days of the caveman...To date, it hasn't worked – except in reverse.” Citing one particular case, Carnegie explained how an “old friend of our family told us that his career was almost wrecked by a wife who belittled every job he ever had...his wife would greet him by saying: ‘Well, how’s the boy genius? Did you bring home any commissions or just a lecture from the sales manager? I suppose you know the rent is due next week?’” In the same piece, Carnegie called wifely nagging “an emotional disease” and advised women who wondered if they fit the bill to simply ask their husbands – “If he should tell you that you are a nag, don’t react by violent denial – that only proves he is right.”²⁴⁹

Another article, which was featured in *Good Housekeeping*, warned women that they were the key difference in their husband’s career: “We employers realize how often the wrong wife can break the right man. This doesn’t mean that the wife is necessarily wrong for the man but that she is wrong for the job. On the other hand, more often than is realized the wife is the chief factor in the husband’s success in his career...If a man has a peevish, nagging wife, if she is jealous and possessive, if she is lazy or overambitious or extravagant, that man is going to be unhappy. And his unhappiness will interfere with his concentration.” The article goes on to list several desirable and undesirable qualities of a professional man’s wife, explaining that “a good wife is friendly...smiles easily and she is pleasant to be with.” Her primary interests are her husband and home and while the author claims it is difficult to truly determine who is a “good wife” right away, they explain that the “real troublemakers are fairly easy to spot.” These include “the complaining woman” who “can toss a cloud over the brightest of days – and the brightest of men.” Other undesirable “types” include “the dominating woman” who “knows it all – from what a man should eat to how he should run his business” and the “wife-in-a-rut” who is “a

²⁴⁹ Mrs. Dale Carnegie, “How to Help Your Husband Get Ahead,” *Coronet*, January 1954, p. 65.

pathetic little creature...out of her element.”²⁵⁰ Articles like these consistently placed the responsibilities of middle class adjustment, including new and challenging forms of white collar work and unprecedented levels of suburban living and commuting, squarely on a married woman’s shoulders. And while men understandably struggled and suffered in this new modern living arrangement, women’s emotional and psychological struggles were more frequently and unmercifully seen as character flaws and in clear violation of marital obligations, not a byproduct of also having to adjust to new roles and expectations just like their husbands. In this way, these popular articles contained hardly any real practical advice for wives and couples, aside from offering condemnatory commentary while holding up impossibly perfect ideals for marital relations.

Unlike these popular magazine articles, which emphasized a wife’s duty was to serve both her husband and, indirectly, the company he worked for, William Whyte noted the inherent conflict of interest between the corporate/business world and that of marriage and family. He mockingly noted that “unlike the Catholic Church, the corporation cannot require celibacy, and because its members are subject to the diversions of family ties, the corporation does fall short of complete effectiveness...and if it officially praises the hearth and family, it is because it can afford the mild hypocrisy.”²⁵¹ Even though Whyte’s famous study on corporate culture illuminated such marital and familial tensions inherent in the American middle class dream, popular stereotypes of the nagging and spend-happy wife perpetually worked to shift attention

²⁵⁰ R.E. Dumas Milner, “Before I Hire Your Husband, I Want to Meet You!” *Good Housekeeping*, January 1956, p. 52.

²⁵¹ William Whyte, *Organization Man*, 147.

and responsibility away from businesses and employers for psychological, emotional, and marital difficulties.²⁵²

As far as struggling wives were concerned, they would mostly have to wait for Friedan and other second-wave feminists to give popular voice to their shared “problem that has no name.” Like the many writers of popular magazine articles, Friedan also saw a kind of illness taking root in American women, but instead of framing it as a likely internal character flaw among the nation’s women, Friedan pointed to profoundly misguided gender roles and expectations as the source of struggle. She explained how “it is not an exaggeration to call the stagnating state of millions of American housewives a sickness, a disease in the shape of a progressively weaker core of human self...at a time when the dehumanizing aspects of modern mass culture make it necessary for men and women to have a strong core of self, strong enough to retain human individuality through the frightening, unpredictable pressures of our changing environment. The strength of women is not the cause, but the cure for this sickness.”²⁵³ In this way, for marriage to be a healthy and enduring enterprise, women did not need to be even more docile and subservient to their husbands, they needed exactly what the men they married at the time needed – a sense of self and the ability to invest in their own personal growth.

For Gart, his final breakdown comes when he is pressured to develop marketing ideas for a television show. After he is seen riding the train home next time, he again dreams of Willoughby, this time almost stepping off the train to walk into town, but just as he steps toward the exit, the train starts moving again. When Gart wakes up, though, he vows that the next time

²⁵² Stephanie Coontz’s *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* explores this topic further and discusses the many ways in which women have been historically held responsible to counteract the dehumanizing forces of capitalism.

²⁵³ Friedan, *Feminine Mystique*, 366.

he finds himself dreaming of Willoughby, he will most definitely get off the train. Back in his office, Mr. Misrell can be heard barking orders through the telephone at Gart, demanding Gart to come up with new advertising ideas for television, while Gart swallows several tablets of medication: “What we need here, Williams, is a show with zazz, an entertainer with moxie! We’ve got to take the audience by the ears and give them a yank, jar ‘em, rock ‘em, give them the old push, push, push!” Mr. Misrell’s demands illustrate just how the creative content on television must bend to sponsors and advertising: “Tomorrow morning I want at least a preliminary idea for the show. You know what I want – just a rough format with a few details as to how we integrate the commercials within the body of the show.” The show, in this way, must do two basic things – startle and grab the attention of the home audience and help to move consumer products. As an ad executive, Gart is being asked to actually come up with the initial creative ideas for a show, not actual writers, showing how television programming was becoming increasingly dominated by the ad industry. John E. Hasty, a producer for film and television, matter-of-factly expressed this point of view, undoubtedly shared by countless sponsors: “TV viewers cannot be regarded as an audience to be entertained...They are prospects...for what the sponsor has to sell. This fact constitutes the show’s reason for being...in a TV production the selling motive stands as the dominant factor.”²⁵⁴ In this way, it is not only a possibility that the creative aspects of television be used for selling, but an outright imperative and priority of the medium, represented clearly in this scene.

In addition, Gart’s reliance on medication to deal with work-related stress and anxiety speaks to the drastically increasing usage and mass-marketing of psychotropic drugs during the postwar era. As Andrea Tone’s work has most recently shown, pharmaceutical companies sought

²⁵⁴ Vance Packard, *The Waste Makers* (New York: Ig Publishing, 2011) 222.

to fill the psychological needs created by this “pathology of success.” And before drugs like valium were popularly considered “mother’s little helpers,” they were most frequently marketed to, and associated with, successful and stressed out men – athletes, executives, and independent bachelors.²⁵⁵ Calling attention to the price of success and achievement, ads emphasized how highly-achieving men courted psychological stress, which could be partially assuaged by prescription drugs. One of the largest producers of psycho-pharmaceuticals, Roche Laboratories, published a manual in 1968 entitled *Aspects of Anxiety* and outlined some of the social issues which necessitated the use of their drugs. The Roche manual, just like the marketing of many psychotropic drugs further emphasized this kind of gendered treatment of stress and success: “Like women, men are under particularly heavy stress during periods of major adaptive efforts. For adult males, these typically include leaving the parental home, serving in the armed forces, marrying, becoming a father, getting ahead in business, growing older, and retiring. Men’s problems, however, are compounded by an unspoken obligation to live up to society’s concept of ideal masculinity...Men – according to one point of view – dam up their feelings and develop ulcers and high blood pressure.”²⁵⁶ Gart, trapped in the social demands of marketing, reaches out for yet another mass-marketed consumer good – pharmaceutical drugs.

Following his one-way conversation with his boss, Gart takes several other calls, one regarding a sponsor’s frustration over the low ratings of a particular show as well as a disgruntled client who received scratched negatives from the office. As he is juggling between several phone calls, his secretary Helen adds to the chaos, imploring him over and over to speak with Mr. Misrell, who wants to discuss an urgent matter. With incessant muttering telephones in

²⁵⁵ Andrea Tone, *The Age of Anxiety: A History of America’s Turbulent Affair with Tranquilizers* (New York: Basic Books, 2008) 159.

²⁵⁶ Roche Laboratories, “Aspects of Anxiety,” 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1968), 88.

each of his hands and Helen demanding what remains of his already thinly-spread attention, Gart gets up from his desk and stumbles into his bathroom, seemingly on the verge of a panic attack. His other-directed radar has been overloaded. As he leans against the sink and looks up in the mirror, he sees several haunting likenesses of his boss, each one admonishing him repeatedly “Push, push, push Williams! Push, push, push! Get with it boy!” Having had enough of the incessant cacophony that repeatedly plays in his own mind even, Gart smashes the mirror with his fist, as the cracked glass reflects a very cracked ad executive. He stumbles back into his office, opting to call his wife Jane on the phone: “I’ve had it, understand? I’ve had it. I just can’t take this another day. Not another hour. This is it right now. I’ve got to get out of here...Janie, will you help me, please? Will you please help me?” No words can be heard on the other end, only the click of Jane hanging up her phone, further emphasizing Jane’s inability to relate or reach out to her own husband.

When Gart rides the train back to his suburban Connecticut home, he falls asleep on the train once again. As expected, Gart begins to have another dream of Willoughby, but this time, he successfully gets off the train. As he walks into the village, he is kindly greeted by some boys who just went fishing and is warmly welcomed to the town by another mustachioed local. As he continues to make his way into town, the camera cuts back to the present day, showing Gart’s dead body lying in a snowy ditch near the train tracks. The conductor explains to the medical crew that he jumped off the train and “shouted something about Willoughby, then ran out to the platform and that was the last I saw him. Doctor says he must have died instantly...” As the ambulance drivers carry his body to the car, they shut the door, revealing the name of the funeral parlor where Gart is headed, “Willoughby and Son,” as Serling offers his closing remarks: “Willoughby? Maybe it’s wishful thinking nestled in a hidden part of a man’s mind, or maybe

it's the last stop in the vast design of things – or perhaps, for a man like Gart Williams, who climbed on a world that went by too fast, it's a place around the bend where he could jump off. Willoughby? Whatever it is, it comes with sunlight and serenity, and is a part of *The Twilight Zone*.”

Although Gart finally escaped to Willoughby in his dream, the real-life consequences seen in his actual death, illustrate how escaping to a world that embodied a romanticized notion of the inner-direction of the nineteenth century was literally impossible and a kind of death sentence for postwar Americans. And while nostalgic and escapist portrayals of a bygone era abounded on television, as seen with consistently top-rating programs such as *Bonanza* (1959-73), *Gunsmoke* (1955-75), and *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960-68), Serling reminds his audience that to view such romanticized portrayals as actual escapes is gravely misguided. Not only were these types of programs set in a different, inaccessible time, episodes like “Andy’s Rich Girlfriend” from the *Andy Griffith Show* (S3, e2) grossly simplified the challenges associated with relationships and modern living. In this particular episode, Andy, in a way much like Gart in *The Twilight Zone*, yearns for the simple pleasures in life, while his girlfriend Peg comes from wealth and enjoys the finer things, such as fine dining, cocktails, and travelling internationally. When Andy becomes convinced that they are incompatible because of these differences, he goes to a nearby lake to clear his head and skip rocks. To his surprise, he finds Peg there doing the exact same thing and the two are reunited over sharing the simple joy of skipping rocks together.

Episodes like these romanticized the past with its seemingly simple, wholesome lifestyles and depicted that kind of life as the “answer” to postwar anxieties. But the mere fact that these were television programs, necessitating modern technology at the same time they were recalling the days before the advent of TV as inherently better, only seemed to exacerbate the tensions of

postwar living. That, coupled with the fact that all these programs worked to promote consumer goods via advertising simultaneously as “the answers” to modern dilemmas, only deepened these socially pervasive cognitive dissonances. Caught between two dominant, discordant messages which stated modern amenities, suburban housing, and consumption were the path to happiness on the one hand, and the simple pleasures which characterized the days of yore actually were, Americans could find themselves in a condition very similar to Gatt’s – working and living for the modern American Dream, but fantasizing about a mythologized past and a deep desire to escape with no practical resolution in sight. This enormous gap between complex modern living and all-too-simple prescriptions was to be filled mainly by pill-popping and pencil-tapping anxiety. This tension-filled psychological middle ground was dramatically distilled by Serling in “Stop at Willoughby.”

Rather than hold up an overly simplified past or a glorified present as being the resolution for postwar Americans, Serling illustrated how pursuing either dream as an end in and of themselves means sacrificing those abilities which enable people to experience fulfillment in real life – compromise and choice. As William Whyte stated: “Whatever kind of future suburbia may foreshadow, it will show that at least we have the choices to make. The organization man...must fight The Organization. Not stupidly, or selfishly, for the defects of individual self-regard are no more to be venerated than the defects of co-operation...It is wretched, dispiriting advice to hold before him the dream that ideally there need be no conflict between him and society. There always is; there always must be. Ideology cannot wish it away; the peace of mind offered by organization remains a surrender, and no less so for being offered in benevolence. That is the problem.”²⁵⁷ The problem that has no name, the problem of other-direction, the problem of the

²⁵⁷ Whyte, 404.

organization man, could only be realistically dealt with by making personal, relational, and social growth and expression more vital than pursuing or escaping to any fantasy, past or present.

“The After Hours”

The potential dangers of working primarily to purchase more and more consumer goods is explored in a number of episodes, including “What You Need,” (S1, e12), which tells the story of small-time crook Fred Renard and an elderly peddler named Pedott who seems to know what people “need” before they do. Seeing Pedott’s special abilities, Renard desperately pursues him, demanding more and more. Ultimately, Pedott gives Renard a pair of slippery shoes which he puts on, only to slip and fall in front of an oncoming car, showing that no matter what Pedott has that Renard needs, Pedott, as a vendor, is always going to be more concerned with his own more than anyone else’s. The world of peddling on the street in this episode bears resemblance to the white collar world of consumption in that ultimately marketers and manufacturers have their own interest in mind, even when they supposedly have what consumers and workers “need.”

At 10:00 PM on Friday June 10, 1960, the CBS aired “The After Hours.” The episode begins as many other *Twilight Zone* episodes in an ordinary setting which television viewers undoubtedly could identify with – a department store. The episode opens with an attractive, well-dressed woman named Marsha White, played by Anne Francis, perusing over different items on the first floor of the store. After not having much success finding anything she’s interested in, Marsha waits at the elevator along with several other shoppers. When one of the elevator doors opens, the operator looks at her and announces, “Going up, ma’am.” Marsha steps on to the elevator and tells him what she is looking for – a gold thimble. He replies, “That would be specialties, ma’am. The ninth floor.” As the elevator doors shut, the camera focuses in on the numbered dial outside indicating the location of the elevator. The elevator ascends and the dial

moves from the left to the right, but here the viewer notices a problem – the numbers only go up to eight, not nine. As the camera returns inside the elevator, Marsha somewhat bashfully states, “I’m not accustomed to such service...well there were a whole lot of people waiting for the elevator. I seem to have a private one.” The operator nonchalantly responds that “this is an express elevator to the ninth floor.” The doors open and Marsha steps out, but is quickly troubled to find nothing but bare display cases on a dark, empty floor. As she turns back toward the elevator, telling the attendant that there must be some mistake, the doors are already closing. The worried look on her face is accompanied by the sound of eerie woodwinds and strings along with Rod Serling’s opening narration: “Express elevator to the ninth floor of a department store, carrying Miss Marsha White on a most prosaic, ordinary, run-of-the-mill errand. Miss Marsha White on the ninth floor, specialty department, looking for a gold thimble. The odds are that she’ll find it – but there are even better odds that she’ll find something else, because this isn’t just a department store. This happens to be *The Twilight Zone*.”

Right from the start, it becomes clear that this particular episode deals with postwar retail work, consumption, and merchandising. To begin with, Marsha’s interest in finding a gold thimble is instructive. The mere fact that she is not just looking for a basic and functional thimble, but one that is gold, a softer but more expensive metal, illustrates that this is a consumer-luxury good, not one borne out of basic necessity. And while luxury items were nothing new in and of themselves, the mass market for luxury-type goods and the ability for an ever-increasing middle class to purchase them, indicated in Serling’s description of the errand as prosaic, was largely unprecedented. This aspect of the thimble’s luxury, rather than utility, is further emphasized when Marsha takes the elevator back down and she discovers a cosmetic scratch on the thimble and states she can no longer send it to her mother. What matters then is

the luxurious appearance of the item, not its usefulness. This idea is simply stated by Louis Cheskin, a prominent marketing researcher at the time: “In earlier years, consumption was mainly of a biological and material nature; in our present society of abundance, consumption is largely psychological. Eating...fills a biological need. Steak provides psychological satisfaction.”²⁵⁸ The gold thimble, however, proves to be even more luxurious than steak as one gains no physical sustenance from it, only psychological satisfaction. One of the psychological satisfactions for Miss Marsha White is ostensibly to show herself to be a loving, thoughtful daughter, something that consumer products, particularly of the luxury sort, promise to fulfill. As one department store report claimed, in regard to selling products to housewives: “Take every opportunity to explain how your store will help her fulfill her most cherished roles in life.”²⁵⁹ The thimble also represents perfectly something marketers frequently tapped into at the time, namely that “people readily accept something new about the old.”²⁶⁰ The thimble, which has been around for centuries, symbolizes tradition and history on the one hand and a mass modern consumer culture on the other, being available at large department stores. Furthermore, the thimble represents a task once performed by hand, sewing fabric and clothing, but is now a mere ornamental artifact of the past.

If the shopping excursion embodied the ubiquity of mass luxury and the fact that consumerism offered a means for a woman to prove her affection to her loved ones, another crucial aspect of Marsha White’s shopping errand is its eerie predetermined or fatalistic nature. The elevator which she boards is exclusively for the ninth floor, a fact she was unaware of initially. The bizarre realization that the operator seemingly knew already where Marsha wanted

²⁵⁸ Louis Cheskin, *Why People Buy: Motivation Research and its Successful Application* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 1959) 99.

²⁵⁹ Friedan, 249.

²⁶⁰ Cheskin, 51.

to go before even articulating it to him is built up all the more by her mentioning an advertisement for the thimble. In this way, her destination and errand seems first shaped by the advertisement itself and then by the elevator operator who knew already that the gold thimble must be what she wants. Finally, when Marsha arrives on the ninth floor, the journey reeking of consumerist predestination intensifies all the more as the only object on the entire floor is precisely what she wants - a single gold thimble. This bizarre quality of her excursion does not go unnoticed by Marsha as she walks back toward the elevator doors after purchasing the product, she stops in her tracks and says with a puzzled look on her face: “Now that’s odd...you haven’t any merchandise here at all except the thimble. Except the very thing I needed...Well you may be a little more sophisticated than I am, but this I call odd.” Marsha’s entire journey from the advertisement to the elevator to the checkout counter seemed all too preordained for her liking, feeling perhaps what Vance Packard lamented in his work *The Hidden Persuaders*, that marketing manipulation invaded the privacy of one’s own mind.²⁶¹ Marsha’s mind, desires, and even how she chose to spend her day shopping was seemingly not under her own control, but was a mere result of sly marketing and salesmanship. As Dichter explained, many people are “more afraid of what to do with the four empty leisure days than...three workdays.”²⁶² Marketers happily assuaged this fear for millions of Americans, just like Marsha.

Marsha, however, does not find just this feature of her shopping excursion odd, but the entire interaction with the saleswoman. After the store representative calls Marsha by her name, unnerving her further, she proceeds to ask Marsha if she is happy. “I beg your pardon...Am...am I what? Am I happy? Well you’ll forgive me, but that’s really none of your business.” The

²⁶¹ Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders*, reissue edition (New York: Ig Publishing, 2007) 240.

²⁶² Dichter, *Strategy of Desire*, 263.

saleswoman laughingly replies, “Well suit yourself, it’s none of my business,” illustrating the psychological divide between consumer and seller. It also arguably serves to demonstrate Serling’s view that happiness will never be ultimately achieved through consumption because of this divide, as sales operate on understanding and manipulating lack of fulfilment, not quenching it. This division is made all the more evident as later on in the episode one of the floor managers proclaims “Tell her to come back tomorrow and we’ll get her a replacement of her merchandise or refund or anything else she wants. What I’d like to give her is a bus ticket. A one-way bus ticket to any department store west of Cleveland, preferably Chicago or Los Angeles or Honolulu!” Retail workers who are obligated to cater to customers all day, do not in turn feel actual affection toward their customers, but resentment and bitterness, which becomes all too evident in exchanges like the floor manager’s. While consumer goods and department stores promise happiness, there is no real interest in achieving it, except to try to ensure that the customer feels that the store really is interested in their satisfaction in the hopes of them coming back again for more. “Please come again, anytime,” the clerk says. Indeed, a purchased product that proves unsatisfactory or unfulfilling can be even more likely to bring a customer back in the store again in search of something adequate. These ideas were articulated merely three years after this episode aired in Betty Friedan’s bestseller *Feminine Mystique*, which cited a department store report that pronounced its purpose “was not only to sell the housewife but to satisfy...the yearning she has...to feel herself a part of the changing world. The store will sell her more...if it will understand that the real need she is trying to fill by shopping is not anything she can buy there.”²⁶³ For Marsha White, her satisfaction seems even more elusive as she discovers that she has purchased a damaged item.

²⁶³ Friedan, 264.

After stepping back on the elevator, Ms. White descends toward the ground floor to find that the thimble she purchased is scratched. Capturing yet another feature of postwar consumerism, the faulty thimble shows how the planned obsolescence of quality shaped the manufacturing and selling of home goods. Acknowledging that quality products which prove durable will not bring American shoppers back to the stores, many companies deliberately set “death dates” for products, making their repair or replacement an inevitability for consumers. While the fashion and automobile industries implemented such tactics already, home goods proved to be slightly more challenging to market in this way as manufacturers found that their customers expected their housewares to be more permanent than a lot of other consumer goods. Among the many iterations of this concept, the business journal *Dun’s Review and Modern Industry* ran an article in its February 1959 issue entitled “Planned Obsolescence: Rx for Tired Markets?” Its author Martin Mayer wrote: “The more durable the item, the more slowly it will be consumed...it is clear that a pattern of successful style of obsolescence must eventually be reinforced by a decrease in the durability of the product.”²⁶⁴ When defective products were returned they were often repaired and resold on clearance or during special sales, a sale perhaps similar to the one promoting the semi-repaired thimble in *The Twilight Zone*.²⁶⁵

Marsha’s act of consumerism exemplifies the very opposite of what marketing researcher Ernest Dichter expressed about advertising: “When writing a communication, whether on safety or on products, or when preparing a television commercial, it is very important the most pregnant moment be chosen in illustrating the action and the drama of possession.”²⁶⁶ For Ms. White, the “drama of possession” proved to be deflating and disappointing, running counter also to Louis

²⁶⁴ Packard, *Waste Makers*, 73.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 118.

²⁶⁶ Ernest Dichter, *The Strategy of Desire*, reprint (Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2012) 173.

Cheskin's thoughts: "Why make handles on cups so that they won't break off? Who wants to pay ten percent more for dishes so that dishes will last a lifetime? Most housewives want or welcome an excuse to buy a new set of dishes every year or so...Furniture, clothes, dishes can all be made to last longer at very little additional cost. But neither the maker nor the consumer is interested in this."²⁶⁷ In Marsha's case, though, she is interested in giving her mother a decent gift, but the drama of possession and planned obsolescence will not just frustrate her ability to do this, it will also complicate and even deny her the possibility of leaving the store at all.

When Marsha asks the elevator operator to look at the faulty product to no avail, he apathetically responds that complaints are on the third floor. Here Serling exposes another defect of postwar consumerism – its increasing impersonal bureaucratization. Marsha purchases the thimble from a saleswoman who did not make the item, and arguably did not even really sell it to her as that task was performed by the advertisement mostly and the anonymous individuals who created the flyers. Marsha then has to attempt to return it to another representative on an entirely different floor who did not perform the transaction with her. She then rides an elevator operated by a listless gentleman whose singular and extremely limited cog-in-the-wheel role is unmistakable due to the hat and jacket he dons, which both simply read, "Elevator." Upon speaking with the store manager, he instructs her to return the item to the gifts department which sells thimbles. But Marsha retorts, "I did not purchase this in the gift department I was taken up to the ninth floor." To which the manager replies, "That's what makes it so difficult to understand, you see, we don't have a ninth floor." When they ask her if she has a receipt, she frustratingly realizes she did not get one during the hurried, nervous exchange. As she looks

²⁶⁷ Packard, *Waste Makers*, 120.

across the store room she notices the saleswoman who waited on her. The only problem is – she is a mannequin.

This next feature of “The After Hours,” namely that the saleswoman turns out to be a mannequin, serves as a metaphor for the dehumanizing and self-alienating nature of white collar, wage labor work, as well as the consumer experience. The sales lady represents to a large degree what C. Wright Mills described in his 1951 book *White Collar*: “One knows the salesclerk not as a person but as a commercial mask, a stereotyped greeting and appreciation for patronage...with anonymous sincerity the successful person makes an instrument of his [or her] own appearance and personality.”²⁶⁸ This is illustrated most clearly in the exchange with Marsha, as the saleslady knows Marsha but Marsha does not know her. Indeed, through the entire episode the audience never learns the name of either the saleswoman or the elevator operator, further illustrating the anonymity and lack of individuality department store workers have.

Moreover, the attributes of the saleswoman in this particular episode, her sophisticated clothing, speech, and mannerisms, all become part of the sale of products and business of the store. Her fashionable attire, waistline, and even demeanor are no longer her own, but they now belong to the store in which she works and toward making her commission. As Mills writes: “the one area of her occupational life in which she might be free to act, the area of her own personality must now also be managed” and becomes the “instrument by which goods are distributed.”²⁶⁹ In this way, skill and experience become secondary to the importance of appearance and the ability to perform superficial, predictable social niceties with customers as a retail worker. The department store employee is unable to authentically connect with his/her

²⁶⁸ C. Wright Mills, *White Collar*, 182.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 184.

customers because they are forbidden to be themselves in the first place, but only nameless representatives of sophisticated consumerism ready to verbalize polite clichés. The focus on personality, charm, and beauty consequently creates tension-filled interactions where a remnant of distrust is always present, similar to a femme fatale character telling a detective the thief “went that way” in a film noir scene. Marsha, even though successfully finding what she was looking for, is left with an unsettling feeling about her purchase and exchange.

Indeed, the focus on appearance and the marketability of the self along with the product became a chief component of both sales and even politics in postwar America, which several historians have recognized. But what is perhaps less self-evident is the way in which these tactics undermine the gospel of American ingenuity and hard work. A nation increasingly dominated by marketing and salesmanship ethics, is one which undervalues hard-won experience and even basic knowledge of products and business practices. Vice President Richard Nixon perhaps most clearly and publicly embodied this in his Kitchen Debate in 1959 with Nikita Khrushchev, as he married consumer chic, female opportunity, and American politics all in one. Just like Nixon promoting color televisions and washing machines in Moscow, the best merchants of shirts were no longer tailors or even designers, but someone completely divorced from the processes of making the product they are selling.

However, far from being an amateurish, naive way of doing business or promoting the American way of life, this tactic was firmly grounded in the up-and-coming method of marketing through motivational research. Psychologists such as Ernest Dichter and Louis Cheskin throughout the 1950s and 60s, were busily uncovering the great extent to which consumers purchase products not out of rational calculation but for subconscious and emotional reasons. Their research helped to formulate innumerable ad campaigns including Marlboro Cigarettes and

Ford Mustangs, which both appealed not to function, but in exuding virility. In this way, the sales rooms and employees of department stores, not to mention diplomatic visits to the U.S.S.R., began embodying the psychological depth approach that marketers had been employing, albeit unknowingly at times. The appeals made not to the efficacy, durability, technicality, and reliability of a product, but to its promise of fulfilling a psychological need or weakness had begun to pervade ads, in-store discussions, and political debates alike. In other words, a saleslady, just like the ads in a magazine, needed to sell the more dream-like qualities of sophistication, elegance, and luxury, not the thimble, for these are the true desires of customers. “It’s quite distinctive looking I think, don’t you?” she says to Marsha. Like the technique of selling the “dream” rather than the product, the best sales person takes on similar attributes, becoming a dream-like, nebulous mixture of a warm, comforting personality and an appealing physique. As Henri Bergson claimed: “The greater part of our time we live outside ourselves, hardly perceiving anything of ourselves but our own ghost, a colorless shadow...we live for the external world rather than for ourselves; we speak rather than think; we are acted rather than act ourselves.”²⁷⁰ The world of consumption both in and out of *The Twilight Zone*, was a world filled with hazy persons.

As the episode continues, Marsha, who fainted after seeing the woman who waited on her was actually a mannequin, falls asleep in the manager’s office on the sofa. When she comes to, the store is closed and every customer and employee has left. Upon realizing this she frantically looks for an escape and heads toward one of the doors, walking uncomfortably in her heels as the camera focuses in on her wobbly legs and feet. She bangs repeatedly on the obscure glass of one of the doors crying out for help but there is no reply. The camera shows her desperate face

²⁷⁰ Bergson quoted in Mills, 228.

obscured behind the obscure glass and the audience can only come to one conclusion - that Marsha is indeed trapped, confined behind the glass of a department store - a confinement which eerily resembles a Barbie doll encased behind clear plastic.

In fact, not more than one year before the episode aired, Barbie was released in the United States and promoted by an ad that crooned the song lyrics, “Barbie, you’re beautiful, you make me feel...my Barbie Doll is really real.” Marsha, who even looks like Barbie, shares another feature with the doll as it became one of the first toys that was a consumer herself – she could be dressed in a variety of different outfits and accessorized with jewelry pieces. The confinement was complete, from her destabilizing high heeled shoes to her perfect beauty, Marsha White was trapped inside the store which helps to promote all these restrictive feminine ideals within the greater restraining world of manufactured consumer desire.

Marsha soon becomes spooked to tears after she hears voices calling her name over and over coming from the many mannequins in the store while the camera quickly cuts among the many mannequin faces. “Marsha. You remember Marsha, Marsha, climb off it. Come on dear. Marsha, Marsha. Come on dear. We know who you are. Marsha, Marsha. Climb off it.” In this cacophony of mannequin calls, Marsha frightened and weeping, retreats backward into the elevator, which takes her back up to the ninth floor. When the doors open, the mannequin of the saleswoman who had waited on her earlier is waiting right as the doors open, which only serves to spook Marsha even more. As the mannequin comes to life and approaches to console her, she states: “You’ll forgive an observation, but you’re acting like a silly child.” She takes the whimpering Marsha by the hands and walks her slowly back into the ninth floor, with mannequins all around. As they walk across the room, each of the mannequins slowly comes to life and follows after them, eventually forming a circle around Marsha and the saleslady. The

sales clerk tells her “Think now. Concentrate. Remember now? All of us will help you. Coming back to you?” Marsha, whose tears now have resided, thinks for a moment, “I’m a mannequin!” The saleswoman explains then that each mannequin has a month off for leisure time and that this had been Marsha’s month and came to an end yesterday. As the saleslady walks toward the elevator to leave the store for her month off now, one of the mannequins turns to Marsha and asks, “Did you enjoy yourself, Marsha? Was it fun?” She looks forlornly down at her hands, locking them into her mannequin pose, “Ever so much. Ever so much fun.” Her small glimpse into being something more than just a mannequin laborer proved to be little more than a tease, as she inexorably, with little struggle, returns to her spot on the floor as a display model, the embodiment of Theodor Adorno’s declaration that the “repetitiveness, the selfsameness, and the ubiquity of modern mass culture tend to make for automatized reactions and to weaken the forces of individual resistance.”²⁷¹ Marsha, like so many television viewers, glimpse a world beyond, only to return to their routinized lives.

Here Serling explores the inherent dichotomy of wage labor and salaried work on the one hand, and the allowance granted for vacation time, on the other. For Marsha White it is no different, as she works throughout the year as a store mannequin and is allotted a certain amount of free time. Mills proves instructive in this regard again, with words that sound like they could have been a closing narration to this episode: “Each day men sell little pieces of themselves in order to try to buy them back each night and week end with the coin of fun. With amusement, with love, with movies, with vicarious intimacy, they pull themselves into some sort of whole again... Thus the cycle of work and leisure gives rise to two quite different images of the self: the

²⁷¹ Adorno cited in James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America’s Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 75.

everyday image, based upon work, and the holiday image, based upon leisure.”²⁷² For Mills then, the work-leisure cycle gives rise to two distinct personalities. Marsha White forgot her other self, her work self, consumed by her leisure time and mindset. For Serling, the work-consumer cycle blurs the lines between these two identities as a number of department store employees, many of them middle class men and women, worked for a supplementary income and not out of sheer necessity, but for the increased ability to consume more products. *The Twilight Zone* takes it this one step further, as Marsha was drawn back to the very store where she works because of a consumer advertisement. Through *Twilight Zone* fantasy, Serling shows how the lines between mannequin and human were blurred, just as the lines between work and consumption were as well in consumer America. We work to buy and we buy where we work.

Serling finally closes his episode with an appeal to viewers to question the seemingly normal and predictable nature of postwar American life: “Marsha White, in her normal and natural state – a wooden lady with a painted face, who one month out of the year takes on the characteristics of someone as normal and flesh and blood as you and I. But it makes you wonder, doesn’t it, just how normal are we? Just who are the people we nod our hellos to as we pass on the street. A rather good question to ask, particularly in *The Twilight Zone*.” As consumers and worker-objects in a rapidly expanding economy, Americans became part of an increasingly blurry world of power relations and marketing. While Serling does not offer a clear solution or sales pitch for dealing with this phenomenon, misleadingly clear and simple solutions via mass-marketing were depicted as a fundamental part of the problem in the first place. The sense of self and community, which were frequently sacrificed for white collar positions that promised to, above all, enhance one’s ability to consume, were depicted as not necessarily worth surrendering.

²⁷² Mills, 237.

In this way, the commodities one gained by sacrificing one's sense of self and community were frequently pieces of a lost world – a gold thimble, a coon-skin cap, or a television show that romantically portrayed the days of yore. For viewers of *The Twilight Zone*, perhaps they could retain something more than a mass-marketed trinket that at once played upon a collective nostalgia for the past and served to continually alienate people with the possibilities of the present. Maybe the white-collar nightmares of *The Twilight Zone* could restore the possibilities of self-expression, identity, and sense of community to those still living and perhaps a few would conclude that the dream is not worth the nightmare.

Chapter 6

Consuming Conformity: The Planned Obsolescence of Selfhood in Postwar America's Marketplace

Arguably no element was as vital to the postwar American Dream as consumer culture. In Lizabeth Cohen's words, which also served as her book title, postwar America was, first and foremost, *A Consumer's Republic*. Cohen's work demonstrates how after World War II a new prevailing ideal of "the purchaser as citizen" emerged as one who "simultaneously fulfilled personal desire and civic obligation by consuming."²⁷³ Following the war, several pieces of policy helped lay the groundwork for this dominant trend, beginning with The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (the G.I. Bill), which rapidly converted veterans into suburban residents who commuted to work in newly purchased automobiles in the morning and returned to a home full of consumer goods at night. In unprecedented ways, the American economy at large was tied to consumerism as policies, such as The Employment Act of 1946, prioritized and enhanced the "purchasing power" of Americans in the decades to come. In addition, the FHA's postwar mortgage financing program granted increasingly affordable loans for millions of Americans to purchase houses in the suburbs, just as the Federal Highway Act of 1956 boosted, and all but guaranteed, the essential role automobiles would continue to play in the everyday lives of Americans. In a myriad of ways, postwar public policy consistently lined up with the same kind of thinking in *Bride's* magazine at the time, that "what you buy and how you buy...is very vital in your new life – and to our whole American way of living."²⁷⁴ The inarguable point was the imperative need for both the individual and society to buy. And as consumption became more profoundly and inextricably connected to the American way of life than ever before, Vice

²⁷³ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Random House, 2003) 119.

²⁷⁴ Brett Harvey, *The Fifties: A Women's Oral History* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 110.

President Richard Nixon sought to impress his Soviet audience in the Kitchen Debate of 1959 the best way he knew how - with color televisions and household appliances.

While Nixon's performance at the Kitchen Debate emphasized the superiority of the American way of life because of the availability of consumer goods and the purchasing power of Americans to enjoy them, Serling encouraged his viewers to be more critical of these dominant assumptions. In this way, Serling specifically illustrated how consumer purchases actually blurred, not necessarily asserted, individual power.²⁷⁵ Just as money was exchanged for goods, power was being exchanged as well, and the fact that this power exchange was largely subconscious, made it perfectly suited for *The Twilight Zone*. The oft-used term alone, "purchasing power," intrinsically connoted, and even equated, the ability to purchase with power. In several different episodes, though, Serling illustrated how postwar consumer comforts could in reality be disempowering to individuals and serve to limit human agency and health. Just as Ernest Dichter claimed objects had souls and human-type qualities, humans, conversely, could be increasingly object-like in both the physical sense of the word and the grammatical sense – they were not just being increasingly objectified, but were also the reactive and/or passive objects, playing a secondary role to consumer trends and marketing tactics. As Serling demonstrates, consumer products frequently tapped into human minds more effectively than human minds were managing the unprecedented flood of consumer goods.

By looking at the pieces of the American Dream one supposedly needed the most – consumer goods, suburban living, beauty products, etc., Serling critically showed how these

²⁷⁵ *The Space Merchants*, written by Frederik Pohl and Cyril M. Kornbluth, similarly dramatized this predominant postwar theme. In their novel, advertising agencies have taken over the world and subsequently flood the market with hazardous consumer goods, while basic human necessities become increasingly scarce. The story originally appeared in *Galaxy Science Fiction* magazine in 1952 in serial format and was later published as a novel by Ballantine Books in 1953.

things all came at a cost that was perhaps not always worth expending for both the individual and society. In both “Number Twelve Looks Just Like You” (S5, e17) and “The Lateness of the Hour” (S2, e8), Serling shows the various ways consumer goods and comforts can actually rob a person’s sense of individuality and stifle their psychological growth. Although touted as such, the elements which made up the American Dream were not the simplistic panaceas their popular portrayals made them appear to be. Instead, the power and insidious pressure to purchase could actually rob a person’s sense of individuality from them, not provide it. And while marketers like Dichter thrived in this hazy world that made it increasingly difficult to distinguish power relations between goods and people, Serling showed there were social costs Americans needed to more actively consider.

“Number Twelve Looks Just Like You”

On January 24, 1964 *The Twilight Zone*’s “Number Twelve Looks Just like You” aired on CBS. While this episode dealt with the superficiality and conformity promoted by the marketplace, particularly with regard to definitions of beauty, it was far from the only episode to explore such subject matter. “The Eye of the Beholder” (S2, e6) flips the concept of beauty on its head as a woman, forced to undergo cosmetic surgery, is revealed at the end to be, in fact, a healthy, attractive female. Meanwhile, the faces of the doctors and nurses performing the required procedure, which remained hidden throughout most of the episode, are eventually revealed to be pig-like. The episode concludes with the woman’s banishment from society for not being able to physically conform properly. In a somewhat similar way, “The Masks” (S5, e25), taking place in New Orleans during Mardi Gras, features a family visiting their ailing grandfather in his home. Knowing that his family is largely there not to offer him love and support, but to take his money, he forces them to all wear masks he personally designed, which

they do so reluctantly. After he dies, and the family is free to take off their uncomfortable masks, their faces are shown to be permanently deformed, physically reflecting the shallowness and distorted priorities of each family member. Finally, “The Trade-Ins,” tells the story of an elderly couple who is looking to undergo a transformation so they can be young again. When they realize they only have enough money for one of them to undergo the procedure, they decide to remain their elderly selves, and in doing so, elect not to restore their bodies, but the youthful love they have shared through the years. In all these episodes, *The Twilight Zone* consistently argued that actual human beauty is achieved, not through materialism or by physically conforming to the standards promoted by consumer culture, but in embracing individuality, aging, and imperfections.

“Number Twelve” begins with a mother and daughter sitting in a large waiting room. Above them hang two large portraits of models labeled, “12” and “8,” with the mother bearing striking resemblance to the number twelve model. This is clearly not an average waiting room for a family doctor, but one at an institute that performs complete physical transformations. And instead of magazines to peruse, awaiting patients are surrounded by large pictures of models to gaze at, serving as possible options one can choose from for their new face and body. As the daughter sits looking at an old photo album, the mother whose nametag identifies her as “Lana” says, “I can’t decide. Eight or twelve. I think twelve might suit you better. What do you think Marilyn?” Her daughter Marilyn, however, is not even paying attention, but immersed in a photo album. Lana, confused by Marilyn’s apparent lack of interest, says that most girls “are thrilled to death when it comes time to pick a pattern,” and recalls how she was so excited she could not sleep for several nights before her transformation. Walking over to Marilyn, Lana sees what her daughter has been looking at - an old family photo album that has a picture of her before the

operation. Ashamed of seeing her old self, Lana says “I was a sight, wasn’t I?” but Marilyn differs, and tells her that she thinks she was beautiful. When Marilyn bashfully asks her mother, “Am I very homely now?” Lana tells her that after the operation she will be “beautiful.” Marilyn’s apprehension becomes all the more apparent as she asks if she would still have to undergo the operation if she really does not want it. Lana tries to quiet her doubts, exclaiming that the “transformation is the most wonderful thing that could happen to a person!” Detecting her daughter’s anxiety, Lana says “Don’t worry darling, you’re just nervous. What you need is a glass of instant smile!” After she rings a buzzer, a maid arrives and Lana requests two glasses of “instant smile.” While they wait for the maid to return, Lana asks, “What’s so terrible about being beautiful? After all, isn’t everybody?” While Lana admires the models’ pictures, Marilyn forlornly gazes at her mother and Rod Serling introduces the episode: “Given the chance, what young girl wouldn’t happily exchange a plain face for a lovely one? What girl could refuse the opportunity to be beautiful? For want of a better estimate, let’s call it the year 2000. At any rate, imagine a time in the future when science has developed a means of giving everyone the face and body he dreams of. It may not happen tomorrow, but it happens now...in *The Twilight Zone*.”

This particular episode touches upon several important developments in postwar America, including the burgeoning market for cosmetic products, pharmaceutical drugs, and the increasing popularity of cosmetic surgery. On the surface, it seemed science, technology, and consumerism all now offered the public unprecedented access to ideals of beauty. Nature and genetics no longer had the final word, but a market increasingly filled with products to make one beautiful seemingly was “democratizing” physical beauty by making it accessible through acts of consumption. This episode also captures the fact that the market for cosmetic beauty products

and ideals was no longer strictly for women – they were being increasingly marketed to men as well. The emphasis on artificial physical beauty and fake smiles as the keys to achieving actual happiness fit comfortably within the postwar consumer economy, which was always looking for something new to sell and promise potential customers. As Vance Packard pointed out in his exposé of the ad industry, *Hidden Persuaders*, cosmetic companies knew they could make even more money off cosmetic products such as creams and lotions than they could off of soap because these products promised beauty, not just cleanliness.²⁷⁶ The socially-constructed and consumer-driven promise that physical beauty will bring individual happiness is inspected in this episode to form yet another *Twilight Zone* nightmare for postwar Americans.

In this opening scene, as Marilyn expresses her apprehension with having the operation, her mother recommends a glass of “instant smile,” a clear metaphor for psychotropic medication. During the fifties and sixties, a wide variety of psychotropic pills began to flood the marketplace, largely beginning with the introduction of Miltown. This new pill quickly gained popularity among Hollywood elite and celebrities who used it to calm their nerves and relax during their stress-filled schedules. As one Hollywood insider mentioned, “If there’s anything this movie business needs, it’s a little tranquility...Once you’re big enough to be ‘somebody’ in filmtown you’ve just got to be knee-deep in tension and mental and emotional stress. The anxiety of trying to make it to the top is replaced by the anxiety of wondering if you’re going to stay there. So, big names and little alike have been loading their trusty pillboxes with this little wonder tablet.”²⁷⁷ Miltown, referred to by some as the “don’t give a darn-pills,” were not only used, but openly praised by the likes of Judy Garland, Milton Berle, Tennessee Williams, Jimmy Durante, Aldous

²⁷⁶ Vance Packard, *Hidden Persuaders*, 35.

²⁷⁷ Kendis Rochlen, “Movie Ulcer Crowd Goes for New ‘Tranquil Pill’” *Los Angeles-Mirror News*, Feb 8, 1956, sec 2, p. 2-6

Huxley, Jerry Lewis, and Norman Mailer among countless others. As historian Andrea Tone has noted, “Hollywood entertainment culture transformed a pharmaceutical concoction into a celebrity fetish, a coveted commodity of the fad-prone glamour set.”²⁷⁸

The pill’s booming popularity, however, actually troubled one of the chief creators of the drug, Frank Berger as well as many other doctors. In response, The New York Academy of Medicine’s Subcommittee on Tranquilizing Drugs issued a report in December 1956 which stated, “Anxiety and tension seem to abound in our modern culture and the current trend is to escape the unpleasantness of its impact...But when has life ever been exempt from stress? In the long run is it desirable that a population be ever free from tension? Should there be a pill for every mood or occasion?”²⁷⁹ These growing concerns over popular obsession with these new anti-anxiety drugs was further justified when Marilyn Monroe was found dead with lethal doses of barbiturates in her blood on August 4, 1962 in her home in Brentwood, California. Barbiturates, which were once given to American soldiers in the Pacific and described by *The New York Times* as “more of a menace to society than heroin or morphine,” were eventually designated as a controlled substance under the Controlled Substances Act of 1970.²⁸⁰

In the 1960s, however, another drug overshadowed both Miltown and barbiturates - benzodiazepines. Among the most popular forms of the drug were Hoffman-Laroche Laboratory’s Librium and Valium, pills that became known as “mother’s little helpers” due to the fact that housewives had become, by the late sixties, the pill-popping majority. While these pills were not nearly as hazardous as barbiturates, consumers were mostly left to find out for

²⁷⁸ Andrea Tone, *The Age of Anxiety*, 59.

²⁷⁹ “Report on Tranquilizing Drugs by the Committee on Public Health of the New York Academy of Medicine,” *Bulletin of Academy of Medicine*, April 1957, 282-289.

²⁸⁰ “Academy Endorses Sleeping Pill Curb,” *The New York Times*, July 9, 1947, 8.

themselves what potential side effects were, including impotency, its addictive qualities, and severe withdrawal symptoms if they ceased taking the drug.²⁸¹ Eventually, valium was classified as yet another controlled substance in 1975 and limited patients to five refills before having to again consult a physician. However, as Andrea Tone has pointed out, “Tranquilizer users were no less at the mercy of manufacturers’ claims and doctors’ ignorance than they had been for decades.” The fact that education regarding the drugs was still not sufficiently provided for the drug-taking public under these new FDA regulations somewhat guaranteed the continued ignorance of users. A psychotropic flood and public education famine was setting in.

This relative lack of education regarding psychotropic drugs was merely a part of the general public’s illiteracy regarding personal health at large. In a variety of ways, dominant messages and images throughout popular culture and advertising dovetailed to encourage hypercritical and perpetual dissatisfaction with one’s own body. The result, an increasingly dominant, yet relatively unexamined belief, that beauty is a commodity one purchases on the market, carried along with it tremendous profit potential. The fact that marketers were selling to a public, who by and large, lacked proper education regarding their bodies, made selling this assumption, and the products that came with it, a significantly less challenging enterprise than it otherwise might have been. Simply put, countless Americans were learning on a consistent, daily basis to dislike their bodies before they knew much about their bodies in the first place.

As a result of this ever-expanding gap between self-knowledge and self-loathing, the Boston Women’s Health Book Collective formed in 1969. This organization sought to partially alleviate this growing crisis involving medicine, health, and the beauty industry, with their 1970

²⁸¹ Tone, 172-173.

publication, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. This guide book, which has since sold almost four million copies in twelve languages, helped women to educate themselves regarding miscarriage, birth control, menstruation, and a variety of other personal health issues that were woefully and unnecessarily shrouded in mystery. Similarly, The National Women’s Health Network formed in 1975 in order to better educate women about drug use and medical practices.²⁸² And Phyllis Chesler, who in 1972 authored *Women and Madness*, declared, “If women take their bodies seriously—and ideally we should—then its *full* expression, in terms of pleasure, maternity, and physical strength, seems to fare better when *women* control the means of production and reproduction.”²⁸³ The underlying issue of all these efforts was clear – women were being actively alienated from their bodies: “Our bodies are the physical bases from which we move into the world; ignorance, uncertainty – even, at worst, shame – about our physical selves create in us an alienation from ourselves that keeps us from being the whole people that we could be.”²⁸⁴ This alienation was, to a great extent, also perpetrated by the very industries which supposedly had their best health interests in mind – medicine, psychiatry, and pharmacology.

As the episode returns, Marilyn’s Uncle Rick, bearing striking resemblance to a Ken Doll, arrives to discuss the transformation with his niece. Marilyn tells him, “I don’t want to be transformed. I want to stay ugly,” with a defiant smirk on her face. Rick retorts that he does not think she is ugly, but that she is just “different,” somewhat foreshadowing the Boston Women’s Health Book Collective’s lament about the beauty industry: “We are encouraged to blend together and hide our differences. We are discouraged from appreciating our uniqueness.”²⁸⁵

²⁸² Tone, 189

²⁸³ Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), p. 287

²⁸⁴ *Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book By and For Women*, Second Edition, Completely Revised and Expanded (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979) 13.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 24.

They sit down as Rick reminisces how Marilyn's deceased father once went through the operation. "Number seventeen, just like you," she responds, referring to the male model number he chose. Rick proudly claims that it is "a very popular number these days" and her father "wouldn't have settled for anything less." Marilyn remains unconvinced, though and earnestly asks, "Yes, but is that good? Being like everybody? I mean, isn't that the same as being nobody?" Taking a deep breath, Rick asks where she is getting these "radical ideas." But when Marilyn begins to talk about her dad once again, he quickly interjects, "Your dad was a handsome man!" While Marilyn politely agrees, she adds that he also thought about things and read books, telling her uncle, "We talked a lot. Just the two of us...about real things. Not just about electronic baseball or super soccer, and where to buy your clothes, or how to fix your hair...there's got to be more to life than just that." Unmoved by her warm memories, Rick says, "You know what I think? You don't feel very well. What you need is a nice cup of instant smile..." His niece roundly objects and explains how she does not feel like smiling all the time, but sometimes wants to cry or frown. In response, Rick tenderly places his hands upon her shoulders and says, "Marilyn, you are a very sick girl."

The exchange between Marilyn and her uncle reflects two simultaneous developing trends in popular culture and psychiatry – exclusively viewing health as the equivalent to happiness. Television's consistent and largely exclusive depiction of life in idealistic and positive form, was also reflected in bestselling books, such as Norman Vincent Peale's runaway bestseller *The Power of Positive Thinking*. At the same time, psychiatrists were increasingly diagnosing human sadness as a mental illness, which was a direct result of new symptom-based approaches to diagnosis. Recently, Drs. Allan V. Horwitz and Jerome C. Wakefield have pointed out this twentieth century phenomenon in their work, *The Loss of Sadness: How Psychiatry*

Transformed Normal Sorrow into Depressive Disorder, where they track the rise in pathologizing common forms of human sadness. Horwitz and Wakefield show how empirical psychiatric studies between 1920 and 1970 “relied on measuring only symptom presentations at a single point in time,” and as a result, “largely set aside issues of course, duration, and especially, the situational context of symptoms.”²⁸⁶ Consequently, patients who showed certain symptoms in an isolated instance were prematurely diagnosed with medical disorders, despite this very flawed approach to diagnosing depression. And while sadness and anger proved to be a “starting point for creative change and growth” for the authors of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and many of its readers, those very emotional states were at the same time being increasingly considered medical disorders.²⁸⁷ Instead of a starting point for change, emotions such as these could prove just as likely to be the ending point as well. The way psychopharmacology could also potentially arrest a woman’s development was succinctly and popularly allegorized by Jacqueline Susann, who referred to pills as “dolls” in her classic 1966 bestseller, *Valley of the Dolls*: “They’re beautiful little red dolls that take all your cares away...”²⁸⁸ For Susann, pills did not contribute to mental health, but worked to psychologically infantilize women and keep them in perpetual states of childlike dependence.

To be sure, psychiatrists prior to the twentieth century almost universally and consistently made an important distinction between normal sadness, grief, and bereavement and that of a melancholy which constituted a medical disorder requiring professional help. Psychiatrists commonly asserted that not respecting this distinction could be potentially dangerous for the patient. Emil Kraepelin, a German psychiatrist and contemporary of Freud, was among those

²⁸⁶ Allan V. Horwitz and Jerome C. Wakefield, *The Loss of Sadness: How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow into Depressive Disorder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 89.

²⁸⁷ *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, 22.

²⁸⁸ Jacqueline Susann, *Valley of the Dolls* (New York: Bantam Books, 1966) 254.

who drew this important distinction. Additionally, by the late nineteenth century, Kraepelin developed an innovative diagnostic approach that would also profoundly influence the psychiatric diagnosing and the formation of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in the second half of the twentieth century. Using symptoms as the principal basis to create distinct categories for mental illness, Kraepelin's work, for example, helped to distinguish what psychiatrists now refer to as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. For Kraepelin, like so many others before him, it was important to differentiate between normal human sadness and, what at the time was termed, "morbidity." In order for a practitioner to distinguish the two, they needed to look at two main criteria – the presence or absence of an assignable cause as well as the trajectory and pattern of a patient's symptoms over time. In this way, sadness which had no clear cause and/or only increased in severity over time, was likely to be diagnosed as a serious medical condition under this Kraepelinian approach.²⁸⁹

But as Horwitz and Wakefield have shown, researchers in the mid-twentieth century who sought to create a more reliable and predictable model for psychiatric diagnoses, employed this Kraepelinian symptom-based approach with one complicating modification – they decontextualized it: "These researchers claimed to emulate Kraepelin, but their approach in fact sharply diverged from his" because the "researchers who relied on statistical techniques to isolate symptom patterns simply assumed, quite reasonably, that all the symptoms they entered into their models were manifestations of disorders in the sampled populations."²⁹⁰ As psychiatric researchers undertook an "urgent quest for reliability," their criteria "inadvertently rejected the previous 2,500 years of clinical diagnostic tradition that explored the context and meaning of

²⁸⁹ Horwitz and Wakefield, *Loss of Sadness*, 75-79.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

symptoms in deciding whether someone is suffering from intense normal sadness or a depressive disorder. The unwitting result of this effort...was to be a massive pathologization of normal sadness that, ironically, can be argued to have made depressive diagnosis less rather than more scientifically valid.”²⁹¹ In this way, the immediate diagnosis of Marilyn as a “very sick girl” reflects how popular culture and psychiatry alike were suppressing the expression of a broad spectrum of healthy human emotions in different ways. In varying degrees and for different reasons, popular culture products and diagnostic methods in psychiatry increasingly equated a clean bill of mental health with redundant expressions of simplistic cheerfulness, or as Herbert Marcuse sardonically described it, “euphoria in unhappiness.”²⁹²

In this psychiatric climate, which somewhat inadvertently helped to pathologize sadness, and a popular culture which practically banished it, patients sought the simplest, most convenient, and cost-effective relief - prescription drugs. And as Thomas Whiteside succinctly wrote in *The New Yorker*, an “age in which nations threaten each other with guided missiles and hydrogen bombs is one that can use any calm it can get, and calm is what the American pharmaceutical industry now abundantly offers.”²⁹³ Indeed, as one family doctor explained, “Patients are far from passive recipients of these drugs,” but arrive “requesting, and even demanding medication to relieve their anxiety...as if we are holding back this wonderful panacea.”²⁹⁴ While psychoanalysis was expensive, mass-marketed drugs like Miltown and Valium were relatively cheap and affordable for almost every middle class family. As Andrea

²⁹¹ Ibid, 103.

²⁹² Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, second edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991) 5.

²⁹³ Thomas Whiteside, “Getting there First with Tranquility,” *The New Yorker*, May 3, 1958, p. 104.

²⁹⁴ Letter from Harvey J. Sachs to Ms. Magazine Corporation, Dec 10, 1975, Carton 3, Folder 66, Letters to Ms. Magazine, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

Tone has explained, these medications “meshed easily with the convenience mentality of the 1950s, the therapeutic ethos that sanctioned changing oneself rather than the world.”²⁹⁵

In the very next scene, one of Marilyn’s friends, Val, who has already undergone transformation, tries to talk to her about her trepidation about the operation: “Don’t you think you’re being awfully silly...it isn’t as if it hurts or anything. When I did mine I didn’t feel a thing...you like the way I look don’t you? It’s like getting a new hairstyle or new clothes or something. You just look better.” Marilyn, though says that she’ll merely look like “one of those drawings the bureau sends over” and no one will see her or know her for who she really is. Despite concerted efforts by her mother, uncle, and friend to convince her to undergo the operation, Marilyn remains firm in her convictions.

At a loss as to what to do for her daughter, Lana decides to take Marilyn to see the doctor. The doctor’s nametag, Rex, fittingly reflects his ominous social power. Initially, he assumes the eighteen-year-old Marilyn is eager and wants to have the operation even sooner than the normal time, which is at age nineteen. Holding his pinky out toward his mouth, the doctor explains, “Marilyn is just like the rest of them nowadays...you see she looks at you, Lana, and all the women around her at the pictures, and then she looks at herself in the mirror...from pure perfection of body, face, limb, pigmentation, stance, carriage, she looks at herself and she’s horrified...the child says to herself why should I be so hideous, so awkward, oversized, unbalanced...? In short, Lana, our Marilyn is tired of being a monster.” After Rex finishes pontificating, Lana finally has a chance to tell him the real reason for their visit – Marilyn does not want the operation at all. When Rex says the operation is merely “part of growing up” and a

²⁹⁵ Tone, 103.

“sign of maturity,” Marilyn questions him, “What? Being like everyone else?” Intrigued by her resistance, Dr. Rex asks Marilyn if he can take a brain scan of her. Sitting back down at his desk, he questions Marilyn about her father: “Did he ever say to you that the transformation was bad?” “No...he thought it was tragic,” she replies. Lana explains to the doctor that while her husband had some “non-conformist ideas...it was just talk.” After Marilyn asks if she could be forced to undergo the operation against her will, Rex explains that no one has been forced to go through with the operation that did not want it. He adds, however, that the “problem is simply to discover why you don’t want it, and then to make the necessary corrections.” Recognizing the somewhat sinister meaning behind these words, Marilyn is left speechless, as the sound of tympani drums signals the unyielding march of fate for Marilyn.

In this scene, the doctor’s false assumptions regarding Marilyn’s eagerness to undergo the operation reflect how being comfortable in one’s body was commonly seen as abnormality. The authors of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* giving voice to this phenomenon, stated, “Our feelings about our physical selves have been negative. Our hair is too straight or too curly, our noses too small or too large, our breasts too big or too small... We are always making some comparison, we’re never okay the way we are... The ideal woman in America is something very specific... Unfortunately, this is not *our* ideal, not what *we* created.”²⁹⁶ A somewhat related inferiority complex was also articulated in Freud’s popular concept of penis envy: “The castration-complex in the girl... is started by the sight of the genital organs of the other sex... She feels herself at a great disadvantage, and often declares that she would like to have something like that too and falls a victim to penis envy.... That the girl recognizes the fact that she lacks a penis does not mean that she accepts its absence lightly. On the contrary, she clings for a long

²⁹⁶ *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, 24.

time to the desire to get something like it...” Freud also went on to explain that women who desire “the capacity to pursue an intellectual career” were expressing “a sublimated modification of this repressed wish.”²⁹⁷ In this way, Marilyn’s comfort with her body and intellect represented a double pathology. Because a normal woman should desire above all to be beautiful, the fact that she is comfortable in her own skin and/or prioritizes the ability to use her own mind, would seemingly implicate a neurotic desire to have a penis. In the next scene, the ways in which male-centered medicine and psychology confined women’s roles and potentialities to a kind of impossible Catch-22 is further developed, as Marilyn is now forced to visit another specialist named Professor Sig.

In order to discover just what is ailing Marilyn’s mind, making her want to remain “ugly,” she visits another doctor, “Sigmund Friend,” an obvious allusion to the father of psychoanalysis. Referring to himself as Professor Sig, he tells Marilyn that he needs to find out what is at the root of her fear of the operation. He then goes on to describe the noble origins of the socially-prescribed transformation that also seem to have deep racial implications as well: “Many years ago, wiser men than I decided to try and eliminate the reasons for inequality and injustice in this world of ours. They saw in physical unattractiveness one of the factors which made men hate. So, they charged the finest scientific minds with the task of eliminating ugliness in mankind.” In a similar way, the early twentieth century entrepreneur, Madame C.J. Walker, once made a fortune from beauty and hair products which helped to “remove or modify Negroid characteristics.” And as E. Franklin Frazier explained, such products were featured in ads that explicitly promised consumers that “the Negro can rid himself of his black or dark complexion”

²⁹⁷ Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. W.J.H. Sprott (New York: Martino, 1933) 170.

and “straighten his hair.”²⁹⁸ Marilyn, who also is lacking ideal beauty, humbly responds that while she may not be pretty, she is not ugly either, causing Professor Sig to laugh and explain that she is ugly to everyone who has had the operation. “Not to people who love me,” Marilyn retorts. Sig expounds on the benefits of the operation as not just beautifying people, but also prolonging their lives. He says Marilyn’s mother, for example, would already be showing signs of aging and wrinkling had she not undergone transformation many years ago. After Marilyn declares once more that she does not want the operation, Sig gives up for the moment and finally asks her why. “Have you ever read Shakespeare...or Keats or Shelley?” Marilyn asks. Puzzled, the professor says how those books were banned long ago and asks where she found them. Marilyn explains that her father gave them to her, along with the works of Aristotle, Socrates, and Dostoevsky: “Did you know that Dostoevsky was an epileptic? He was ugly, he was deformed, but he wrote about beauty, about real beauty...these men wrote about life and about the dignity of the individual human spirit and about love!” Having heard enough from his unruly patient, Sig demands Marilyn to cease: “The introduction of smut into this interview will not help your case...not at all!” After she asks to leave, Marilyn discovers she now has to stay overnight in a special room reserved just for her.

In this scene, the obvious allusion to Freud and psychoanalysis emerges as yet another source of Marilyn’s oppression. As Betty Friedan and Freud biographer Ernest Jones have both noted, Freud’s personal views of sexuality, not to mention those of Victorian Europe, greatly informed his theories. The fact that Freud’s own sexuality was also “exceptionally chaste, puritanical, and chaste” even by Victorian standards, was evidenced in his many personal letters,

²⁹⁸ E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (New York: The Free Press, 1957) 189-90.

which further reveal an infantile view of both women and sex.²⁹⁹ In “Number Twelve Looks Just like You,” this is shown not only in the idealization of feminine beauty, but of youth as well. In a letter where Freud criticized John Stuart Mill’s ideas regarding female emancipation, he wrote, “If...I imagined my gentle sweet girl as a competitor, it would only end in my telling her....that I am fond of her and that I implore her to withdraw from the strife into the calm, uncompetitive activity of my home. It is possible that changes in upbringing may suppress all a woman’s tender attributes...and...the most delightful thing the world can offer us – our ideal of womanhood.” He succinctly concluded, “Nature has determined woman’s destiny through beauty, charm, and sweetness.”³⁰⁰ As for their intellectual capabilities, Freud explained that young women “frequently stagger us by...psychological rigidity and unchangeability,” and concluded that in such cases, there are “no paths open to her for further development.”³⁰¹ In this way, Freud’s letters foreshadowed a common feature of postwar American cultural cognitive dissonance – the constrictive idealization of youth and beauty and the disparagement of the forced results - stunted psychological, emotional, and intellectual growth. Just as Freudian thinking dismissed women’s ambitions to pursue careers or engage in intellectual activity as a sign of neurosis, the professor here dismisses Marilyn’s knowledge of philosophy and literature as “smut.”

Friedan, however, argued that the feminine mystique, “elevated by Freudian theory into a scientific religion, sounded a single, overprotective, life-restricting, future-denying note for women. Girls...were told by the most advanced thinkers of our time to go back and live their lives...restricted to the doll’s house by Victorian prejudice. And their own respect and awe for the authority of science – anthropology, sociology, psychology share that authority now – kept

²⁹⁹ Friedan, 120.

³⁰⁰ Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 1 (New York: Basic Books, 1953) 176.

³⁰¹ Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 184.

them from questioning the feminine mystique.”³⁰² And just as Marilyn’s eclectic knowledge of philosophy and literature is scorned, countless articles from professionals and popular writers also derided the idea of women pursuing further education. As Friedan explained, “The feminine mystique has made higher education for women seem suspect, unnecessary, and even dangerous...But...I discovered that the critics were half-right; education was dangerous and frustrating – but only when women did not use it.”³⁰³ The fact that the professor claims that classic philosophical and literary books have been banned, also reflects the narrowness of available course offerings to many women, who after settling down, desired to become more educated: “Housewives in every suburb and city are seeking more education today...But the courses they take, and the courses they are offered...in golf, bridge, rug-hooking, gourmet cooking, sewing are intended, I suppose, for real use, by women who stay in the housewife trap.”³⁰⁴ Although Marilyn’s struggles are entrusted to medical doctors and psychiatrists, Friedan argued that these “problems cannot be solved by medicine, or even by psychotherapy.” Instead, postwar America needed “a drastic reshaping of the cultural image of femininity” that enables women “to reach maturity, identity, completeness of self, without conflict with sexual fulfillment.”³⁰⁵ Marilyn was confronting every one of these dilemmas, seemingly all at once.

The next day when Lana and Val come to visit Marilyn, the doctor explains that she was “quite upset” last night and opted to give her “a mild sedative” to help her relax. Once he leaves the room, Marilyn says she knows the doctor is going to force her to undergo the operation whether she wants to or not. Her mother, however, still confused by her daughter’s resistance says, “I just don’t see why you’re so unhappy when all they want to do is make you pretty.” To

³⁰² Friedan, 138.

³⁰³ Friedan, 431

³⁰⁴ Ibid, 436

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 440

which her daughter responds, that it is less about making everyone beautiful and more about making everyone the same. As Lana leaves the room, Val stays behind and asks Marilyn why she puts so much weight in her father's words and memory: "I don't see why you're so concerned about him. He's dead. I mean, surely you've had other fathers. My mother's been married eleven times and personally, I've liked the stepfathers better anyway...I know you've had nine fathers since the first one. Everybody marries everybody these days...I just don't see how anybody can stay married to the same husband for a hundred years. And besides, I've heard your father was pretty dull." Infuriated, Marilyn rises out of bed and orders Val to stop talking about him: "Can't anybody understand?! I loved him! I cared about him! He was good and he was kind and he cared about me, not what I wore, not the way I looked, but what I thought, what I felt. And what's more important, he cared about himself and his dignity as a human being. Valerie, he didn't die in the Ganymede incident. My father killed himself because when they took away his identity he had no reason to go on living...Valerie, can't you feel anything?" But her friend only responds that she feels good, always feels good, and that "life is pretty, life is fun, I am all and all is one!" Exhaling in disbelief, Marilyn realizes Val is incapable of understanding her and breaks into tears exclaiming hysterically, "They can't understand! They can't understand! They can't understand!" Disturbed by Marilyn's display of raw emotion, Val dismisses herself and leaves Marilyn to cry on her own.

In the next scene, Marilyn finally attempts to make her escape. Running down the sterile grey hallway, she backs into one of the rooms, only to find Doctor Rex and his assistant waiting for her: "We've been expecting you...Sooner or later everyone wants to be beautiful...she's chosen number eight! Excellent!" The three of them approach the operating table, her worst fears now painfully becoming a reality. When the operation is completed, Marilyn emerges to meet

her mother and Val. Completely transformed and bubbling with excitement, Marilyn rushes over to the mirror to look at herself: “The nicest part of all, Val, I look just like you!” As she stands admiring her new, beautiful body and face in the looking glass, Serling’s closing remarks are made: “Portrait of a young lady in love...with herself. Improbable? Perhaps. But in an age of plastic surgery, body-building, and an infinity of cosmetics, let us hesitate to say impossible. These and other strange blessings may be waiting in the future, which after all is *The Twilight Zone*.”

Herbert Marcuse, in his 1964 work, *One-Dimensional Man*, distinguished between real needs, such as shelter, food, and water, and false needs, such as the need to perpetually purchase obsolescent consumer goods. These false needs, represented by the beauty and cosmetic industry, were socially superimposed by advertisements and media, serving to squash individual development and expression. In exchange for completely succumbing to these false needs, Marilyn, like so many postwar Americans, sacrificed her very identity. Marcuse states, “No matter how much such needs have become the individual’s own, reproduced and fortified by the conditions of his existence; no matter how much he identifies himself with them and finds himself in their satisfaction, they continue to be what they were from the beginning – products of a society whose dominant interest demands repression....The prevalence of repressive needs is an accomplished fact, accepted in ignorance and defeat, but a fact that must be undone in the interest of the happy individual as well as all those whose misery is the price of his satisfaction.”³⁰⁶ Marilyn could not resist getting caught up in tide of chemically induced smiles,

³⁰⁶ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 5.

youthful bodies, and an utter lack of individuality. Perhaps viewers of “Number Twelve Looks Just like You” could still find a way to not succumb to these false needs.

“The Lateness of the Hour”

“The Lateness of the Hour,” *The Twilight Zone*’s first production on videotape, aired on December 2, 1960. This particular episode illustrates the ways in which the American Dream prioritizes comfort, predictability, relaxation and convenience can have nightmarish consequences. In a somewhat related way, “A Nice Place to Visit” (S1, e28) tells the story of Rocky Valentine, a burglar who is shot and killed by the police and seemingly has gone to heaven. As he gambles at a casino, he continually finds himself winning and surrounded by admiring women. Eventually, however, Rocky gets bored with the ease and predictability of his heavenly existence and demands to go to the “other place.” He finds out, though, that he is in fact in the other place, hell. And his luxurious comforts and predictable winning are actually his eternal punishments. Similarly, “The Lateness of the Hour” explores how human comforts and making the world comfortable and controlled can have dehumanizing effects.

The episode begins during a thunderstorm within a large mansion. Inside, a young woman named Jana stands by the window watching a thunderstorm and looking at a photo album. Meanwhile, Mrs. Loren, Jana’s mother, can be heard deeply moaning in an almost orgasmic way from the other side of the room. As the camera pans across the room, it becomes apparent that the Lorens are a rather affluent family, as their home is filled with classical art, an extensive library, and antique furniture. The husband reads a book, while his wife continues to moan as she gets a back massage from Nelda, one of their maids. Jana approaches her father, Dr. Loren, and inquires about one of the pictures in the album. Her parents, though, seem uninterested as Dr. Loren responds that he cannot remember when it was taken, while an irritated

Mrs. Loren adds, “It seems like that’s all you do lately is look at that album.” When she shows the photograph to her mother, Jana comments suspiciously how Nelda does not look any different now than she did when that picture was taken. When Jana walks to the bookshelf to put the album back, her father says that Nelda can put it back. “That’s all right father. I’d like to put it away myself,” she replies. After Jana walks over to the fireplace, her mother asks, “You’re not chilly are you, Jana, dear? Shouldn’t be. Seventy-two degrees in here. Isn’t it, William? Isn’t it seventy-two degrees?” Dr. Loren responds, “Exactly. The optimum temperature.” Jana, however, seems somewhat uneasy amidst all the luxury and comfort and replies sardonically, “Of course. The optimum temperature. And the fireplace designed for perfect heat radiation. The chair, for maximum comfort. And the windows, for the most efficient light and proper ventilation. Oh, yes, and the ceilings, for the most desirable acoustical qualities. Everything built to perfection, father. Everything designed for a perfect life.”

Jana, disgusted by the excessive comfort in her home and the continual groans of pleasure she hears from her mother, wears a pained look on her face and takes several deep breaths. Finally giving way to the inner tension she is feeling, Jana exclaims, “Haven’t you had enough of that, mother?!” But Mrs. Loren simply replies that the massage helps build her appetite. Clearly feeling oppressed and constrained by her family’s routine schedule, Jana recommends they eat dinner a little earlier or later, or perhaps go to a restaurant for dinner. Stunned by her daughter’s suggestions, Dr. Loren says, “Why in the world would we go out to eat in a restaurant...we’d walk through the rain and get ourselves sopping wet. Then we’d eat some greasy, unpalatable food served off of dirty, unwashed plates, and after that it would be a moot question whether we’d succumb to ptomaine or pneumonia,” kissing Jana gently on the cheek. Jana indignantly responds that “outside there must be the clean beautiful sound of rain,

and in here, those constant animal grunts of pleasure!” After her father scolds her, Jana merely eggs him on, “Yell at me, father. Please yell at me. I can’t tell you how delighted I am to hear you yell at me. Why, it proves to me that you’ve got lungs...oh father we’re atrophying in here. We sit here day after day and year after year, while that clock just turns and turns. And we decay with every minute of the time, while Nelda, the maid, and Robert, the butler, and Gretchen, the cook, and Jensen, the handyman...this army of domestics do everything but our breathing for us!” Jana then storms up the winding, elegant staircase. When one of the maids says that she just sounds jealous, Jana finally snaps and pushes the maid down the stairs, but the machine-servant merely smiles at her act of aggression and is seemingly unharmed. Serling introduces his audience to the setting as, “The residence of Dr. William Loren, which is in reality a menagerie for machines. We’re about to discover that sometimes the product of man’s talent and genius can walk amongst us untouched by the normal ravages of time. These are Dr. Loren’s robots, built to function as well as artistic perfection. But in a moment, Dr. William Loren, wife and daughter, will discover that perfection is relative, that even robots have to be paid for. And very shortly will be shown exactly what is the bill.”

This particular episode of *The Twilight Zone* touches upon several key developments taking place in postwar America – the exodus from inner cities to suburban landscapes, the rapidly increasing rate of mechanization and automation of the home, and the subsequent impact these changes were exacting on the lives and habits of both individuals and families. The Lorens’ readily apparent obsession with cleanliness reflects what for many millions of Americans was the primary driving factor to suburbanize during the postwar period, namely the desire to live in cleaner, healthier neighborhoods. For Cleveland suburbanites, for example, sixty-one percent said they relocated for that very reason - to live in a clean neighborhood, while forty-eight

percent said it was for better schools or to be a homeowner, and twenty-eight percent cited having a garden or yard as their primary motivation.³⁰⁷ While the Lorens appear to be an established upper-middle class family and not a nouveau-riche or a recently transformed middle class one, the very fact that their desires and habits reflected the aspirations of millions of Americans who had unprecedented to clean, comfortable suburban living made it that much more poignant. Here was a family who had distanced itself from the city and the headaches of modernity in idealized form. But as Lewis Mumford explained at the time, “The cost of this detachment in space from other men is out of all proportion to its supposed benefits. The end product is an encapsulated life...Every part of this life, indeed, will come through official channels and be under supervision. Untouched by human hand at one end: untouched by human spirit at the other.”³⁰⁸ This episode shows how an encapsulated life, one untouched by the human hand and spirit, can have costly effects on human development. Serling’s statement that Dr. Loren’s residence is, in reality, a “menagerie for machines,” captures how “The Lateness of the Hour” dramatized the ways which suburban living was perhaps better suited for machines and consumer goods than it was for humanity. The immediately obvious obsession with predictability, order, and routine in the Loren household alludes to how humans in this type of environment were likely to mimic and take their cues from machines, not the other way around. Indeed, the Lorens’ lifestyle appears to be just as robotic as the machine-maids that serve them.

Another clear aspect of the Lorens’ lifestyle is the mastery over their physiological needs through cutting edge technology. All their physical needs are taken care of, even the desire for sensual pleasure is fulfilled, not by a human, but by one of the robots who induces groans of

³⁰⁷ Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1961), 487.

³⁰⁸ Mumford, 512.

ecstasy from Mrs. Loren. When this episode aired, one of the most influential psychological theories was gaining increasing prominence, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow's theory, which placed various levels of human needs in a pyramid, was first developed in a 1943 article and was later featured in his 1954 book, *Motivation and Personality*. According to Maslow's theory, physiological needs, which include air, water, food, clothing, shelter, and sex, are the most fundamental necessities of human beings and fill up the bottom of the pyramid. Beyond this most fundamental set of needs, though, Maslow theorized the need for safety and security was the next essential component, followed by love, belonging and relationships in one grouping, esteem in another, and, finally, self-actualization as the pinnacle need of human beings.³⁰⁹ Maslow later added another stage of human development, self-transcendence, which consisted of altruistic and spiritual pursuits.³¹⁰

Dr. Loren, the family patriarch in this episode, clearly exhibits an almost neurotic concern with predictability, sanitation, and orderliness in his life. Maslow referred to this kind of fixation as "compulsive-obsessive neurosis." He explained how "compulsive-obsessives try frantically to order and stabilize the world so that no unmanageable, unexpected or unfamiliar dangers will ever appear...They hedge themselves about with all sorts of ceremonials, rules and formulas so that every possible contingency may be provided for and so that no new contingencies may appear. They...manage to maintain their equilibrium by avoiding everything unfamiliar and strange and by ordering their restricted world in such a neat, disciplined, orderly fashion that everything in the world can be counted upon...anything unexpected (dangers) cannot possibly occur. If...something unexpected does occur, they go into a panic reaction as if

³⁰⁹ A.H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* No. 50, 370-396.

³¹⁰ A.H. Maslow, "The Farther Reaches of Human Nature," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* (1969a), 1, pp. 1-9

this unexpected occurrence constituted a grave danger. What we can see only as a none-too-strong preference in the healthy person, e. g., preference for the familiar, becomes a life-and-death necessity in abnormal cases.”³¹¹ This kind of obsessiveness is perfectly characterized right away by Dr. Loren. When Jana proposes going out to dinner, or even just having a dinner at a different time, Dr. Loren instantly rebuffs her idea in a melodramatic, life-or-death fashion, claiming they would be all but guaranteed to suffer ptomaine or pneumonia.

While the suburban lifestyle was rapidly becoming the dominant norm in the United States, many postwar critics pointed out that finding seclusion in a suburb was not necessarily the ideal their popular portrayals made them appear to be. And while many families, like the Lorens, were concerned with meeting their basic needs of health and safety, several writers reminded Americans that physiological needs did not constitute the whole of existence. Much like Maslow’s theory of a hierarchy of needs, critics such as Betty Friedan and Lewis Mumford, sought to raise their readers’ awareness that an isolated life in the suburbs could actually stunt personal development, internal satisfaction, and social awareness. Mumford explained, “As an attempt to recover what was missing in the city, the suburban exodus could be amply justified, for it was concerned with primary human needs. But there was another side: the temptation to retreat from unpleasant realities, to shirk public duties, and to find the whole meaning of life in the most elemental social group, the family, or even in the still more isolated and self-centered individual. What was properly treated a beginning was treated as an end.”³¹² And amidst a flurry of messages that reiterated women’s fulfillment meant raising a family in the suburbs, Friedan pronounced that “there is only one way for women to reach full human potential – by

³¹¹ A.H. Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” *Psychological Review* No. 50, 380.

³¹² Mumford, 494.

participating in the mainstream of society, by exercising their own voice in all the decisions shaping that society.”³¹³ *The Twilight Zone*’s “The Lateness of the Hour” dramatizes how when one treats suburban security and comfort as ends in and of themselves, it can stunt psychological and social maturity and even make certain human qualities atrophy over time.

This suburban life, though, was not merely idealized inside the home through advertisements and television programming like *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1952-66), *Father Knows Best* (1954-60), *Leave It to Beaver* (1957-63), and *The Donna Reed Show* (1958-66), it was also promulgated outside the home at schools. A flood of educational films that covered proper etiquette and life habits instructed students how their families could live a properly middle class life. These films included titles such as, “A Date with Your Family” (Simmel-Meservey, 1950), “Let’s Be Clean and Neat” (Coronet, 1957), “Let’s Be Safe at Home” (Portafilms, 1948), “Let’s Give a Tea” (Simmel-Meservey, 1946), “Mealtime Manners and Health” (Coronet, 1957), “Appreciating Our Parents” (Coronet, 1957), “The Griper” (Centron, 1954), and “Habit Patterns” (McGraw-Hill, 1954).³¹⁴ All these films consistently stressed the importance of conforming to social and familial standards, including manners of grooming, fashion, speech patterns, and taste. As Ken Smith has pointed out, though, “Social guidance films would not have existed had America been like *Leave it to Beaver*. Instead, they thrived in a nation traumatized by war, fearful of communist witch-hunters, terrified of nuclear annihilation, and rocked by fears of generational rebellion. School boards bought films that showed well-mannered teenagers because, in the eyes of adults, teenagers weren’t well mannered or well-groomed or respectful or polite. Mental hygiene films were popular because they showed life not

³¹³ Friedan, 464.

³¹⁴ Ken Smith, *Mental Hygiene: Classroom Films, 1940-1970* (New York: Blast Books, 1999)

as it was but as their adult creators wanted it to be.”³¹⁵ In many ways then, the structure and order represented by the Lorens perfectly embodied this supposed ideal combination of modern domestic technology, suburban living, and the nuclear family seen on classroom projectors and family room television sets. *The Twilight Zone*, however, shows that these same ideals could actually constitute a nightmare, rather than an aspirational dream.

As the episode returns, Robert, one of the butlers, tends to Dr. Loren, who requests to have his evening pipe. During their exchange, though, every single word is simultaneously mouthed by Jana, who clearly knows everything the two men will say. Dr. Loren approaches Jana and asks if the two should discuss her “sudden” and “inexplicable” unhappiness and her increasingly rebellious attitude. After not getting much out of Jana, Dr. Loren says, “I explained to you a long time ago why I did what I did. Why I retired from the world, why I built these people.” Jana, now finding her footing responds, “What you’ve done to yourselves is an atrocity, but what you’ve done to me is even worse. You’ve turned me into a freak. An unsocial, unworldly, insulated freak!” Her father, now putting his hands on her shoulders, reassuringly states that he has also protected her from harm and disease and that being insulated from the twentieth century world is an amenity: “You’ve never had to look into the face of war or the face of poverty or prejudice...what you think of imprisonment just happens to be asylum and security, yes, and survival.” Jana, unconvinced, retorts, “Asylum in a hothouse? Security in a mausoleum? Survival as a vegetable survives. What you’re becoming and what you’re making me become – a vegetable!” After crying to her parents that they are in fact being controlled by their machines because of their utter dependence on them, Jana demands that the machines be destroyed. Dr. Loren explains that they are not mere machinery, however, but products of

³¹⁵ Ibid, 25.

scientific precision with implanted memories and even a certain amount of free will. He dramatically pronounces, “Jana, you’re not asking me to destroy machines, you’re asking me to destroy that which has life!” But his daughter remains indignant, calling them “complicated toys” and their house, a “playroom.” Jana finally offers her parents an ultimatum, either they get rid of the machines or she will leave. As she storms up the stairs once again, one of the robots beseeches her to respect her parents and to act more appropriately. But in response, Jana ominously warns her father that the machines may be indestructible, but he is not.

Here again, Jana gives voice to many of the criticisms being raised at the time by social commentators. In particular, Jana raises concerns that would be at the heart of Betty Friedan’s 1963 groundbreaking book, *The Feminine Mystique*. Just as Jana expressed frustration over how predictable their lives were, Friedan later lamented how those who suffered from “the problem that has no name” were victims of a “deadly dailyness.” One woman she interviewed explained, “I can take the real problems; it’s the endless boring days that make me desperate.”³¹⁶ And in a way which incriminates Dr. Loren, Friedan asked why “any social scientist, with godlike manipulative superiority, take[s] it upon himself – or herself – to protect women from the pains of growing up? Protectiveness has often muffled the sound of doors closing against women; it has often cloaked a very real prejudice, even when it is offered in the name of science.”³¹⁷ In this way, Dr. Loren’s calling up “science” and “development” for a defense of his lifestyle and treatment of Jana, “The Lateness of the Hour” illustrates how women were especially vulnerable in a kind of prearranged suburban living arrangement. Mirra Komarovsky, one of the first sociologists to research and critically appraise gender roles, claimed the effect of sheltering

³¹⁶ Friedan, 377.

³¹⁷ Friedan, 141.

women frequently leads to “a generalized dependency which will then be transferred to the husband and...enable her all the more readily to accept the role of wife in a family which still has many patriarchal features.”³¹⁸ Indeed, for Friedan and many other feminists at the time, the perpetual and cyclical subjugation of women happens in part by “permitting girls to evade tests of reality, and real commitments, in school and the world” which, consequently, “arrests their development at an infantile level, short of personal identity, with an inevitably weak core of self.”³¹⁹ In Friedan’s estimation, the suburban house is, in reality, a “trap,” and for women to escape it, “they must...exercise their human freedom, and to recapture their sense of self. They must refuse to be nameless, depersonalized, manipulated and live their own lives again according to a self-chosen purpose.”³²⁰ Though not a housewife, Jana shows clear signs of suffering from “the problem that has no name,” as she pleads for a break from routine and a chance to experience the outside world. The Loren household reflects Mumford’s observation that a suburb, in effect, operates as “an asylum for the preservation of illusion” and is “not merely a child-centered environment” but represents “a childish view of the world, in which reality [is] sacrificed to the pleasure principle.”³²¹ Although suburban environments granted safety and security for children, Jana clearly desires to grow into adulthood and be tested by reality. She wants more than just her physiological needs met but wants to feel a part of society and thereby approach self-actualization.

Jana not only exemplifies many of the same grievances given voice by Friedan and other sixties feminists, she also captures the disillusionment of many young adults at the time. Less than two years after this episode aired, the Students for a Democratic Society decried the

³¹⁸ Mirra Komarovsky, “Functional Analysis of Sex Roles,” *American Sociological Review*, August 1950.

³¹⁹ Friedan, 347.

³²⁰ Ibid, 372

³²¹ Mumford, 494.

excesses of materialism, technology, and comfort in postwar America. The authors of the Port Huron Statement announced, “Loneliness, estrangement, isolation describe the vast distance between man and man today. These dominant tendencies cannot be overcome by better personnel management, nor by improved gadgets, but only when a love of man overcomes the idolatrous worship of things by man.” They argued that instead of “power and personal uniqueness” being “rooted in possession, privilege, or circumstance,” it should instead be based on “love, reflectiveness, reason, and creativity.” The students also called for a democracy where individuals can participate in the “social decisions determining the quality and direction” of one’s life and “that society be organized to encourage independence...and provide the media for their common participation.”³²² For Friedan, the SDS, as well as Jana, all the comforts and amenities offered by modern technology, coupled with the seclusion from social problems granted by suburban housing, formed the basis of society’s problems, not the solutions.

Hopeful he can smooth out Jana’s frustrations, Dr. Loren enters her bedroom but immediately notices that she has already begun packing her things. When he asks her if she really wants to leave home, Jana responds, “I want you to open the windows and let the air in. I want you to let the world in.” After thinking things over for a moment, Dr. Loren tells Jana that he agrees to her demands and will get rid of the machines immediately. He descends down the staircase and takes out a remote from his jacket pocket and turns the knob. Soon thereafter, all the machine-servants gather around Dr. Loren, who orders them to go down to the basement. After a brief moment of resistance, all of the robots make their way down to the basement. Having successfully retired his machines, Dr. Loren explains to his wife that it will be just the two of them along with their daughter from now on. Jana excitedly descends downstairs and

³²² Students for a Democratic Society, Port Huron Statement, 1962.

searches all the different rooms for any robots. When she does not find a single one, the Lorens' daughter delightedly says they can all live normal lives now and make friends, have parties, and maybe she could even meet a man and have children someday. Mrs. Loren, however, appears noticeably troubled when Jana mentions having kids, while Dr. Loren, trying to save Jana's positive mood, reassures Jana that it is just a shock for her mother to hear that for the first time. Jana is unconvinced, however, and insists that something is amiss. Returning to the photo album she had at the beginning, Jana asks why there are no pictures of her as a little girl – just pictures of her parents and the robots. Her parents, seemingly stunned into silence, have no reply. "What am I?!" Jana cries out. Her father reluctantly begins to explain how they were childless and wanted someone to share their lives with. "You built a daughter!" Jana screams. Her parents try to comfort her and explain that although she is a machine, they love her just like a real daughter. But Jana only becomes increasingly hysterical and begins banging her hand repeatedly on the railing screaming, "No pain! No pain at all! No pain! No love. I can't even feel love..." After a moment of deliberation, Dr. Loren, feeling that he does not want to live without Jana, seems poised to make another decision.

When the final scene begins, Mrs. Loren's groans of pleasure can be heard once again. This time, however, the maid massaging her back is none other than Jana, who has since been transformed into a servant and renamed Nelda. What happened is clear enough – the Lorens have reprogrammed their daughter to now serve them as a maid. Before the final credits, Serling offers one final remark, "Let this be the postscript: should you be worn out by the rigors of competing in a very competitive world, if you're distraught from having to share your existence with the noises and neuroses of the twentieth century, if you crave serenity but want it full time and with no strings attached, get yourself a workroom in a basement and then drop a note to Dr.

and Mrs. William Loren. They're a childless couple who made comfort a life's work, and maybe there are a few do-it-yourself pamphlets still available – in *The Twilight Zone*.”

This final sequence of events, culminating in the revelation that Jana is in fact a robot, emphasizes just to what lengths one might have to go in order to uphold postwar suburban ideals. When his daughter begins to express her own individual will, Dr. Loren offers a compromise, but ultimately, compromises his daughter so his comfortable, predictable, vacuum-sealed home can continue without an inconvenience or disruption. The episode's conclusion casts doubt upon the idea that comfortable suburban homes are child-centered, but are in truth, representations of a childish view of the world. As Jana increasingly exerts her independence and need for socialization and self-actualization, her father merely stresses the more basic and child-like desires of security and routine. While teenagers were encouraged by television content and instructional films in schools to be more structured and habitual in their daily lives, *The Twilight Zone* shows how such patterned thinking and behavior can lead to the creation of beings who either resemble robots, or actually are robots.

“The Lateness of the Hour” also illustrated the ways which teenage rebelliousness and housewives' discontentment were commonly handled, namely through attempts to reprogram the individual, rather than attempts to change the environment. Suburban malaise and rebellion were not typically viewed as symptoms of an inability to have legitimate needs met, but were viewed instead as problems originating within the individual. Time and again instructional films and popular television programming emphasized that happiness was achieved by fitting into existing familial, social, and educational structures. Rarely, if ever, was it proposed that those same structures might preclude someone from having their needs, other than the most basic, fulfilled in real life. As Friedan decried, “For years, psychiatrists have tried to ‘cure’ their patients' conflicts

by fitting them to the culture. But adjustment to a culture which does not permit the realization of one's entire being is not a cure at all..."³²³ When she summarized the most common approach to suburban discontent during the postwar period, historian Elaine Tyler May explained how "treatment was geared toward improving her mental state through drugs to help her better adapt to her situation. Rather than help her to alter the conditions that caused her emotional problems, the psychiatrist changed her tranquilizers."³²⁴ As unfulfilled housewives and disturbed teenagers expressed frustration with being relegated to permanently dwelling on the bottom of Maslow's pyramid, both the suburban environment and the nuclear family were above suspicion more often than not.

Mumford, Friedan, and Serling all emphasized in different ways that nuclear family life in the suburbs, while not necessarily an anathema, was certainly not the ultimate earthly paradise it was almost universally purported to be. Just as personal anguish and social injustices were not necessarily resolved there, familial and individual happiness could not be guaranteed either. But for Americans who were repeatedly told that buying more for their home and families was the most effective cure for extended bouts of suburban ennui, alternative solutions and ways of thinking could not emerge or spread very easily. In this context, social commentators attempted to offer different formulas for achieving human happiness and fulfillment by pointing out how the increasingly empty physical spaces of American cities once filled by working and middle class Americans, was partially reproduced by a spiritual emptiness in postwar suburbs. Within this Cold War climate and culture which aggressively promoted consumer capitalism and portrayed modern domesticity as the ultimate fulfillment of the American Dream, Nikita

³²³ Friedan, 374.

³²⁴ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988) 215.

Khrushchev irreverently asked Richard Nixon, “Don’t you have a machine that puts food into the mouth and pushes it down? Many things you’ve shown us are interesting but they are not needed in life...They are merely gadgets.”³²⁵ Because criticism of American policy and practice was more likely to be heard coming from someone like Khrushchev among mainstream coverage, pundits frequently, and with very little effort, associated forms of social criticism with un-Americanism or even communism, and responded with defensive emotional appeals and even more enthusiastic praise for the inherent virtues of consumer capitalism.

In this complicated context which was fraught with obstacles to those desiring to express constructive forms of dissent, social critics such as Serling, Friedan, and Mumford sought to psychologically and socially empower postwar Americans by pointing out some of the crucial needs that modern gadgetry and domesticity could not fulfill, even though marketers sought to convince the public they would find ultimate fulfillment via consumption. While suburbs granted millions of Americans, especially those who were traumatized by war or who were weary of city life, a safer, more peaceful place to grow old and raise a family, these critics reminded Americans that the suburbs were also simultaneously more likely to stymie social awareness, self-actualization, and self-transcendence, rather than help to facilitate them. And while millions of Americans took up suburban residence in order to escape racial tensions, poverty, crime, noise, and pollution, they needed to also bear in mind that these problems would not disappear just because they were no longer in view. Indeed, as Kenneth Jackson and Arlene Skolnick, among many others, have shown, the mass migration to the suburbs served to actually exacerbate a lot of these problems in the long run, particularly in urban centers where working class and middle class Americans once resided. And while some activists criticized Betty Friedan’s brand

³²⁵ Nikita Khrushchev, Kitchen Debate, Moscow, July 24, 1959.

of feminism for its lack of consideration given to working class women, Friedan's goal was in many ways not to tackle working class problems, but to shake middle class suburban women (and men) out of their homes and into the broader world where racial, sexual, and economic disparities abounded. Indeed, most working class women were aware of these issues. Before women and men could find meaning and purpose beyond their middle class trappings and privileges, Friedan sought to explain to her readers that those comforts could not ever truly fulfill them, even though that message was being repeated ad nauseam to them. In trying to walk a narrow social tightrope, Friedan was careful to point out how the "problem that had no name" was not an individual problem, but a social one. By remaining in middle class suburban America without experiencing anything else, Friedan made a convincing case that middle class Americans were causing a kind of hidden harm to themselves, their children, and their fellow citizens all at once. Even though having a nuclear family in the suburbs seemed to be the epitome of the American Dream, Lewis Mumford outlined the dangers of such a lifestyle: "Each of them living apart, is a stranger to the fate of all the rest – his children and his private friends constitute to him the whole of mankind; as for the rest of his fellow-citizens...he sees them not; he touches them, but he feels them not; he exists in himself and for himself alone; and if his kindred still remain to him, he may be said at any rate to have lost his country."³²⁶ It was up to Americans to not simply exchange civic responsibility for private comfort and apathetically close themselves off from their fellow citizens. Doing so would place them forever in *The Twilight Zone*.

By encouraging viewers to question their prosaic habits, thinking, and actions, Serling's *Twilight Zone* sought to remind his audience that purchasing beauty and comfort did not necessarily bring happiness or lead to self-fulfillment. Instead, the comforts and luxuries

³²⁶ Mumford, 513.

afforded to people as a result of developments in science and technology frequently meant that people themselves were in danger of becoming more like animate tools - machine-like and bereft of spirit, sensitivity, and emotion, just like the devices that increasingly surround them. And just as nuclear bombs brought a kind of security to the nation, the security and comfort afforded to Americans in suburbia came with a certain risk to humanity. This was revealed in “Number Twelve Looks Just Like You,” as Marilyn found that pressures to conform to certain beauty standards led to her sacrificing her real self, including her intellect, emotions, and memories. It was also illustrated in “The Lateness of the Hour” as Jana, who has the American Dream filled with every imaginable comfort she could ever want, finds it tortuous to remain closed off from the outside world. And while it was remarkable in many ways that this line of critical thought could be found on television at the time, even if it was in metaphorical form, Serling’s *Twilight Zone* carried with it yet another dilemma for postwar Americans – passively consuming social criticism in commodified form was not enough in and of itself. Indeed, ingesting criticism merely as just another commodity to be consumed without further thought or action could be as dangerously ineffectual as defining individual power solely in terms of the ability to purchase consumer goods. One of the biggest challenges faced by those living in postwar America was now before them - for their minds, personalities, and sense of self to not fall victim to the planned obsolescence of the marketplace and thereby permanently place them in *The Twilight Zone*.

Conclusion

“These Things Cannot Be Confined to *The Twilight Zone*”

Despite many obstacles, the American Dream was still undoubtedly achieved by millions of Americans across the nation. However, for those who successfully obtained all the middle class trappings, they frequently found out that they had actually exchanged certain things that could not necessarily be purchased on the legendary postwar consumer marketplace. Veterans of the “good war,” such as Serling, found they had given up parts of themselves, including their minds, limbs, relationships, self-confidence, and lives. After experiencing the horror and brutality of combat, they had been welcomed home by a nation overflowing with popular portrayals of war, featuring unscathed actors and writers who continually romanticized war and urged for more to be declared, all while comfortably situated in the backlot of a Hollywood studio. War experience seemed now to be more valuable in a film, rather than in real life, as it has become increasingly clear that real American heroes are not born, but scripted, and also require wardrobe changes and snack breaks. Actual veterans of the Korean and Vietnam Wars similarly learned their experiences were not as valued as they might have figured, mainly because they failed to confirm how popular conceptions of war. It is evident that millions of Americans still preferred to preserve their romanticized perceptions of war than to judge them against reality. In this way, especially when it came to war, Americans maintained their residency within *The Twilight Zone* well into the 1970s and beyond.

And just as an utterly false memory of war penetrated deep into the national psyche, one simply defined as “good,” depictions of technological advancements during the postwar era consisted of similar deficiencies of nuance and consideration for reality. While automation was touted as further proof of American superiority, its introduction often served to actually worsen

economic and racial inequalities, leaving cities, workers, and the hard earned relationship between laborers and employers almost completely abandoned. As unemployment dramatically rose throughout the late 1960s in Detroit, a several day riot broke out in the summer of 1967, leaving over forty dead and more than a thousand injured. The conditions of the city continually illustrated how the shots fired by Whipple into the chest of his employee Dickerson in “Brain Center at Whipple’s” perhaps was not melodramatic or fantastical at all. And just as syndicated versions of the episode no longer include that scene, our popular memory regarding automation, technology, and their role in our lives, has been far too sanitized and simplified to even provide the possibility for constructive national debate. For, change and progress always was less about the technology itself, but more about how it was being implemented and utilized. Popular portrayals that focused solely on the technology, rather than how it was being used and what economic changes were occurring, obfuscated corporate interests and deliberate choices, ultimately failing to account for how automation compromised the economic and personal value of working Americans. While the technology and intelligence once involved in the space race served to fuel the flames of American international insecurities, the Apollo missions proved that alleged humanitarian pursuits of peace and knowledge had taken a back seat to militarism, defense spending, and a thirst for international spectacle. And back on planet Earth, the obsessive pursuit of national security meant that political debate and dialogue were easily corrupted and hijacked by demagogues and fear-mongers like McCarthy who, in turn, made the country a more dangerous, divisive, and paranoid place. As American political discussion continually featured ad hominem attacks, rather than serious discussion of policy, Americans found themselves, to be still living in, not separate from, *The Twilight Zone*.

As for the millions of Americans who chose to start families, they discovered that neither they, nor Dr. Spock, had the authority they assumed to possess. Rather, marketers who effectively manufactured insatiable childhood levels of desire for a non-stop flood of consumer goods, demonstrated that the costs of raising a middle class family were even greater than expected. In a nation that continually praised the virtues of the nuclear family, there remained a great deal of work to line up rhetoric and reality. Families were still swept up by false promises that declared complex problems can be resolved with consumer goods. But instead of more expensive products, the nation still desperately needed to consider enacting policies, including health care and family leave, which would have realistically prioritized familial relationships and helped parents and children alike more feasibly attain the family-centered American Dream. As postwar Americans found employment in white collar work to keep up with the demands of their consumption-centered world, they also learned that they had lost some freedom and control in the process. White collar workers not only lacked unionization or any other kind of labor organization, they were no longer even free to be themselves, as their labor was not just required for the job, but their personalities too. Finally, those who sought fulfillment in the vast world of consumer goods found that they, too, had given up some things in the process – their identity was no longer in their possession, but it had somehow been stolen from them while they were sleeping. When they awoke, they found their identity and sense of self were now being sold to them in a commodified, beautified, remodeled, and mass-produced form.

And while “*The Twilight Zone*” has entered into our vernacular, indicating something eerily fantastic or odd, this common usage seems questionable. For, it was less the illusory or fantastical that served as the true foundation of the show, but the perilously real particularities and prejudices that make up our actual world – the hazardous, oppressive, mind-numbing

elements that we too often accept without questions or reservations. These features were never exclusive to *The Twilight Zone*, and never will be. By making “reality” seem stranger and more grotesque to relatively insulated Americans, Serling sought to call attention to the fact that their reality is, in fact, arbitrarily shaped. Whether Americans choose, somewhat subconsciously, to completely cede all responsibility and power in defining what reality is over to marketers, politicians, pundits, and Hollywood actors, without actively contributing themselves, still remains to be seen. Indeed, before Americans simply accepted the “real” aspects of postwar life, they needed to consider how fantastic they actually were. Only then, could Americans possibly be willing to think and be engaged in defining what reality is, and not just passively consume it.

Overall, *The Twilight Zone* illustrated many of the somewhat hidden costs of achieving the American Dream, ultimately begging the question, “What is it worth?” In a postwar world where Americans were repeatedly fed messages about what they should desire, fear, and buy, Serling sought to restore some of that power to the public audience. For instance, perhaps taking a well-paying but alienating and less fulfilling white collar job is not worth exchanging a less lucrative one that is unionized or one that simply grants you a sense of community, self, and productivity. Maybe trying to live up to mass-produced definitions of beauty and happiness are not ultimately worth swapping out one’s idiosyncrasies, intellect, emotional depth, memories, and relationships. And perhaps achieving a sense of security is not worth the irreparable damage wrought from baselessly scapegoating neighbors, minorities, and those who simply hold slightly different political viewpoints. Maybe living a secluded life with an excess of comfort somewhere in a suburban development is not worth perpetually feeling disconnected and alienated from the larger outside world. Does new technology have to mainly serve the interests of CEOs and not the needs of workers too? Is it also possible that there are answers to global conflicts other than

racially-fueled wars that should be explored? These considerations and questions, while seemingly answered by sponsors and so many other mainstream messages, needed to be once again restored to public consciousness so they could answer them more for themselves as active citizens, not merely passive consumers. The constantly reassuring messages of technological progress, moral superiority, and consumer comfort on television, however, all but guaranteed that millions of Americans would be less capable of dealing with reality, complexity, and social challenges going forward, largely because the world they thought existed never actually did.

The sponsors who funded the content of postwar American television were not necessarily malicious. For the most part, they performed their jobs in a way similar to William J. Levitt, who once explained, “We can solve a housing problem or we can try to solve a racial problem. But we can’t combine the two.” It is still the major underlying tension of American life that we have not effectively combined the powers of market forces and consumerism with individual, social, and environmental needs. The priorities of capitalism and democracy continue to play in separate, dissonant keys alongside one another in the United States, making it nearly impossible to listen to both at once. As a result, listeners limit the cacophony by tending to pay exclusive attention to one or the other, and in doing so, ensure the perpetuation of profound social, economic, and political divisions.

Serling’s career following *The Twilight Zone* in many ways illustrated this, as his involvement with media became increasingly commercial, while his interest in democracy and social issues was relegated to college classrooms. Serling was involved in a variety of different projects for both television and film. He wrote the screenplay for *Seven Days in May* (1964), attempted a short-lived western entitled *The Loner* (1965-66), contributed to *The Planet of the Apes* (1968), wrote several specials for television, such as *A Carol for Another Christmas* (1964)

and *Eyes* (1969), and was perhaps most recognized for his time as host of *The Night Gallery* (1970-73). Although Serling contributed a couple episodes, he lacked creative control of *Night Gallery*, having been hired by Universal for his popular image. He soon found the show to be full of formulaic horror and cheap thrills, conspicuously lacking the incisive social element he sought to inject throughout *The Twilight Zone*. "I'm staying on as announcer...It's not mine at all. It's another species of formula series drama," he once remarked about the show.³²⁷ He also was hired for several TV advertisements after fighting so long against sponsors' dominant control of the medium. He narrated a Proctor and Gamble ad for floor wax and offered his celebrity status to Crest, Anacin, and Z-Best rustproofing for advertisements.³²⁸ In many ways, Serling seemed to be losing the very ground which he had worked so hard to gain on television. While he seemed to be compromising some of his strongly held beliefs in his later years, this was largely due to the fact that he had sold the rights to *The Twilight Zone* to CBS following the show's last season. For Serling, it was a regrettable decision. While the show continues to air on the SyFy channel and still has its own dedicated New Year's marathon, Serling, who proved to be prophetic in so many ways, failed to see the durability and longevity of his creative output. By the late 1960s, it became clear that the show was only increasing the size of its audience and growing in popularity, particularly with young audiences. With CBS making millions of dollars from syndicated reruns, Serling was obligated to pursue other means to support himself and his family. But as a result, Serling was transformed into a kind of commodity himself. His appearance and voice, now imminently recognizable and marketable, were now intellectually sanitized and divorced from the issues he worked so hard to publicly discuss. He had undergone

³²⁷ Gordon Sander, *Serling: The Rise and Twilight of Television's Last Angry Man* (New York: Dutton Books, 1992) 213.

³²⁸ *Ibid*, 209.

a transformation not dissimilar to Jana's in "The Lateness of the Hour" or Marilyn's in "Number Twelve Looks Just Like You." Having once brazenly criticized social conformity and various aspects of consumerism, he had now merged with these same hegemonic, amorphous forces and mutated, like Marsha White did in "The After Hours," into a kind of mannequin, there only for his appearance, to be used as a prop for the marketing of goods.

In a related sense, Serling also exemplified a trend that became increasingly apparent during the postwar period – the commodification of cultural dissent. While Gil Scott-Heron once declared, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," manufacturers and marketers figured out ways to do just that by repackaging elements of the counterculture and selling it right back to "non-conforming" Americans, thereby ensuring their conformity. As Thomas Frank has recently explained, "The anointed cultural opponents of capitalism are now capitalism's ideologues."³²⁹ Instead of advertisers putting forth an image of conformity, tradition, and conservative values, they have, like Nike recently did with William S. Burroughs, invited their once ardent critics to boost their hip factor and expand their market to the most marginal would-be social rebels. From Burger King one learns, "Sometimes you gotta break the rules," while Levi's lets the jean-wearing public know, "There's no one way to do it."³³⁰ If imitation is the highest form of flattery, then American marketers have seemingly showered the counterculture with an endless torrent of it. Consequently, the sponsored world has effectively declawed their once outspoken critics and offered them an indefinite invitation to come sit on their lap. The world of consumerism now actively pursues the unorthodox, marginalized, and non-conformists of the world in order to come up with fresh, new ideas, a phenomenon recently explored in the PBS

³²⁹ Thomas Frank, "Why Johnny Can't Dissent," in *Commodify Your Dissent: Salvos from The Baffler*, edited by Thomas Frank and Matt Weiland (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997) 35.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

documentary, *Merchants of Cool*. Meanwhile, numerous characters of *The Twilight Zone* have been transformed just like Dan Hollis was by Anthony in “It’s a Good Life” – they are literally now toys.

But is not this inclusion of the counterculture in the marketplace evidence of the democratization of consumer capitalism? Sadly, I submit, it is not. Although “revolutionary” imagery is increasingly found in ads, products, slogans, and industries, they remain largely that – an image. Whether the imagery comes from the Beat writers, the Black Panthers, social activists, or punk rockers, most businessmen can rest assuredly, knowing that the mind of the willing participant will first be anesthetized and their truly subversive ideas surgically removed. Consumers everywhere can now enjoy non-controversial and intellectually dull versions of some of the most probing minds in American history. In this way, the social critics, poets, and singers of the postwar era have been effectively turned into dolls with pre-recorded messages to suit the ad campaign. Even though William Burroughs reassures us in his Nike ad that “The purpose of technology is not to confuse the brain,” there is indeed something confusing and unsettling about all of this. Why Crest would want to feature Serling, a world renowned chain-smoker, to be their spokesman for dental hygiene is a bit perplexing to the say the least. Apart from simple ironies like these, however, there is something at work far more troubling - genuine intellectual thought of such figures has seemingly vanished before the public’s eye as a direct result of being “incorporated.” While the appearance of Rod Serling or William S. Burroughs in an ad may make a company seem more eclectic, hip, and smart, they have fooled us if we believe that they, as a company, or the United States as a society, have genuinely changed. Indeed, ads like these accomplish nothing more or less than when they featured a well-dressed corporate executive sitting in his 53rd floor office - convince you to simply buy their product.

The revolution is not just being televised, it is being outright promoted. Just do not expect any insight as to what “the revolution” is or was actually about. That clearly is not the important part. Just as Marlboro once sought to expand its male consumer base by incorporating a rugged, tattooed cowboy, industries have done the something similar with Nina Simone and Martin Luther King, for example. The main difference is that the Marlboro Man never had an illustrious career as an activist or profound words of social criticism to sanitize. For example, from Zzzquil one is told on MLK Day, “Today is the day for dreaming.”³³¹ This irony seems almost too much to bear as a murdered Civil Rights leader is now used to promote the consumption of sleeping aids – sweet dreams, America. Undoubtedly news to Civil Rights workers everywhere, King’s “I Have a Dream” speech was actually not about achieving racial justice, but about insomnia and just wanting a good night’s rest. Similarly, Pop Chips intrepidly reminded chip eaters everywhere that MLK was a “poptomist” and featured his quote, “The time is always right to do what is right,” probably the vaguest and most malleable statement from MLK they could find.³³² Consumers are not encouraged to more deeply consider how King worked tirelessly against poverty, economic inequality, racial violence, voter suppression and disenfranchisement, and American wars that killed millions of innocent people. The real story is that MLK was a “poptimist” who wanted people to do the right thing, namely, buy the right brand of potato chips.

Nina Simone has also recently found a second career thanks to Ford. Posthumously working as a promoter of Ford’s new line of cars, her song “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free” is played in Ford’s 2017 advertisement along with footage of people being stuck in traffic and a poor housecat that cannot seem to get its head out of a cardboard box. Her once

³³¹ ZZZquil, Twitter account, January 20, 2014.

³³² Pop Chips, Twitter account, Jan 20, 2104.

powerful appeal to justice, “I wish I could break all the chains holding me,” now relates to simple inconveniences, like getting dressed. The fight for racial equality has been mindlessly equated with inconvenient work commutes and wearing a shirt that is perhaps a little too tight and difficult to take off. But wait, has not Simone’s dream been achieved as she sings, “I wish I could say all the things that I should say. Say ’em loud, say ’em clear, for the whole wide world to hear?” Her words are indeed loud, being broadcasted on American flat screen televisions throughout the country, but are certainly far from “clear.” While Simone worked at a grueling pace to promote racial equality and justice in the postwar United States, Ford reassuringly explains, “No one likes being stuck. That’s why Ford is developing new ways to help you through life – faster, easier, better. Today and tomorrow we’re going further so you can.”³³³ Ms. Simone can indeed rest peacefully being in hands such as these, and so too, can the American people. No need to work against being “stuck” as a result of racial, economic, or sexual oppression, Ford has it covered. Just make sure you can afford the car payments.

Without trying to sound melodramatic, what marketers have accomplished with such ads might be termed “book burning with marketplace refinement.” Instead of barbarically throwing the whole book in the furnace, they have carefully taken the time, not to read the book, but to salvage the attractive back and front covers. Meanwhile, they have made sure to tear out those oh-so-troublesome pages which lurk between them. Undoubtedly, part of this has to do with the way mass media, with blinding speed and power, dehumanizes, commodifies, and strips all substance from both willing and unwilling participants. Nothing more than a vague image remains.

³³³ Ford Motor Company, “Go Further” advertisement, 2017.

Marketers, to a large extent, have simply played along with what Kurt Vonnegut painfully learned once, namely just how violently resistant some Americans could be when it came to honestly discussing challenging topics, such as war. During his own lifetime, novelist and WWII veteran Kurt Vonnegut, learned firsthand this firsthand on multiple occasions. His books were banned in schools in Levittown, New York, ironically consisting of suburban homes that were constructed specifically for WWII veterans.³³⁴ It seemed that while Vonnegut could have once obtained a reasonable mortgage on a ranch house there, his ideas, experiences, and frank depiction of war were not welcome residents. Vonnegut's books were not only banned in Levittown, but they were also burned at a school in North Dakota. After receiving the news, he decided to write a letter the school in order to make them understand he is, in fact, a real person:

My novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* was actually burned in a furnace...in Drake, North Dakota, on instructions from the school committee there...Certain members of your community have suggested that my work is evil. This is extraordinarily insulting to me. The news from Drake indicates to me that books and writers are very unreal to you people. I am writing this letter to let you know how real I am. I want you to know, too, that my publisher and I have done absolutely nothing to exploit the disgusting news from Drake...We have declined to go on television, have written no fiery letters to editorial pages, have granted no lengthy interviews. We are angered and sickened and saddened...If you were to bother to read my books...you would learn that they are not sexy, and do not argue in favor of wildness of any kind. They beg that people be kinder and more responsible than they often are...If you are an American, you must allow all ideas to circulate freely in your community, not merely your own...You should also resolve to expose your children to all sorts of opinions and information, in order that they will be better equipped to make decisions and survive. Again: you have insulted me, and I am a good citizen, and I am very real.³³⁵

Clearly, marketing ads do not go to such dramatic, fiery lengths as these schools in Levittown, NY and Drake, ND. But the simple fact that the creative and intellectual substance of "real

³³⁴ Kurt Vonnegut, *Palm Sunday: An Autobiographical Collage* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1981) 7.

³³⁵ *Ibid*, 5-7.

people” is essentially detached from them, one has to wonder, how different is the end result?
Nina Simone *was* a real person, right?

In this way, while marketing approaches and images have changed since *The Twilight Zone*, one element has remained constant – the final, simplistic, solution. Just as appliance manufacturers ensured women in the 1950s that a modern piece of technology could free them to be more attentive mothers and housewives, the purchase of certain clothing items, beverages, cars, and cologne now guarantees *your* freedom. Similarly, consumer purchases are supposedly the most official and authentic way to confirm your status as a self-actualized social rebel. Instead of being empowered to think critically, act constructively, and seek to resist and regulate sources of corruption that permeate society, one can, among other things, grab a midnight snack. Rather than think outside the proverbial “box,” those who are genuinely hungry for change can instead simply “think outside the bun” by placing an order at a conveniently located Taco Bell drive-thru. Being a non-conforming rebel has never been so easy.

During his years as a television writer, Serling once asked, “How can you put out a meaningful drama when every fifteen minutes proceedings are interrupted by twelve dancing rabbits with toilet paper?” The question has now changed to, “How can you promote critical thought, meaningful action, and intellectual stimulation when proceedings are now interrupted by former Civil Rights activists promoting Nike shoes and Ford Motor vehicles?” In other words, how can one argue for the continual need to support and fight for social rights when the voices of such causes have been domesticated to such an absurd degree? Marketers have taken the work and thought of social critics and turned them into a cozy image, or warm feeling. They have hired their critics, offered a free makeover, and told them to smile. But Americans are in serious amnesiac danger if they cede all control and historical memory to marketers whose

primary interest remains improving *their* image, boosting *their* sales and making consumers “feel something.” Restoring singers, activists, and writers to their proper context, focusing on their unique work and ideas, rather than their image, is clearly a vital need going forward. If America’s historical mausoleum, along with its residents, is to be maintained and not endlessly vandalized by marketing campaigns that sell junk food and sweat-shop produced sneakers with the voices of social activists, then a more concerted social response is required.

This does not imply a need to simply offer historical actors some kind of vague reverence, but to constructively and creatively maintain the connection of strugglers *with* their struggle, as well as our own. It has been my humble attempt to show that innovative thinkers and writers, are in fact “stuck” by the very marketing that promises social liberation, and consequently, so are we. Along with these historical actors, it is clear that we too, need to exist beyond the mere “dimension of sight and sound,” but once again be allowed to dwell with others, living and deceased, in the “dimension of mind.” By reconnecting *The Twilight Zone* to the rich intellectual world in which it emerged, I have sought to do the opposite of marketers – emphasize the significant, robust, and relevant ideas, rather than the overly recognizable images.

Apart from many of his increasingly commercial appearances on television, Serling began to teach writing classes at Ithaca College in 1967 and remained a faculty member until his death in 1975. His platform for social criticism had largely vanished from popular media, illustrating how television writers require finding reliable sponsorship. Although his critical thought vanished as a TV writers, Serling managed to regain it to some extent in the classroom. He not only taught courses, but frequently made appearances at colleges throughout the nation, speaking at UCLA in 1966 and 1971 and giving the commencement address for USC’s graduating class in 1970. And while Serling would undoubtedly be troubled by the great number

of injustices still being perpetrated in American society today, he would be glad to see that there still are television writers who share his social consciousness and concern. Charlie Brooker's creative output, including *How TV Ruined Your Life*, which focuses on the suppression of reality on television, and *Black Mirror*, centering on the precarious impact of technology on our lives, are clear descendants of Serling's series. And merely two years ago, Ithaca College created the "Rod Serling Award for Advancing Social Justice through Popular Media." The annual award was first awarded to David Simon, whose best known work includes *The Wire* and *Tremé*, dramatic explorations of urban life in Baltimore and New Orleans, respectively. In its second year, the award went to Kenya Barris, whose show *Black-ish* has included commentary on police shootings, complicated aspects of raising black children in America, and the continual struggle for racial equality. With the persistent popularity of *The Twilight Zone* and the success of socially critical writers like Brooker, Simon, and Barris, it remains clear that there is both a need and demand among public audiences for popular media to broach controversial subject matter so that they might not be entertained to death, but to think, and thereby more meaningfully connect to their real world. As Serling told USC graduates in 1970,

It's simply a national acknowledgement that in any kind of priority, the needs of human beings must come first. Poverty is here and now. Hunger is here and now. Racial tension is here and now. Pollution is here and now. These are the things that scream for a response. And if we don't listen to that scream - and if we don't respond to it - we may well wind up sitting amidst our own rubble, looking for the truck that hit us - or the bomb that pulverized us. Get the license number of whatever it was that destroyed the dream. And I think we will find that the vehicle was registered in our own name.³³⁶

While 21st century Americans continue to experience various aspects of the American nightmare, there remains a profound need for writers and sponsors alike, in the words of Theodor

³³⁶ USC Commencement Address 1970.

Adorno, to “let suffering speak.” If Americans desire to live in a representative democracy, there is no question that one of the essential requirements for doing so is having more representative media that reflects the diverse experiences of being an American. And while Adorno was no fan of mass media, it is evident that forms of popular media are here to stay. For Adorno, Serling, and the large number of postwar critics, articulating anguish was an essential requirement for revealing truth, whether it be personal or social, and helping to make the world a less harsh place. TV and popular media, however, still operate in the “middle ground between light and shadow” and “between the pit of man’s fears and the summit of knowledge.” And as news programs are increasingly formatted as outlets for entertainment and have come to resemble ads in their simplistic “solutions” to complex issues, it is arguably even more imperative now than ever for creative writers to cast light on socially destructive shadows and expose real suffering so the nation’s citizenry can be at least slightly more engaged in the problems that affect them and their communities.

In *The Twilight Zone*’s final season, “I Am the Night, Color Me Black” aired on March 27, 1964. Much like his earlier teleplay for the *U.S. Steel Hour* entitled *Noon on Doomsday*, Serling returned to the topic of violence, and once again, his racial commentary was for the most part exhumed from the script. Initially, the script featured Jagger, an African-American, sentenced to be lynched, but the script was altered so that the man was now white. Although Serling had successfully concealed social commentary in *The Twilight Zone* throughout its first four seasons, the final season served as a reminder how little things had changed with regard to American mass media, popular television, and American social norms. While the victim was changed racially, the enthusiastic hatred of some of the local law enforcement remained somewhat intact, as a deputy gleefully proclaims, with regard to Jagger, “He’s guilty as

hell...And man, justice is bein' served deluxe style!" The sheriff, however, does not see things quite so simplistically: "I saw the victim...And when a committee of townspeople came to me and said there'd be no autopsy, I just bent my head and nodded. We've all got little axes to grind, don't we? I'd like to be re-elected sheriff, and you'd like to keep that newspaper going, and Deputy Pierce over here...he likes to feel important. He likes to be popular. He likes to stay on the good side of people. So here we are, gentlemen. All of us treading water in a sewer." After Jagger is hanged at the gallows, Deputy Pierce sardonically remarks to the black reverend, "You seen the light, Reverend. You really seen the light." Reverend Anderson somberly responds to the deputy, as well as the crowd standing below, "Have you? Have any of you? In all of this darkness...can anyone make out the truth?" He questions the crowd, "Do you know why it's dark? Do you know why there's night all around us? Do you know what the blackness is? It's the hate he felt...the hate you've felt...the hate all of us feel. There was too much...there was too much, and we've had to vomit it up and now it's surrounding us and choking us. So much hate. So much miserable hate." As the town is enveloped in blackness, the sky becomes even darker and Serling offers his closing narration, "A sickness known as hate. Not a virus. Not a microbe. Not a germ. But a sickness nonetheless. Highly contagious. Deadly in its effects. Don't look for it in *The Twilight Zone* – look for it in the mirror. Look for it before the light goes out altogether."

In one of Serling's last scripts for *The Twilight Zone*, he once again returned to the issue that he undoubtedly viewed as the most important regarding American culture and arguably led more than anything else to the creation of the program in the first place – the nation's rampant forms of prejudice and the collective inability to deal honestly with them. Merely three years after the episode aired, Serling expressed, "I can't sit on a fence and let carbuncles form...I

happen to think the singular evil of our time is prejudice. It is from this evil that all other evils grow and multiply. In almost everything I've written, there is a thread of this: man's seemingly palpable need to dislike someone other than himself."³³⁷ Indeed, prejudice had led to the awful brutality of war in the Pacific, it had led to the poisonous effects of McCarthyism, to the unprecedented number of military and CIA interventions throughout the third world and the stockpiling of nuclear weapons at home, it led the once admirable wealth gap to dramatically widen, alienating a diverse work force from production, purpose, and a place in their communities. Prejudice had wreaked havoc in the form of housing discrimination, criminal justice, access to jobs, education, and public facilities. And while the Civil Rights movement made gains throughout *The Twilight Zone's* five seasons on television, the fact that a war veteran cum television writer, concerned with the social health of his nation he had once risked his life for, was continually obstructed to make full, direct, and dramatic comment on television regarding such matters, reveals a profound public dilemma that has yet to be resolved. But this episode, like so many other installments of *The Twilight Zone*, revealed Serling's ability to find the middle ground between offering explicit, biting social criticism and escapist, celebratory content during the postwar period of television and mass media. His ability to do so reveals that scholarly portrayals of TV as either reformatory or repressive in the postwar United States also need to account for this creative and critical middle ground occupied by Serling.

In the present day, these issues have only become more complicated with the increasing amount of mass media constantly before our eyes and penetrating our minds. But with all that we are supposedly looking at, we are *not* looking at even more. As Serling expressed,

³³⁷ Rod Serling, *Los Angeles Times*, June 25, 1967.

The moment you begin to censor the writer – and history bears this out in the ugliest of fashions – so begins a process of decay in the body politic that ultimately leads to disaster... It has forever been thus: So long as men write what they think, then all of the other freedoms – all of them – may remain intact. And it is then that writing becomes a weapon of truth, an article of faith, an act of courage.³³⁸

During his short lifetime, Serling found a creative way to express important social concerns, but the mere fact he had to do so in such a concealed way, exposes how sponsorship, financial backing, and wealth powerfully impact one's ability to exercise the first amendment. In this way, *The Twilight Zone* revealed the underlying conflicts between democracy and capitalism and the limitations of a commodity attempting to critique commodification. As Paul Goodman observed with regard to American society, we “allow everyone his political right to say what he believes,” but make sure “to swamp his little boat with literally thousands of millions of newspapers, mass-circulation magazines, best-selling books, broadcasts, and public pronouncements that disregard what he says and give the official way of looking at things.”³³⁹ Amidst the rising intellectual “swamp” made possible by technology and mass media, Serling's show also exemplified some of the limited ways popular media can direct its audience toward the rushing waters of important social issues, as well as a broader, deeper world of social criticism and intellectual thought. While the priorities embodied in mass marketing and corporate profit margins need not be altogether anathematized, they somehow must be more balanced with humane considerations that will enable all of society, including the business world and advertising industries, to thrive continually in the future. In the language of America's main Cold War enemy, the word to hate, “*nepavidet*,” literally translates from Russian as, “to not see.” By choosing to censor and not look

³³⁸ Rod Serling, “The Challenge of the Mass Media to the 20th Century Writer,” January 15, 1968, quoted in Anne Serling, *As I Knew Him*, 165.

³³⁹ Goodman, 44.

at certain issues, Americans continue to express a kind of tacit hatred toward their fellow citizenry and the outside world. Only by exposing and looking at our nation and world honestly, can the nation begin to earn its influential place in the world and sustain constructive national conversations and minimize social problems and suffering collectively. After all, as Serling once stated, “There is nothing in the dark that isn't there when the lights are on.” Postwar social critics helped to ensure the lights not only stayed on, but perhaps even, shone a bit brighter in some dark corners. It will be up to future generations to ensure social awareness, light, and power do not vanish altogether, but continue to course through the signals of popular media and social criticism.

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Vita

David Brokaw was born in Albany, New York in the summer of 1984. He attended Schenectady County Community College from 2003-2005 and graduated with an A.A. in History. He then attended Centre College in Danville, Kentucky from 2005-2007, where he studied abroad in Turkey and England, and graduated with a B.A. in History. After earning his bachelor's degree, Brokaw served as an ESL instructor in Madrid, Spain from 2007-2008 at Colegio Federico Garcia Lorca. Upon his return to the United States in 2008, Brokaw enrolled at the State University of New York at Albany where he earned his M.A. in History in 2010, and soon began substitute teaching for secondary schools in the area. In the summer of 2011, he relocated to Baton Rouge, Louisiana to undertake the Ph.D. program in U.S. History at Louisiana State University. He currently lives in Madison, Wisconsin and plans on graduating with a doctorate in history in May 2017.

