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No Time to Stop Worrying, Even If We Don't Love the Bomb
A Few Words from the New President Of ISSNTC

Editor's note: In the wake of the resignation of ISSNTC founding President Jean Kittrell, the members of the board agreed to ask Daniel Zins to serve as her replacement. He has accepted the position, and offers the following thoughts.

I have been asked to serve as president of International Society for the Study of Nuclear Texts and Contexts, and I have agreed to do so. Because, like all of you, I tend to find myself plenty busy, this is not a position that I would have solicited. Nor is it a position that I would be unhappy to relinquish at some point in the future if another member of our organization would be amenable to taking over.

I apologize if this sounds like a complaint; it is not meant to be. And I surely do not wish to exaggerate the demands of my new office! What I would like to accentuate, however, is that I probably would have declined the presidency of virtually any *other* organization. I have agreed to become the president of ISSNTC because of my conviction that the value and importance of this particular organization has *not* waned with the easing of Cold War tensions. Ironically, the need for an alliance of concerned educators willing to make the study of past, present, and future nuclear developments a significant part of their professional lives may be even greater now, when there once again appears to be widespread complacency about the Bomb, than during the height of Cold-War animosities in the early eighties. The end of the Cold War notwithstanding, what is called the "nuclear predicament" is still very much a part of our lives, whether we choose to acknowledge this new phenomenon in human history or not. After all, some 50,000 nuclear weapons are still nuclear dangers will undoubtedly diminish, or even disappear, in the coming decades. But other, perhaps even more perilous dangers, may arise. If the nuclear dilemma is not an altogether intractable problem, it is, unfortunately, a profoundly complex one, and one that cannot be resolved quickly or easily.

In some ways, the threat of nuclear war undoubtedly has decreased in recent years. In other ways, however, the danger may be increasing. Unchecked by the moral agency of human intervention, technology can, and often does, acquire a momentum of its own. If educators, students, and ordinary citizens once again complacently forget about the bomb, there will be others who surely will *not* forget about it. Millions of Americans, in one way or another, have vested interests in the survival of the nuclear national security state, and ensuring *its* survival often seems to take precedence over improving the likelihood of *human* survival.

We live in a nation whose leaders still seem convinced that their country's security requires the continued development, testing, and deployment of new nuclear weapons. It is easy to forget that in the United States, in the Soviet Union, and in the other nuclear weapons states—announced and undeclared—and in any number of non-nuclear states which covet the Bomb, dedicated, highly intelligent and often handsomely-paid scientists and technocrats are straining their intellectual capacities to create ever more sophisticated and lethal weapons of mass destruction. The arms race, in other words, has hardly ended. And it will not be halted, and reversed, in the absence of an informed and aroused public, in the United States and elsewhere, which insists that their leaders assiduously explore more sensible and less precarious means of achieving global security. Education obviously has an indispensable role to play here.

At least one important shift has occurred in much national security discourse in recent years. It is now being suggested with increasing frequency that the possibility

of *environmental* holocaust is the cardinal threat to international security, its gravity superseding even the nuclear peril. Much greater attention to the alarming deterioration of the earth's ecosystems is, without doubt, long overdue. (It is also important that the public be made much more aware of the significant *links* between militarism/nuclearism and environmental degradation, e.g., the hundreds of billions of dollars that will be needed to clean up the extensive pollution in and around America's bomb factories. Nuclear weapons, often championed as a means of obtaining security "on the cheap," may turn out to have been somewhat more expensive than commonly advertised.) If we are now at the beginning of an "environmental decade"—and, of course, I hope that we are—it would be unfortunate if this newly acknowledged danger deflects attention from the still very real problem of nuclear weapons.

It is my sincere hope, then, that all members of ISSNTC will remaininthis organization. And I would also like to see many more educators and scholars join ISSNTC. I know that most of us cannot devote all, or even the majority, of our professional lives to grappling with the nuclear predicament. But I suggest that we not underestimate the value of making even a modest commitment to this endeavor. Merely remaining in the organization, and taking the time to peruse *Nuclear Texts and Contexts*, may be a not insignificant contribution. Others, perhaps, will make the time periodically to read various articles in journals like *Nuclear Times* and *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,* or occasionally a new or already classic book on nuclear weapons.

If the eighties taught us anything, it was that nuclear-weapons issues are much too important to be the sole province of the "experts" or "nuclear priesthood." It is not merely that their understanding of these matters is often dangerously narrow or technocratic. Something is seriously amiss if a nation can twice elect a commander-in-chief who is not only woefully uninformed about fundamental aspects of nuclear weapons issues, but also makes little effort to eliminate such an alarming gap in his education. At the heart of the problem may be the imperial presidency itself. The very democracy that our enormous nuclear arsenal purportedly exists to defend is not merely compromised, but undermined in fundamental ways, by the obliteration of the traditional protection of "checks and balances" and the massive secrecy inherent in the nuclear national security state. Moreover, it is hard to imagine how democracy can survive if ordinary citizens, not to mention educators, are unwilling to take the time to make themselves reasonably well informed, or are unwilling to make their voices heard, on the most important issues of our time.

I hope that ISSNTC members, and all of those who happen to read *Nuclear Texts & Contexts,* will share their scholarship, and their thoughts, in future issues of the newsletter, or with me personally. I like to think that ISSNTC will not only survive but prosper in the nineties, and that even such a seemingly marginal organization might make a considerable contribution to minimizing the possibility that nuclear weapons will ever again be detonated in anger. Finally, I would at this time like to express my gratitude to Jean Kittrell, the first president of ISSNTC, for giving so much of her time during the formative stages of our organization.

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Book Reviews

Chernus, Ira. ***Nuclear Madness: Religion and the Psychology of the Nuclear Age.*** **Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991. 336 pp. $17.95 softcover.**

This book attempts to explain political psychology in the nuclear age through nuclear imagery and psychiatrist R. J. Lifton's (1967) construct of psychic numbing. To start with an image of my own, the nuclear threat could be characterized by two men (gender intended), each holding a gun to the other's head as a means of security. The inherent danger and illogic in this is of course mad; a madness defined by Mutual Assured Destruction (M.A.D.). The book draws heavily on metaphors of madness in attempting to explain this situation, and in attempting to "point to new political possibilities that will lead beyond the nuclear trap and void" (p. 70).

The logic followed in the book is that psychic numbing causes us to shut off any thoughts about a fundamental threat to our existence. We therefore develop no images of nuclear doomsday, and this is essentially why we do not act to prevent it. It is not completely clear, however, why numbing makes us inactive regarding the nuclear threat, but not about other threats. Certainly death is a more immediate threat to blacks in South Africa or to those in bread lines in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. Yet rather than being numbed into paralysis, thesevictims defy government threats of bloodshed to hold public rallies. Numbing may not be the cause of general inactivity regarding the nuclear threat; unlike demonstrations against foodlines and racism, we may just find it too long-term, large and improbable to deal with in our day-to-day lives.

As a central theme, *Nuclear Madness: Religion and the Psychology of the Nuclear Age* states that: "The question to be asked about nuclear weapons . . . is: What fantasy images are embedded in our attitudes and behaviors?" (p. 83). But Psychology as a discipline and profession is based on empirical research, not fantasy images. Author Ira Chernus does acknowledge that his approach is not easily interwoven with formal psychological research (discussing theologian Paul Tillich, p. 48; also pp. 105-

106). But he nevertheless uses arguments, such as those from Mircea Eliade, that "can be neither verified nor falsified by empirical research" (p. 193), an ominous note for social scientists reading the book. Chernus overlooks vast areas of empirical research in political science, economics, political psychology, and even the scientific evidence on nuclear winter, stating that "the empirical reality of a large-scale use of nuclear weapons eludes scientific understanding" (p. 64). As one example to the contrary, in psychology there have been innumerable experimental studies of imagery, both in terms of imaginal thinking, and a narrower literature specifically focusing on nuclear imagery (e.g., *Journal of Social Issues*, v. 39[1]). Skirting these seems to be a gross omission in a book purporting to use imagery as a basis for a psychological understanding of the nuclear age.

Similarly, although the subtitle "Religion and the Psychology of the Nuclear Age" appears to describe a study of religion, this book uses a religious approach, based on "infinitude" (p. 51) and immortality. It supports Lifton, who allegedly "recognizes that the nuclear dilemma has religious roots" (p. 187). However, religious roots are much more directly dealt with in books such as those by Mojtabai (1986) and Del Tredici (1989), who discuss Amarillo, Texas and the Pantex nuclear-weapons plant there.

This is a book that relies heavily on lofty language and philosophical jargon (e.g., "radical finitude", p. 53). Relating mythological terms like "the underworld" (p. 254) to nuclear deterrence is about as useful to a real understanding of the nuclear threat as former U.S. President Reagan's references to "the evil empire." These grandiose descriptions fail to recognize simple economic realities. The scientific-military-industrial complex and the nuclear industry are often supported simply because they provide companies and shareholders with profits, and employees with jobs. Therefore, it may not be that numbing occurs because of the magnitude of the threat, but that rationalization occurs because of vested interests in the threat. It would therefore be worth considering whether there is any difference between numbing in the hibakusha that survived Hiroshima, and rationalization (or numbing) for questionable work that pays well. This distinction may perhaps be studied empirically. As with imagery, there are also empirical studies that could have been considered in any book dealing with these types of psychological mechanisms (e.g., Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959 and all of the subsequent studies validating cognitive dissonance).

The only evidence for numbing in the book is Lifton's observations of victims in Hiroshima, which are then linked to potential victims of the contemporary nuclear threat. Lifton himself recently associated the thought processes in perpetrating Nazi mass killing, and in contemporary "perpetrators" of the nuclear threat, which would have been very relevant to reference here (Lifton and Markusen, 1990). The tendency throughout *Nuclear Madness* is to increasingly leave the initial evidence and begin describing events as schizophrenic, neurotic or mad.

The mental health metaphors in *Nuclear Madness* are rooted in pre-1950s psychoanalysis. (Even continual reference to "The bomb" rather than "smart missiles," for example, is outdated.) Chernus states

> Psychologists may identify nuclear weapons with interpersonal hostility, dominance needs, repressed rage, or magical defenses against insecurity. Freudians will find a mapping of infantile omnipotence desires. Jungians will find archetypal patterns of all sorts. Theologians will consider the bomb a mapped replication of our traditional image of God. But all will attest the existence of social fantasy. (p. 32.

Infantile omnipotence desires? All will attest to the existence of social fantasy? *Nuclear Madness* does, but it is surely a step backwards for any reader attempting to learn something of explanations in contemporary political psychology. In relying on clinical metaphors from over forty years ago, Chernus has tied his philosophy to a clinical approach with little actual evidence, and which is generally no longer accepted.

Psychic numbing and mental illness could be used successfully if not treated as just a metaphorical explanation for nuclear irrationality. This is a difference between Lifton's (1967) actual psychiatric observations and Chernus's numbing metaphor. But *Nuclear Madness* dwells on descriptive images and similes, not actually pursuing responses to the nuclear threat using either side of psychology: (a) the experimental and observational bases, which have been extensively documented, or (b) clinical psychopathology, which would be worth seriously pursuing. One could propose very real psychiatric grounds for the suicidal nature of being a passive bystander or having vested interests in the nuclear arms race (see Charny, 1986). Masking, numbing, rationalizing, or however ignoring the potential for nuclear omnicide is a psychological process that poses a very real threat to human life, and may thus fit the criteria for inclusion as a pathological disorder in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders III* (American Psychiatric Association, 1987).

People with different political agendas could make completely different conclusions using the material in *Nuclear Madness*. It is also the case that completely different premises and images could be used to arrive at the same conclusions. A discussion of sexual and pornographic images of the nuclear threat in Rosenbaum (1978) is equally metaphorical. It is descriptive, but not explanatory. Perhaps no real explanation is necessary in *Nuclear Madness*, though, or even any conclusions on religious thinking or psychological processes. Chernus's description of "the bomb" as "a symbol of neurotic ambivalence" (p. 67; also 56, 61) is almost just an abstract, artistic image. This would be okay if presented this way in the introduction. As it is, though, we are misled from the title on into thinking that this book will provide an

understanding of psychological perceptions and responses to the nuclear threat.

In conclusion, I appreciate the attempt in *Nuclear Madness* to deal with a fundamental threat to our continued survival. However, I would have reservations about recommending it, at least as a book on psychology or religion and the nuclear threat. *Nuclear Madness* attempts to provide a new understanding through a metaphorical nuclear neurosis: "the annihilating trap of narrowness and the empty dark void of formlessness" (p. 65). But really, the book just descends into these itself.

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Millicent Lenz, *Nuclear Age Literature for Youth. The Quest for a Life-affirming Ethic.* Chicago and London: American Library Association, 1990. 315 pages.

Millicent Lenz completes two tasks in this comprehensive and thoroughly researched survey and interpretation of nuclear literature for youth: she offers the reader summaries and genre classification of narratives and she frames those narratives within the context of the paradigm shift from the hero/enemy dichotomy to the connecting patterns of the life-affirming ethic of the "biophile." For the educator, the book is both a resource for texts and an argument that challenges readers to examine ways of re-visioning our cherished myths in order to envision our future. In particular, Campbell's ethnocentric and exclusive myth of the hero is seen as needing revision. Lenz's cumulative bibliographies are especially helpful in their interdisciplinary humanities and social science focus.

Lenz points out that our culture has privileged mythologies of war over mythologies of peace, though the latter have been in narratives from classical antiquity to our own time. If foregrounded, such mythologies, she feels, could "contribute significantly to the restructuring of heroic paradigms" (xxiii). Her nine chapters clearly announce for the reader the range of her argument and the texts she discusses: a new heroic model; narratives of life lived in the nuclear shadow; voices from Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the peace pilgrim as hero/hera; scenarios of end-time; survivors in an atomized Eden; the quest for wholeness in a broken world; Gaia as cosmic myth, a life-affirming ethic. Each chapter is highlighted by subdivisions.

These subdivisions are useful to the educator in terms of the issues they announce and their relation to the exploration, discussion and teaching of nuclear literature; they may even inspire the creative imagination of writers. But, since the sub-topics are so numerous in each chapter, they frequently remain "under-discussed," though their subject may be as important as "related images of wholeness in myth and contemporary thought" (215). Rightly so, Lenz sees literature for youth as an extension of the philosophical, psychological, sociological and literary concerns in texts written for adults. The inclusion of several such texts enriches her study but at the same time overburdens it so that the reader fears "the center cannot hold." But, whenever the reader listens to Lenz's voice, a committed and urgent voice, she becomes aware that this writer needs to tell her reader what has to be read in order that we can find new structures to save the earth and ourselves.

In this effort, nuclear literature for the young is important, for the young are always at the point of sensitive dependence on initial conditions that make them the hope or the despair of the future. Lenz believes in the directional value of stories, life-affirming stories for the young. Her primary interest—the need for myth—is increasingly privileged in her discussion. She reflects:

> Based on this survey of experiences of the astronauts, the theories of some notable philosophers, and selected examples of literary and film images, I believe the cosmic image of Gaia, in the process of being assimilated into the consciousness of people worldwide, can bring us into touch with the timeless realm of the Great Story, with what T. S. Eliot called "the still point of the turning world" (224).

By delineating the various mythologies of nuclear texts, Lenz herself becomes a mythologist. Moreover, she is a mythologist who assumes that mythic patterns can be "revised," invented and even devised. As antenna of culture and time, the rationally creative imagination invents myths that hitherto evolved and transformed themselves less intentionally. There is an artificiality in such myth-making activity that worries this reviewer because of its implications for social and political manipulations, not that the old mythic patterns have not been used towards such ends. Lenz's hero-hera model, based on

DuPlessis' discussion of Psyche, or wholeness, is an example of the "artifice" that defines much of contemporary myth-making. Hera, the feminine of hero, is no longer the vengeful and frustrated Hera of Greek mythology, but the quester seeking *gnosis* (xxx). She becomes paradigmatic for Lenz, but never quite loses for the reader the resonance of casual language games such as popular feminism's history/herstory.

The focus on life-denying and life-affirming myths and their effect on the psyche severely backgrounds discussions of scientific, social and political issues; though, of course, most narratives background these as well. The mythologist in the context of her or his culture may unintentionally maintain the status quo by proclaiming a need for myths rather than for rational solutions to problems in a nuclear age.

Nuclear Age Literature for Youth challenges the reader not only with its suggestions of new patterns, but also with the dynamics of believing and doubting the author's assumptions. Always, however, Lenz' study is richly informative and will provide for quite some time a most valuable resource for all who care about youth and the nuclear age.

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Der Derian, James and Michael J. Shapiro, eds., *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*. Lexington, Ma.: D.C. Heath, 1989.

If in recent years there has been nothing less than a fundamental rethinking of the very nature and purpose of the humanities in American higher education, much of the credit (or, for champions of more traditional approaches, reproof) surely must be given to continental poststructural theories. And, as the provocative essays in *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics* make abundantly clear, postmodern and poststructural thought and practices "as diverse as geneology, deconstruction, semiotics, feminist psychoanalytic theory, and intertextualism" are now also challenging the "boundaries of knowledge and power" in the field of international relations. If countless texts taught in English and humanities courses have yielded new and illuminating readings through the writings of Barthes and Baudrillard, Derrida and Foucault, the essays in *International/Intertextual Relations* evince that such theorists have at least as much to contribute to the rereading and reformulating of the most important national security discourses and questions.

An engagement with nuclear weapons/national security discourses and questions, unfortunately, is still uncommon in humanities education. But for those who would like to begin challenging students with innovative and enlightening analyses of the national security implications of such topics as the sport/war intertext of world politics, popular spy novels (and their faith in technological fixes like Star Wars), the pornographic violence of paramilitary magazines, strategic and social fictions in the "prisoner's dilemma," Freud's discourse of war/politics, the language of antiterrorism and the concomitant militarization of our common life, mass media coverage of the bombing of Greenpeace's *Rainbow Warrior*, or semiotic interpretations of deterrence and the nuclear arms race, *International/Intertextual Relations* is an invaluable anthology.

"Through a rigorous analysis of the language and methods of international relations," write this volume's editors,

> poststructuralism has disturbed many of the conventions that have long stood as the natural truths of the field. Poststructural practices have been used critically to investigate how the subject—in the dual senses of subject-matter and subject-actor—of international relations is constituted in and through the discourses and texts of world politics. Poststructuralism has called into question the Enlightenment foundation of international relations—not to repudiate its significance for the field but to pry into and at the death-grip of a candle-power doctrine on nuclear times.

Convinced "that an increasingly postmodern world politics is very much in need of poststructural readings," James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro have assembled a collection of papers which shed a great deal of light on our nuclear times, and how we might survive them. Providing incisive and original readings of a variety of national security/nuclear texts and discourses, *International/Intertextual Relations* not only suggests how recent developments in literary theory and cultural criticism have helped to reconstitute and revitalize scholarship in international relations, but reminds educators in English and the humanities that *their own* teaching and research can also benefit enormously from the willingness of other fields to continue to expand and transcend arbitrarily constructed if seemingly natural disciplinary boundaries.

But to reap such benefits—the most important one, I submit, would be unleashing the heretofore unacknowledged, or at least greatly underestimated, potential of humanistic scholarship to contribute to a just, stable, and enduring peace—one must be willing to tolerate more than a modicum of uncertainty, or even chaos, rather than insisting on a comforting, but potentially totalitarian, closure of both ostensibly settled and unprecedented questions. In his essay on how political "realists" have misread and caricatured Machiavelli, R.B.J. Walker cites Kal Holsti's comments on international theory's "state of disarray." "In the past decade," Holsti observed in 1985,

> the three-centuries long intellectual consensus which organized philosophical speculation, guided empirical research, and provided at least hypothetical answers to the critical questions about international politics has broken down. New conceptions and images of the world, and how it works in the diplomatic, military, and commercial domains, have arisen. . . . The continued underdevelopment of many new states, combined with the startling pace of technological transformation, have raised new kinds of questions about international politics, questions which were not relevant to the kinds of problems contemplated by our intellectual ancestors and most of

those working within the realist, or classical, tradition.

If many individuals working in the field of international relations, and others, are still loath to grapple with these entirely new (often nuclear) questions and problems—ostensibly out of a fear of what is frequently denounced as "relativism"—the contributors to *International/Intertextual Relations* demonstrate that if we fail to open up the nuclear age's new texts and discourses in radically new ways, we cannot possibly ask the kinds of questions that our radically new era poses. And as long as we continue to defer such interrogations, *real* security will necessarily continue to elude us.

What is needed, then, is what Der Derian calls an "intertextual" approach to national security issues, where there will be

> a considerable measure of metatheory, of theorizing about the theories of international politics. This allows for a form of preanalysis that disturbs the complacency of received knowledge, its self-evident relation to events, and the "naturalness" of its language. Through interpretation, metatheory promotes the transfer of theory from one historical context to another. There is, however, a commitment to limn—rather than delimit—significant empirical questions through intertextuality.

One particularly important question is raised by Donna Gregory in her forward to this volume: "Could linguistic meaning-making actually be connected to how social power gets constituted, or is the relationship only analogical?" Gregory adds that "if anything unites the disparate poststructuralists, it is their interest in this question. According to Foucault's analysis, there are profound interconnections between differentiations at the levels of discourse and of social action."

The search for genuine security in an age of mass death is not, of course, a matter of language merely. But any such inquiry is doomed to failure if it fails to take into account the central role of language in determining how international security questions are silenced and legitimized, framed and resolved. We are only beginning to realize just how profoundly various discourses structure our perceptions of who our (current) "enemies" are, the kinds of "threats" they present to us, and the "solutions" deemed necessary to vanquish these threats. Particularly important here is the remarkable efficacy of cleverly constructed discourses in foreclosing all but the military option for a variety of security problems which can only be solved by economic, political, or diplomatic initiatives.

However it is all too easy to forget that the 50,000 nuclear weapons still extant in the arsenals of the United States, the U.S.S.R. and other members of the nuclear "club" are very *real*, and very capable of being detonated on human populations. In an important sense nuclear warheads are also texts or discourses which must be carefully read or decoded if they are ever to be delegitimized and dismantled. In his semiotic interpretation of U.S. national security policy, Timothy W. Luke discusses how the "manifest function" of the Bomb—to make enormous nuclear explosions to destroy the enemy's military forces and/or urban-industrial centers in war—has been gradually effaced, if not superseded, by a "latent function," wherein nuclear arms

> circulate as complex signs of national will, capability, and determination, signalling the ability to fulfill their manifest function while communicating the direction of particular national policies and goals. . . . [Strobe] Talbott [writes] in his account of the SALT/START negotiations: "nuclear missiles and bombs are symbols of power. The way in which their custodians, the leaderships of the United States and the Soviet Union, manipulate these symbols is a key factor in how successful their other policies will be. In that respect, nuclear weapons exist to be talked about, not to be used." Strategic nuclear forces can be seen as elements of a code, texts enscribed with meanings to be read and reconsidered at varying semantic levels by internal and external audiences. Individual nuclear-weaponry objects are signs laden with meaning; grouped units are code bits loaded with connotations; entire forces are code displays meant to be seen by antagonists and allies alike.

In discussions of nuclear strategy, nuclear weapons tend to be viewed, erroneously,

> as simple functional objects. They are regarded as useful instrumentalities tied to specific technical needs for coping with the military situation in the current world system. Their functional status allegedly derives from these technical needs, and their meaning flows from the state's instrumental employment of them in this global environment. Yet, this conventional attitude about nuclear weapons as military tools is completely anachronistic. As weapons or tools of statecraft, nuclear weapons are unique. They actually have no real use value now as lethal weapons.

Which is not to say, of course, that nuclear weapons will never again be used as lethal—or genocidal—weapons. We can most effectively minimize the likelihood that nuclear weapons will be employed for *this* purpose, however, if we are willing to undertake the formidable task of deconstructing and decoding the (largely unacknowledged) ways that they have been, and are, "used" to achieve other, less obvious, ends in international politics. Emerson once remarked that literalism is "the disease of the Western mind," and Jean Bethke Elshtain calls her chapter on Freud's views of war and aggression "an exercise in antiliteralization." Always remaining mindful that nuclear weapons are indeed real, all *too* real, we must at the same time appreciate that they are much more than "simple functional objects." They are, in fact, not really "weapons" at all, but rather instruments of genocide, the nucleus of a nuclear national security state which not only undermines democracy at home but militates against the establishment of a truly *new* "new world order," one which would finally recognize that the pervasive *structural* violence of the international status quo is perhaps the principal threat to a stable and enduring peace.

If we are successfully to initiate the fundamental changes that a just (new) world order requires, we must first become much more cognizant of the myriad ways

that prevailing discourses have constructed, and help to maintain current (in)security arrangements. *International/Intertextual Relations* makes an excellent contribution to this challenging but necessary project. **Daniel L. Zins**
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Martin Medhurst, Robert L. Ivie, Philip Wander, and Robert L. Scott. *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor and Ideology*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.

Two decades ago Wayne Brockriede and Robert L. Scott collaborated on a study called *Moments in the Rhetoric of the Cold War*, which, Martin J. Medhurst informs us, "located the art of rhetoric as a generative principle of Cold War politics." This 1970 monograph accentuated that

> rhetoric was not something added on or peripheral to or substituting for the 'real' issues. No, rhetoric was *the* issue; it constituted the central substance that required serious attention if the Cold War was to remain cold and rhetoric was to continue to be used in place of instruments of death.

The essays in *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor and Ideology* also underscore that rhetoric is "a central defining characteristic of Cold War." A Cold War, in other words, "is, by definition, a rhetorical war, a war fought with words, speeches, pamphlets, public information (or disinformation) campaigns, slogans, gestures, symbolic actions, and the like." Moreover, because language does not so much describe reality as *constitute* it, when we study the Cold War we are actually examining "a linguistically mediated act that cannot be separated easily from the discourses that call it into being, sustain, structure, and ultimately define it."

Although there is a voluminous scholarship on the Cold War itself, surprisingly little attention has been allocated to deconstructing the rhetorics, metaphors, and discourses with which it has been fought. "After more than four decades," writes Robert L. Ivie in the concluding essay of this important study, "the Cold War remains a rhetorical reality that demands a critical response, for there are better and worse ways of talking about a world endangered by instruments of its own making—even when chronic tensions between the superpowers appear to subside." Even if the Cold War is now over, and even if there is admittedly no prospect of a return to the status quo ante in superpower relations, the future of this peculiar relationship will, in no small way, be shaped by the various discourses which emanate from both policymaking elites and popular culture. And because even "cold" wars can be terribly costly—and, in a nuclear age, particularly dangerous—it still devolves on educators, in more than a few disciplines, to painstakingly investigate the rhetorical construction of the past four decades of Soviet-American enmity. If such scholarship can help to prevent even a considerably less malignant recrudescence of this unfortunate, and unnecessary, chapter in superpower relations—and I am convinced that it can—then perhaps far more of us whose special talent is ostensibly the interpretation of texts of various kinds should be explicating the specific Cold War texts which might enhance our understanding of the making, and unmaking, of enemies in the nuclear age. *Cold War Rhetoric* is an important contribution to this end.

A rhetorical analysis of the origins and significant episodes of the Cold War is, to be sure, no small task. In his illuminating chapter on one such episode—Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" speech—Martin Medhurst notes that over a period of five weeks in November and December of 1953 no fewer than eleven major revisions of this landmark address were composed. If we are committed to understanding an issue as complex as the Cold War itself, then, we may have to deconstruct such "carefully crafted piece[s] of Cold War rhetoric" (and, when available, their various drafts) as assiduously as they were constructed. The "Atoms for Peace" speech, for example—"a masterpiece of realpolitik long before the term became fashionable"—was presented "as a se-rious offer to negotiate the problems of the nuclear age with any potential adversary." In reality, Medhurst convincingly demonstrates, it was no such offer, but rather "a paradigm of both linguistic deception and strategic posturing at the highest levels of government." (Perhaps a not unfair description, Medhurst might have added, of four decades of arms control talks as well.)

Medhurst also devotes a chapter to John F. Kennedy's March 2, 1962 speech on the resumption of atmospheric nuclear weapons tests. For Medhurst, this speech was "an exercise in portraiture, a picture intentionally creating in the minds of the listeners a particular image of the president." Cultivating an image of reason, rationality, and restraint, Kennedy managed "to accommodate the strategic and geopolitical exigencies of the moment while simultaneously preserving for himself the rhetorical space to act differently, to make different choices, in the future." Medhurst evinces that by emphasizing the ethical character of the speaker and the moral superiority of his nation, Kennedy was able to successfully parry a great deal of the reproof which would have otherwise undoubtedly resulted from the announcement of the resumption of above-ground nuclear weapons tests. As Glenn T. Seaborg remarked in 1981, "occasionally what a politician says and how he says it are so significant as to have the effect of an important action."

Much of what a politician says, of course, is inevitably couched in metaphor. In his chapter on the rhetorical motives for the superpower rivalry, "Cold War Motives and the Rhetorical Metaphor: A Framework of Criticism," Robert Ivie discusses how such rhetorical motives and metaphors "have evolved over four decades into powerful conventions of public discourse that diminish the political imagination, undermine the incentive to envision better alternatives, and thus reduce the scope of practical options available to leaders of both nations." By elucidating how national security discourses since Hiroshima have sanctioned a remarkably narrow range

of policy options, rhetorical criticism can "uncover images that constrain the political imagination of Cold War leaders and their publics, images that otherwise would remain literalized beyond recognition as elaborated tropes and figures." Ivie pays particular attention to metaphors of "savagery," which at least militate against, if they do not foreclose entirely, any efforts at realistic empathy between antagonistic nations.

Ivie explores the disastrous effects of Cold War rhetoric on domestic politics in his chapter "Diffusing Cold War Demagoguery: Murrow versus McCarthy on 'See It Now."' Unwilling to confront the issue of Red hunting *Per se* (which had wide public support), Murrow instead focused merely on Joseph McCarthy's reckless and indiscriminate *methods*. In outwitting McCarthy in a game of "rhetorical irony," Murrow undoubtedly played a not insignificant role in the eventual downfall of the junior senator from Wisconsin. But "McCarthyism" itself did not die with the demise of Joseph McCarthy. In refusing to confront McCarthy's anti-Communism, "Murrow's rhetoric necessitated no reconsideration of Cold War assumptions and may instead have inadvertently reinforced them as a consequence of identifying, even indirectly, the Communist threat with McCarthy's demagoguery." Like other Cold War liberals, Murrow was unable, or unwilling, to seriously question policymakers' delineations of the "Soviet threat" and the Cold War discourses which exaggerated and distorted it. The recent marked improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations notwithstanding, we are still paying an enormous price for such linguistic trepidation.

In his final chapter on metaphor Ivie focuses on three Cold War "idealists": Henry Wallace, J. William Fulbright, and Helen Caldicott. According to Ivie, a common (and serious) error of many "idealist" critics is their tendency to place nearly the entire onus for the genesis and continuation of the Cold War on the United States. Within a few years after being rejected by voters in the 1948 election, however, Wallace recanted in his essay "Where I Was Wrong." His new appraisal of the Soviets was, unfortunately, almost equally one-sided. "Wallace ultimately fell victim," Ivie maintains, "to the inadequacies of his own rhetorical invention. His system of metaphorical concepts proved to be self-defeating because it did not enable him to explain Soviet initiatives without either continuing to blame the United States for creating the conditions that forced the Soviets to compete unfairly or deciding eventually that the Soviets were actually Satan's surrogates." In his sections on Fulbright and Caldicott ("long on courage and energy but short on rhetorical invention") Ivie discusses the former Arkansas Senator's critique of the crusading metaphor pervasive in American political discourse, and Caldicott's excessive reliance on "madness vehicles" to explain America's responsibility for the arms race. What is needed, Ivie suggests, is a "replacement metaphor" which acknowledges "the evidence that both parties are rational and irrational, aggressive and pacific, competitive and cooperative, independent and interdependent . "

Part three of *Cold War Rhetoric* contains three essays on "ideology" by Philip Wander. Wander's first essay, an introduction to ideology criticism, concludes that there has never been a greater need to deliberate such practical questions as: "What is the agency for change in opposing imperialism, war, the production of nuclear weapons, nuclear and chemical wastes, the destruction of the ozone layer? What are the strengths and weaknesses of rule by the many in these tasks? What are the realities of political power now in relation to these issues, and what is the potential for change?"

In his next chapter, "The Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy," Wander provides a sophisticated reading of the "prophetic dualism" (or what is often called Manicheanism) of the Eisenhower—Dulles administration. If there are clear advantages in the context of domestic politics accruing to the users of such self-righteous language—among other reverberations, it tends to inhibit debate and encourages greater dependence on the established order—Manichean rhetoric also engenders at least one major problem for those in power: it leaves little room for modification and compromise if one's adversary becomes more conciliatory and changes his behavior. In his discussion of the "technocratic realism" of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Wander laments the arrogance with which the foreign-policy views of non-elites are summarily dismissed by the best and the brightest; because crucial information cannot be divulged for reasons of "national security," and because ordinary citizens "have no experience in the potential of modern techniques for nation building," it is cavalierly assumed that only the "experts" are capable of rendering informed judgments of government policy. Thus "[t]he task of criticism in our time," Wander asserts, "is to raise real issues and to assist in the creation of publics able to and, in the interests of human survival, willing to rise above parochial concerns."

In his final chapter, "Political Rhetoric and the Un-American Tradition," Wander focuses on the ideologies which have contended to determine the meaning of "America" and "Americanism." Throughout the Cold War years, of course, the meaning of "America" has hardly been "the product of free and open debate." Moreover, "the issue is not only how the nation is defined, but also who gets to do the defining." In his discussion on the debased debate over "patriotism" during the 1988 election campaign, Wander compares and contrasts right-wing rhetoric in the 1950s and 1980s. According to Wander, during the past decade what anti-Communist conservatives accomplished (rhetorically speaking) was

> the recuperation of anti-Communist ideology. It has changed, to be sure. In this new incarnation, liberal means fellow traveler, and fellow traveling is linked with child-pornographers, welfare breeders, rapists, abortionists, homosexu-

als, along with those who want to redistribute the wealth of hard-working Americans.

In 1991, of course, "fellow traveling" is also linked with the utopian idea that a peace dividend might someday really be possible, and with the failure to manifest sufficient ardor for the pervasive unthinking and militaristic nationalism which are now so successfully masquerading as "patriotism." Because of "the bankruptcy of a liberalism unable to speak its name or advance its programs, no matter how desperately needed," the right continues to have little difficulty commanding the keywords in American political discourse. Perhaps all of us should be grateful that the more strident strains of Cold War rhetoric have indeed evanesced. But even if the Cold War itself is already becoming history, in ceding to the right virtual monopoly on framing the debate on national security issues, liberals continue to allow the nuclear national security state to flourish, and ensure that a bona fide "new world order," rather than a merely rhetorical one, will continue to elude us.

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New Fiction

Appel, Allen. *Till the End of Time.* New York: Doubleday, 1990. A history professor travels back in time and strives to prevent the nuclear bomb from being dropped on Japan, but what he experiences in World War II teaches him instead the necessity of the atomic destruction of Hiroshima. The Japanese, it seems, besides carrying out inhuman experiments on captive subjects and developing a jet engine with the help of a captive Amelia Earhart were developing the atomic bomb themselves. Modern Japanese are also depicted as corrupt and malevolent. An anti-Japanese tirade presented as an adventure story.

Berman, Mitch. *Time Capsule.* New York: Putnam, 1987. New York: Ballantine, 1988. A young jazz musician and a black engineer cross America after a nuclear war kills off almost everyone else, living at first on roaches and roasted rats. They encounter a dictatorial slave society set up by remnants of the U.S. Army, a vicious gang of criminals led by the engineer's brother (which the engineer obliterates using a leftover nuclear missile), and an idealistic group of survivors hand-towing a truckload of supplies across the continent. Interwoven in the text is a good deal of information about various time capsules.

Bredenberg, Jeff. *The Dream Compass.* New York: Avon, 1991. A roughneck logger pursues the tough, plain, but fascinating woman who, when she was arbitarily chosen to be his wife, ran away from him. Set in a brutal postholocaust U.S. dominated by a mysterious dictator enforcing his will through mandatory illiteracy and savage repression. The villain must be stopped from launching a leftover nuclear missile. Features a dreadlocked Black seer. Despite unconventional features, essentially just another postholocaust adventure story. A sequel, *The Dream Vessel*, is promised.

da Cruz, Daniel. *Texas Triumphant.* New York: Ballantine, 1987. Sequel to *The Ayes of Texas* and *Texas on the Rocks.* After nuclear incidents depicted in *Texas on the Rocks*, the Soviet Union engages in massive environmental sabotage in its quest for world supremacy, but is foiled by a brilliant Texas businessman in the Ayn Rand / Robert Heinlein mold.

Hoyle, Trevor. *Kids.* London: Sphere, 1987. New York: Berkley, 1990. A group of children given super-intelligence and telepathic powers by an artificial virus which escaped from a biochemical warfare lab use nuclear blackmail to try to force the destruction of all U.S. biological warfare weapons. In the end one of them detonates a traveling train loaded with missiles. Another variation on the "muscular disarmament" theme.

Jacobson, Mark. *Gojiro.* New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1991. A Godzilla-style monster created by nuclear testing in the fifties travels to Hollywood with his companion, a mutant boy created by the Hiroshima bomb, to make one last movie. They stumble on a conspiracy involving the chief scientist on the Manhattan Project, who is still living in secret at ground zero of the old Trinity Test site. Much bizarre nuclear humor.

Kennedy, Leigh. *Saint Hiroshima.* New York: Harcourt Brace, Jovanovich, 1990. Movingly depicts the complex relationship between a frustrated musician and a woman who has been haunted since childhood by the fear of nuclear war. During the Cuban missile crisis, her jealous husband tricks them into suffering through a traumatic two weeks together in a fallout shelter. They spend much of the rest of their lives trying to recover from the crippling effects of this experience. In the last chapter the woman, finally healed of her phobias, travels to England—just in time to be dusted by the fallout from Chernobyl. Compare with Tim O'Brien: *The Nuclear Age.*

Morris, Janet and Chris. *Medusa.* New York: Baen, 1986. A thriller designed to show a Strategic Defense Initiative-style system in action. After the Soviet Union blinds our orbiting space station, a new highly secret air / space craft manages to down a nuclear missile launched at the United States and prevent a holocaust.

Olson, Wesley. *3AR.* Moore Haven, Fla.: Rainbow Books, 1986.A clumsy anticommunist tract modelled on Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four,* concerning a Soviet conquest of the U.S. in the wake of an abortive nuclear exchange. The Soviets institute compulsory orgies to break up family units. Finally a dissident Soviet blows up a nuclear weapons plant, creating fallout which threatens to wipe out all life on Earth; but in the end the threat disappears mysteriously, the dictatorship is destroyed, and humanity survives.

Pilkey, Dav. *World War Won.* Kansas City, Mo.: Landmark Editions, 1987. A clever rhymed picture book for children satirizing the arms race, resolved by a literal "freeze"—encasing the weapons in ice. Similar to, but with much more political savvy than Dr. Seuss' *Butter Battle Book.* Pilkey was 19 when he wrote and drewthis book.

Rankin, Robert. *Armageddon: The Musical.* London:

Bloomsbury Publishing, 1990. New York: Dell, 1991. A wild Douglas Adams-style satire in which the entire history of the Earth turns out to have been a popular television show manipulated and viewed by aliens on a distant world. When ratings began to slump, they started World War III; but this move backfired, since the remnant of humanity left alive merely cowered boringly in bunkers, watching television. The aliens decide to alter history by going back in time to prevent a crucial act: Elvis Presley's entering the Army. Although a nuclear weapon is used in the course of the story, and there is some effective black humor about nuclear war, most of it treats other themes. Just published: *Armageddon II: They Came and Ate Us.*

Sheffield, Charles. *Trader's World.* New York: Del Rey, 1988. The adventures of a brilliant, courageous trader/negotiator in the varied neofeudal kingdoms into which Earth has divided in the wake of the Lostlands War, which left much of the planet a radioactive wasteland. Some nations are rearming and are—at the end of the novel—poised once more at the brink of nuclear war.

Skobolev, Eduard. *Catastrophe.* Orig. 1983. Trans. from Russian by Sergei Sossinsky. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1989. A ruminative philosophical novel told from shifting perspectives, set on a mythical tropical island which still suffers in the postcolonial era from imperialist domination. A varied cast of characters discusses human nature, the future of communism, and the madness of nuclear weapons. Two-thirds of the way though the novel, nuclear war breaks out, a few characters find refuge in a super-shelter, but end by murdering each other. A remarkably gloomy view of humanity's nuclear future from a Byelorussian author.

Tilton, Lois. *Vampire Winter.* New York: Pinnacle, 1990. A nineteenth-century vampire roams the postholocaust landscape freely, immune to radiation (he can also sense it in his victim's contaminated blood) andshielded from harmful daylight by nuclear winter. He is basically a sympathetic character who tries to restrain himself and protect the refugees he discovers, even while feeding on them. Lots of violence, but no sex: he's impotent.

In last issue's New Fiction column there was a preliminary note on the following book, based on early reviews. What follows is more accurate.

Oda, Makoto. *The Bomb.* (Originally *Hiroshima*). Trans. D. H. Whittaker. Tokyo & New York: Kodansha International, 1990. An impressionistic collage of scenes surrounding the building and use of the atomic bomb. Concentrates on racism, both American and Japanese (against Native Americans, Japanese, Koreans, etc.). Set in White Sands, Tinian, Hiroshima, and a veteran's hospital in which two Native Americans irradiated by uranium mining share a ward with a Vietnam vet dying because of his early exposure to bomb-test fallout. Striking as the first Japanese attempt to depict the Manhattan Project. **PB**

Translations

Card, Orson Scott. *O Segrede do Abismo.* Editora Record (trans. into Portugese of his novelization of *The Abyss,* published in Brazil).

Tilley, Patrick. *Erste Familie: Die Amtrak-Kriege—Zweiter Roman,* trans. into German by Ronald M. Hahn. Heyne, 1990 (translation of *The Amtrak Wars, Book 2: First Family).*

___ . *Wolkenkrieger: Die Amtrak-Kriege—Erster Roman*, trans. into German by Ronald M. Hahn. Heyne, 1990 (translation of *The Amtrak Wars—Book 1: Cloudwarrior*).

Scholarship

Recent:

Schwenger, Peter. "Circling Ground Zero." *PMLA* 106 (1991): 251-261. Discusses *Riddley Walker*, using Derrida. An excerpt from his forthcoming work, *Letter Bomb: Nuclear Holocaust and the Exploding Word.*

Forthcoming:

Broderick, Mick. *Nuclear Movies.* McFarland, due this coming winter. A greatly expanded edition of this definitive filmography.

Caputi, Jane: "The Metaphors of Radiation: Or, Why a Beautiful Woman is Like a Nuclear Power Plant," *Women's Studies International Forum.*

___. "Nuclear Themes in Ethnic Literature." Popular Culture/American Culture Association, San Antonio, Texas, March 1991.

Porter, Jeff. "Science as Fiction in *Gravity's Rainbow:* Paranoia, Necrophilia, and the Rise of the Nukestate." International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, March 21, 1991. Part of an ongoing project to write a book on "how nuclear bombs and the science that made them possible were assimilated by American culture before and after WW II . . . concentrating on the numerous fictions invented by popular science, the media, and mass culture."

Projected Dissertations

Three of our ISSNTC members are graduate students hoping to write dissertations dealing at least in part with nuclear issues.

Thomas A. Brunell is a completing an MA with Bruce Franklin at Rutgers who intends to go on to write a PhD dissertation exploring "the effects of technology and industrialism on modern thought and literature."

Ken Cooper, doing a doctorate at Vanderbilt University, wants to study doctors in nuclear fiction.

Steve Dorney, at the University of Southampton, Highfield, England, is considering several topics, some focussing on native peoples and their relationships with nuclear weapons—a subject which some of our other members have been studying.

Comic Books

A number of interesting comics have appeared recently. *Atomic Age* (Frank Lovece, writer & Mike Okamoto, artist, Epic Comics), is a four-part series dealing with alien invaders set during the Sputnik era. Each issue is headlined: "Welcome to the 1950's. Welcome to the Atomic Age." Although no nuclear war is featured, there is plenty of wry satire on Cold War paranoia, and on racism.

In contrast, Catalan Publications of New York has published a translation of an outrageous 1985 erotic fantasy by Paul Gillon called *The Survivor*, in which an attractive young woman roams the ruins of Paris naked in search of sexual satisfaction, but finds only a robot whom she discards when an American looking remarkably like Kris Kristofferson appears. The robot, jealous, kills her new lover.

Perhaps the most interesting recent comic is *The Last American* (Alan Grant and John Wagner, writers & Michael McMahon, artist, Epic comics), another four-part series which is a very biting satire on macho postholocaust thrillers. Although its graphic style suggests a fast-paced adventure story, this is essentially a sardonic meditation on the futility of nuclear war. In the second issue, entitled "Apocalypse: The Musical" (Cf. *Armageddon, The Musical*, above), the hero hallucinates Death and a chorus of corpses singing a series of parodies of Broadway tunes which recount the destruction of New York City.

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Films

Akira Kurosawa's Dreams contains two segments of interest to ISSNTC members: one depicting the cataclysmic aftermath of a nuclear power accident, and another the effects of a nuclear war. They are highly poetic and striking, but not the strongest sequences in this collection of short films. Kurosawa is reportedly at work on a major film depicting the bombing of Hiroshima.

Look for this summer's release of the sequel to *The Terminator* to see whether it follows up the survivalist ending of the original.

Meetings

Edra Bogle of the University of North Texas, is soliciting papers for a session on war in science fiction for the Science Fiction Researrch Association annual meeting in Long Beach in June. Submissions may be made up to June 1. Contact her at 201 Peach Street, Denton, TX 76201. Phone: (817) 387-8216.

Radioactive Rambo Lives!

Despite their increasing implausibility, postholocaust adventure stories continue to be published. The cover of the latest volume (#23) in Jerry Ahern's *Survivalist* series claims "five million in print!" Although several series have died, new ones are appearing. Unlessdevelopments in the Soviet Union revive acute fears of nuclear war, it seems likely that this genre will survive only as a form of nostalgia, like the Western. For now, it is very prosperous.

Here are the titles of some of the series, with the approximate number of volumes which has so far appeared in each: *Amtrak Wars* (6), *Ashes (12), Blade* (13), *C.A.D.S.* (5), *Deathlands (12), Doomsday Warrior* (18), *Eagleheart* (3), *Endworld* (27) *Firebrats* (4), *Freedom's Rangers (5), The Guardians* (15), *The Last Ranger* (10), *Maurauders (5), The Outrider* (5), *Phoenix* (5), *Traveler* (13), *Turbo Cowboys* (10), *Wasteworld* (4), *Wingman (8), The Zone* (9).

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