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Giant ants and killer children: Fear and popular culture in 1950s America

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Giant Ants and Killer Children: Fear and Popular Culture in 1950s America

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the degree of

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In dedication to my amazing parents, Paul and Lynn Ford

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Abstract

This public history thesis consists of three main sections that combine to form a complete plan for a museum exhibit on 1950s American fears as seen through the lens of popular culture. In American popular memory, postwar America often emerges as a somewhat simplistic time in which every citizen was mired in conservatism and concerned only for communist spies and nuclear devastation. Though these were very real fears for the majority of the population, their fears also went much deeper than this. Through the museum exhibit medium, this thesis explores fears of loneliness, humanity's capacity for evil, and societal collapse that occupied the minds of postwar Americans. Horror and science fiction are a uniquely useful medium to explore such fears as each attempts to break down and explore the particular fears and neuroses of its historical moment. Films, television shows, and literature written in the horror and science fiction genre are thus used to explore such fears. The exhibit plan is divided into a research paper, an exhibit brief, and an exhibit script that combine to complicate popular memory concerning 1950s America.

Introduction

Scholars in various fields have written multiple works on nearly every aspect of the fascinating time that was the 1950s in the United States. Some have focused on masculinity and gender, others on the era of paranoia associated with McCarthyism, and others on the complex political machinations associated with the Cold War. Further, popular culture during the 1950s Cold War has also proved to be a popular area of study. As seen throughout popular culture in the 1950s, fear was a near constant theme, though it manifested itself in vastly different ways. There was fear of communist subversion among neighbors, fear of radiation and the atomic age, and fear of the “other,” just to name a few. Few historians have looked at the culture of fear in general that developed across popular culture in the 1950s. Even when studying individual aspects, though, historians tend to disagree on the nature of the fear that they are studying.¹ Was it simply a conservative backlash against liberal communism? Or was it a fear of modernity and the changes inherent in postwar culture? Or was it something else altogether?

I intend to explore such questions through the creation of an exhibit plan that focuses on fear and popular culture in the 1950s. Rather than creating a permanent exhibit, this will be a travelling exhibit designed to fit into a variety of museum settings and increase interest for the museum. In order to understand properly the background and results of this phenomenon, I focus on the immediate postwar years through 1962 with the Cuban Missile Crisis, as most historians tend to agree that the American attitude

¹ For example, two of the most compelling scholars of the period to display this disparity are Mark Jancovich and Stephen Whitfield. Jancovich tends to focus on the psychological aspects of 1950s culture and fear, while Stephen Whitfield attributes much of the paranoia to a clash between conservative and liberal elements during the prolonged Cold War. For Jancovich, see Mark Jancovich, *Rational Fears: American Horror in the 1950s*, (New York: Manchester University Press, 1996); for Whitfield, see Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

toward the Cold War was markedly different after this point. The goal of creating an exhibit plan on the subject is to understand better how the museum medium can be used to explain and explore complex historical questions. Planning an exhibit is a multistep process through which greater understanding of the topic can be achieved, for both the creator and the public that would eventually go to see it. Popular culture in the 1950s is an inherently fascinating subject and my research and resulting plan provide a different outlook on the way that fear manifested itself in that decade.

This project is split into three main chapters. The first is an original research paper in which I explore fear and popular culture in this time period. I focus mostly on the film industry, literature, television, and some of the “fads” of the time, such as the creation of fallout shelters. I have centered my research on the horror and science fiction fields as I believe they offer the best lens for viewing popular fears of the day. The film industry, for example, was very concerned with creating films at this time that explicitly portrayed communism and the communist party in a negative light.¹ However, this was less a reflection of popular culture and more of a reflection of governmental influence on the film industry through the House Un-American Activities Committee in Hollywood. Horror and science fiction, on the other hand, were also influenced by the politics and events of the time, but they portrayed these fears in more subtle ways that are much more revealing of the accepted values and paranoia.² They can use common themes and historical realities as props to explore the deeper fears of the moment. Through examining these media three common fears are revealed: fear of loneliness, fear of

¹ For example, this is well covered in Tony Shaw and Denise J. Youngblood, *Cinematic Cold War: The American and Soviet Struggle for Hearts and Minds*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010).

² This is a common theory in the film studies field, as seen in Charles Derry, *Dark Dreams 2.0: A Psychological History of the Modern Horror Film from the 1950s to the 21st Century*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2009).

humanity's capacity for evil, and fear of societal breakdown. Communism and nuclear devastation instead become the props to explore these deeper, more psychological fears rooted in the historical moment of postwar America.

The second chapter will be the creation of a curatorial brief as seen in *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions* edited by Barry Lord and Gail Dexter Lord.³ The method proposed in Lord and Lord is designed to synthesize the information of the exhibit with the various ways it will be displayed for the public. A curatorial brief consists of a floor plan, a storyline, a resource plan, and a public programming plan. Each of the sections of the brief is designed to transform the information and arguments from the first chapter into the medium of an exhibit. The exhibit uses objects, film clips, and text to bring this message to the public in an engaging way. A major goal of the curatorial brief is to conceptualize an exhibit in which the public can connect to the fears of 1950s America, an era that is often mythologized in popular memory.

The third and final chapter consists of an exhibit script based on the curatorial brief. I will follow the examples as given in Beverly Serrell's *Making Exhibit Labels*.⁴ The script conceptualizes the ways that objects and information will be oriented in exhibit space and further provides the actual text that will be used throughout the exhibit on labels and text panels. The script will attempt to use language, as illustrated by Serrell, on how to properly write copy for the exhibit that is most easily read by the public. Combined, these three chapters present a view of fear and popular culture in

³ Barry Lord and Gail Dexter Lord, Eds, *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2001).

⁴ Beverly Serrell, *Making Exhibit Labels: A Step-by-Step Guide*, (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1983).

1950s America that is both more complicated than the traditional memory of it and also relatable to a modern American museum visitor.

Chapter One

Like most of the material culture of 1950s America, the fallout shelter has become a site of nostalgia in America's collective memory. We approach the fallout shelter with a sort of indulgent, bemused manner that separates us from those people who found them necessary to build in their basements. The National Atomic Museum in Albuquerque, New Mexico, provides an interpretation of the fallout shelter, and the atomic age in general, in such a way. Visitors to the museum are given the opportunity to walk through a re-created fallout shelter that is designed to "invoke memories of 'Duck and Cover' drills from their school days."¹ This version of the past mired in nostalgia assumes that Americans were concerned only with a hypothetical nuclear disaster, a fear that may seem superficial and "simple" at first glance. Though the threat posed by the atomic age should not be trivialized, it is also misleading to assume that popular fears in postwar America were so one-dimensional. They were certainly not for Madge Powner and her family in 1960.

The Powner family considered themselves a group of pioneers when they volunteered to live in a fallout shelter for two weeks as a part of a psychological experiment.² Designed by the Princeton University psychology department, the experiment involved observing the Powner family's behavior while they were confined to an eight by nine foot room made to the specifications of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization (OCDM) for a proper fallout shelter. The research team wanted to understand the physical and emotional effects that would accompany such prolonged isolation. Two weeks was the recommended amount of time that a family would be

¹ "Cold War Fallout Shelter." The National Atomic Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico. <http://www.nuclearmuseum.org/see/exhibits/cold-war-fallout-shelter/>.

² William Peters, "The Testing of a Family," *Redbook* 115, no. 1 (May 1960): 36-37, 91-95.

forced to spend underground if there were ever a nuclear attack on the United States. The effect that such an attack would have on society was truly terrifying to Americans, and was a source of debate throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s. The scientists' worst fears were realized as Madge and her husband, Tom, had extreme difficulties coping with the isolation. They began to experience headaches, dizziness, and eye strain that put them on edge, eventually leading to intense fights. By the second week, their fights devolved into fits of angry silence, putting the children on edge as well. Though they eventually made it through the experiment relatively unscathed, their experience revealed that "war and peace in a nuclear world cannot, of course, be answered so simply."¹

Stories such as that of the Powner family and many others were extensively debated in magazines and newspapers of every variety. *Redbook's* coverage of the Powner's experience was part of a greater series exploring the moral and ethical dilemmas caused by the use of fallout shelters. These stories generally crafted a negative outlook on fallout shelters, citing the self-centeredness and rejection of society inherent in building one.² *Good Housekeeping* magazine tended to flip-flop more on the issue, citing the necessity for maintaining family order as well as the inherent negative connotations of class supremacy in owning a fallout shelter.³ Other magazines would explore the moral issues surrounding fallout shelters, such as whether one would have to be willing to kill to defend it. Clearly, men and women were using popular culture as a medium to explore much deeper issues than just whether or not the Soviet Union would drop a bomb. Popular culture, such as the fallout shelters and the debate surrounding

¹ Peters, 95.

² Kenneth D. Rose, *One Nation Underground: The Fallout Shelter in American Culture*, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 143-146.

³ Rose, 146-147.

them in popular magazines, can therefore be used as a lens to view and understand these fears and neuroses.

Popular culture reveals the mindset, worries, and opinions not only of those who create it, but of culture at large. As defined by sociologist Herbert Gans, popular culture is an “apparatus that...reflects and expresses the aesthetic and other wants of many people.”⁴ Popular culture includes such media as film, television, and literature, as well as fads such as fallout shelters. In postwar America, these media explored the obvious symbols of the Cold War, such as communism and nuclear weapons, but their treatment of such symbols was often surprising. For example, attitudes toward nuclear weapons and communism in popular culture could often be flippant or used as a simple plot device. Historians have noted such a trend in Cold War America prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis, especially concerning the film industry.⁵ One comedy film that was emblematic of this flippancy is *The Atomic Kid* starring Mickey Rooney.⁶ In the film’s most famous scene, Rooney’s character wanders onto a nuclear test site where he realizes that a bomb is about to be dropped on the area. Instead of running or finding a hiding place, Rooney simply places his hands over his head and somehow survives the bomb. He becomes radioactive, but instead of exploring the devastating effects of such an exposure, the film uses this device for comedy and Rooney spends the rest of the film

⁴ Herbert J. Gans, *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste*. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1974), vii.

⁵ Most studies of popular culture that examine the 1950s tend to focus exclusively on the film industry. Most film historians actually will often ignore the 1950s, though, as nothing more than conservative propaganda or a conservative backlash. However, there are some works that do give a more multidimensional analysis of films at this time. For excellent examples of such studies, see Mark Jancovich, *Rational Fears: American Horror in the 1950s*, (New York: Manchester University Press, 1996); Frank Krutnik and others, Eds, “*Un-American*” *Hollywood: Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007); and Tony Shaw and Denise J. Youngblood, *Cinematic Cold War: The American and Soviet Struggle for Hearts and Minds*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010).

⁶ *The Atomic Kid*. Directed by Leslie H. Martinson 1954; Los Angeles, CA: Republic Pictures.

helping the FBI to catch spies. Such flippancy in popular culture was a common response to nuclear threats in the early Cold War. Historians Scott Zeman and Michael Amundson characterize the postwar period prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis as “high atomic culture.”⁷ During this time, Americans would disassociate the devastating potential of nuclear warfare from the realities of everyday life. This was seen in popular culture when bombs were used more as props for humor than as a reality to be explored, as they would be in later atomic culture.

Nuclear weapons and communism were common props used for horror and science fiction as well. Though many films and books did focus on nuclear threats and communists abstractly, they were again mostly used as props to explore deeper fears and issues. Most historians studying popular culture in the immediate postwar period tend to ignore this with films especially, characterizing them as either being mired in McCarthy-era conservatism or as a simple backlash to this conservatism.⁸ In reality, the fears being explored in the early Cold War were much more complicated than this. Postwar America was a time of great flux and confusion and many of the fears that are seen in popular culture at this time are manifestations of this. Horror and science fiction are the best genres to understand the fears of any age as they most blatantly attempt to explore aspects of society that are most unsettling and terrifying. Every culture has certain fears that define it, and the early Cold War was no different. Three of the most commonly explored fears in science fiction and horror of the 1950s are loneliness, human potential

⁷ Scott C. Zeman and Michael A. Amundson, Eds, *Atomic Culture: How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2004).

⁸ Some works to gloss over the 1950s are Mark Jancovich, Ed, *Horror, The Film Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2002); Wheeler Winston Dixon, *A History of Horror*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010); and Rick Worland, *The Horror Film: In Introduction*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

for evil, and societal breakdown. Through an exploration of these three fears, it is evident that 1950s American popular culture was dominated by fears that cannot so easily be categorized as “conservative” or merely a reaction to conservatism. Instead, these were deep, universal fears that, while distinctly Postwar in nature, reveal a culture unable to process the changes surrounding it.

Loneliness, though a universal emotion, had become something to be feared on a deeper level following World War II. The worldwide upheaval of peoples and societies as well as the massive, never before seen death tolls crafted an American society with a new understanding of death and the terrible possibilities of loneliness. New technologies also exacerbated fears concerning human connections. One of the most polarizing new technologies of the postwar era was television, in part due to its rapid increase in availability. Mass production, increased leisure time, and greater disposable income made owning a television feasible following World War II. In 1946, only 0.5% of American households had a television set, but by 1962, 90% of homes had a television.⁹ This new inundation of televisions into American society accompanied shifting attitudes and behaviors that caused a great deal of concern among many Americans. Many feared that people were becoming more anxious to see the latest episode of their favorite program, rather than interacting with family and friends. A *U.S. News and World Report* article from 1955 expressed just such a concern:

This is that television is changing the American mind and character, although nobody knows for sure just how. The evidence is too fragmentary. The analysts are disturbed by some aspects of TV's effect on viewers. Some think TV is conditioning Americans to be ‘other directed,’ that is, getting the ideas from someone else. The early American,

⁹ Gary Edgerton, *The Columbia History of American Television*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 114-130.

by contrast, is supposed to have been ‘inner directed,’ a man who thought things out for himself on the basis of his own reasoning.

A fancy name for this suspected effect of TV is ‘narcotic disfunction.’ This means that more and more men come home in the evening, drop into a chair in front of the TV set after supper and slip into a dream world of unreality.¹⁰

Popular culture would be used as a medium to explore these fears as Americans became more and more concerned with such a lonely and unconnected society.

Two writers to explore this fear, among many others, were Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury, two of the most famous and prolific science fiction writers of all time. Ironically, both were born in 1920 and are considered to have reached a height of prominence in the 1950s. Asimov was a scientist who wrote both science fiction and hard science books, always aiming to provide a better understanding of scientific theory to the public. He was also extremely concerned with many of the political and social upheavals of the time, and made no secret of the fact that these concerns were reflected in his work. He wrote in the foreword to a collection of his best stories in 1974 that “Naturally, anyone who writes is going to reveal the world in which he is immersed, whether he wants to or desperately wants not to.”¹¹ Bradbury, on the other hand, came from a less scientific background but still wished to explore the dangers of an increasingly technological world. He was specifically concerned throughout his career with the loss of reading and books that went along with alternative technologies for learning.

Both were also a part of a movement in the 1950s known as social science fiction.

Social science fiction called for a change in the science fiction field in which stories

¹⁰ “What TV Is Doing to America.” *U.S. News and World Report*. September 2, 1955.

¹¹ Isaac Asimov, *The Best of Isaac Asimov*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974).

would move away from space epics and dramas and move towards a deeper use of the genre. Asimov, especially, believed that science fiction as a genre could be used to explore uniquely current issues and questions of humanity in an unparalleled fashion. For example, writers of science fiction could explore social science theories in an imagined future that was not bound by the limitations of present day realities.¹² Most of Asimov's and Bradbury's works following World War II made use of these new ideas for science fiction. Loneliness was one of the fears they explored.

In 1946, Bradbury published a short story called "The Night," which explicitly explores the terrifying relationship between fear, death, and loneliness.¹³ It is also written in the always strange second person that places the feelings of the character upon the reader. Though it is more of a horror story than science fiction, it still uses the genre to explore deeper fears. The story follows an eight-year-old boy and his mother as they go outside at night to look for his older brother. It is much later than his usual bedtime and the boy can tell that his mother is worried about his brother, as he should have been home hours ago. Before they leave, the boy describes how safe he feels in a house full of light and electricity and how he feels connected to others through the strange radio that he listens to every night. However, as they continue their search for his brother, they realize that the lights around them have gone out as it gets later, and eventually they come upon a ravine where they know the older brother usually plays. At this point it is completely dark and completely silent, and as they both stand terrified in front of the ravine, the boy must contemplate the idea of death for the first time. He thinks to himself:

¹² Neil Gerlach and Sheryl N. Hamilton, "Introduction: A History of Social Science Fiction," *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 30 (July 2003): 162.

¹³ Ray Bradbury, *The Stories of Ray Bradbury*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980) 9-16.

The essential impact of life's loneliness crushes your beginning-to-tremble body. Mother is alone too. She cannot look to the sanctity of marriage, the protection of her family's love, she cannot look to the United States Constitution or the City Police, she cannot look anywhere, in this very instant, save into her heart, and there she'll find nothing but uncontrollable repugnance and a will to fear. In this instant it is an individual problem seeking an individual solution. You must accept being alone and work from there.¹⁴

He goes on from there to realize the overwhelming loneliness associated with death and that all humans must face it alone eventually. He comes to the conclusion that "Life is a horror lived in them at night, when at all sides sanity, marriage, children, happiness, are threatened by an ogre called Death." Eventually, the brother is found safely, and they all return home, but the crushing feeling of loneliness remains with the boy and the reader.

Through "The Night," Bradbury reveals that loneliness is a fact of life and all humans must face it eventually. The technology present earlier in the story, such as the lights and the radio, create an artificial sense of safety and connection to other people. Once this is eliminated in the darkness of night, the truths of the human condition are revealed in a crushing manner. Bradbury implies that the boy and his mother should have faced this truth earlier in life, but the shallowness of technology had prevented this. Thus, their eventual realizations are more devastating. Bradbury thus uses this story to lament the fact that technology can be used as a veneer over the true human relationships, even among family members.

Another Bradbury short story to explore a fear of loneliness was "There Will Come Soft Rains," published in 1950.¹⁵ Since its release, it has become one of Bradbury's most popular short stories. It begins with a house in the year 2026 that is

¹⁴ Bradbury, 15.

¹⁵ Bradbury, *The Stories of Ray Bradbury*, 96-102.

capable of carrying out all of the needs of the family that lives there. However, it quickly becomes evident that no one lives there any longer and yet the house still continues to go through the motions. Eventually, it is revealed that the world has succumbed to some sort of nuclear disaster as the house and the rest of the deserted city give off a radioactive glow at night. The family that used to live in the house is forever burned into the side of the building as their bodies were incinerated by the blast. It is a dark, bleak, depressing view of the world after a nuclear apocalypse. Though there are no people in this world, it is the reader who experiences a sense of loneliness while reading the story. The house is characterized as almost human throughout the story. When a fire breaks out near the end, the house valiantly attempts to fight the fire and get the family out of the house even though they are no longer there. The house is eventually destroyed, and the reader feels as if the world has lost its last connection to humanity. Throughout, though, Bradbury gives a sense of hope in that life will go on after humanity dies. Thus, “There Will Come Soft Rains” crafts a distinct type of loneliness in which the reader loses his last connection to humanity while simultaneously realizing that humanity is not even necessary in the first place.

Loneliness was a fear tackled in other media as well, notably in the popular television show *The Twilight Zone*. The series was created by Rod Serling and ran for five seasons from 1959-1964. In a serial format, each episode was unrelated to the others but instead told stand-alone stories that focused on science fiction, horror, or paranormal themes. Though the goal in each episode was to titillate and scare the viewer, *The Twilight Zone* was also notable for its ability to challenge existing American social

issues, such as racism and sexism, in a fantastic format, similar to social science fiction.

The goals of the show can be seen in its weekly opening narration from season one:

There is a fifth dimension, beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call the Twilight Zone.¹⁶

The narration reveals that the show hopes to explore “the pit of man’s fears and the summit of his knowledge,” thus making it a perfect medium through which to view early Cold War fears. Like other science fiction and horror works of the period, communism, dangerous technology, and nuclear disasters are common themes throughout many episodes. However, again, these aspects are used as props to explore deeper fears.

Serling had built his career in television and radio on his desire to bring difficult and controversial subjects to the public. As a writer, he frequently attempted to elucidate such difficult themes on television especially, but was stymied at every turn by executives and advertisers who feared alienating the audience.¹⁷ This is best illustrated through his attempts to bring the story of the Emmett Till murders to television.¹⁸ Till was a fourteen-year-old African American boy who was brutally murdered in Mississippi in 1955 after being accused of flirting with a white woman. The woman’s husband and brother took Till to a barn where they beat him, mutilated him, and shot him through the head. The two men were acquitted of their crime in court, leading to a media frenzy across the country. Serling wished to bring the injustice and prejudice of the event to

¹⁶ Rod Serling, *The Twilight Zone*, 1959-1964.

¹⁷ Leslie Dale Feldman, *Spaceships and Politics: The Political Theory of Rod Serling*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010).

¹⁸ Christopher Metress, “Submitted for Their Approval: Rod Serling and the Lynching of Emmett Till,” (*Mississippi Quarterly* (December 2008): 143-172).

light through a television movie, but his script was completely torn apart by every network he brought it to. Every network claimed that he could tell a story of lynching, but it could bear no resemblance to the actual events of the Emmett Till murder as this would risk losing the southern audience. The eventual movie that was created, *A Town Has Turned to Dust*, was released in 1958 and was about a Mexican lynching in California in the 1870s. Serling said of the debacle that:

By the time "A Town Has Turned to Dust" went before the cameras, my script had turned to dust. Emmitt Till became a romantic Mexican. The setting was moved to the Southwest of the 1870s. The phrase "twenty men in hoods" became "twenty men in homemade masks." They chopped it up like a roomful of butchers at work on a steer.¹⁹

This was one of the main events that eventually led to his desire to create *The Twilight Zone*. He wanted a show where he could express his commentary on the social situation of the United States through maximizing his own creative control. However, previous events had taught him that he needed to use a slant to express these views, so he turned to the method used by some of the most effective social commenters of his day: science fiction. Thus, *The Twilight Zone* uses science fiction as a means to explore fears and realities of 1950s America.

One such episode, "Time Enough at Last," uses a nuclear disaster to explore a fear of overwhelming loneliness.²⁰ The episode follows a man named Mr. Henry Bemis whose all-consuming love of reading is thwarted at every turn by his job and his wife. Bemis wishes that he could do nothing but read all day, but his boss thinks that it detracts from his work at a bank while his wife actually destroys his books. Finally, he finds time

¹⁹ Metress, 166.

²⁰ *The Twilight Zone*. Season 1, episode no. 8, first broadcast November 20, 1959 by CBS. Directed by John Brahm and written by Rod Serling.

during his lunch break to hide in the vault and read, but after only a few moments, an explosion rocks the bank. When Bemis regains consciousness, he goes outside of the vault only to discover a horribly apocalyptic landscape. Evidently, he is the only survivor of a nuclear disaster. He wanders for days looking for signs of humanity, but finding nothing, he descends into a suicidal state. Just before he is able to kill himself, however, he sees the remains of a library where hundreds of books lay strewn about, waiting for him to read them. He gathers them up and regains a sense of purpose, realizing that he will finally have all the time in the world to read as much as he wants. However, just as he leans down to sit and begin reading, his glasses slip off of his face and shatter. He is now incapable of seeing at all and laments the utter hopelessness of his fate by repeatedly screaming “It’s not fair!” The closing narration states:

The best laid plans of mice and men and Henry Bemis, the small man in the glasses who wanted nothing but time. Henry Bemis, now just a part of a smashed landscape, just a piece of the rubble, just a fragment of what man has dedeed to himself. Mr. Henry Bemis in the Twilight Zone.²¹

On the surface it may seem as if this episode is merely playing into a Cold War fear of nuclear destruction, but that is only on the surface. Rod Serling, in writing this episode, is exploring the inherent ability of men to destroy themselves and the strangeness and irrationality of anti-intellectualism. However, though these are the themes, one of the true fears that Serling is tapping into is man’s fear of loneliness. Bemis, like many postwar Americans, is unable to make true connections to other human beings, but instead feels connected only to books. Thus, he could have survived in a post-apocalyptic world if he had still had his books, his only escape from devastating

²¹ *The Twilight Zone*. Season 1, episode no. 8.

loneliness. Serling reveals through Bemis that many people are capable of handling being alone, but no one is able to withstand loneliness for long.

Isaac Asimov's work that most directly addresses a fear of deteriorating human connections is *I, Robot*.²² *I, Robot* is a series of short stories organized as a set of reminiscences from the perspective of a female scientist involved with the creation of the first robots. Though robots have proven to be extremely successful and immersive in this futuristic society, each of the stories explores the more tragic elements of their existence. For example, "Robbie" tells the story of girl named Gloria who has formed such a connection to her robot named Robbie that she cannot make friends with children her own age. When her distressed mother removes Robbie from the home, the family finds that Gloria can no longer even make connections with other family members the way she could with Robbie. Asimov thus explores a frightening world in which real human connections have been lost and replaced with machines, crafting a horrible feeling of loneliness.

Another common Cold War fear seen throughout multiple mediums was a fear of man's capacity for evil. World War II was the deadliest war in human history with a death toll that was baffling for nations on every side. It was also after the war that Americans began to learn further specifics concerning the true depravity of the Nazi regime, specifically concerning war crimes and the Holocaust. Americans also had a difficult time processing their compliance with the nuclear devastation at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the lasting violent effects seen there. For example, David Lawrence, the editor of *United States News*, was an outspoken opponent of America's use of atomic weaponry. In article from 1945 called "Where Is the Faith?," he wrote:

²² Isaac Asimov, *I, Robot*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1950).

The truth is we are guilty. Our conscience as a nation must trouble us. We must confess our sin. We have used a horrible weapon to asphyxiate and cremate more than 100,000 men, women and children in a sort of super-lethal gas chamber--and all this in a war already won or which spokesmen for our Air Forces tell us could have been readily won without the atomic bomb... We ought, therefore, to apologize in unequivocal terms at once to the whole world for our misuse of the atomic bomb.²³

Though this would have been an unpopular stance to take in 1945, it still reveals the sorts of rhetoric that Americans were forced to contend with. Evil was thus used on both sides of the war, a concept that was difficult for postwar Americans to understand. The Office of War Information and the Bureau of Motion Pictures had fed the American people a constant diet of propaganda depicting Americans as a united force of good in the face of an evil enemy. Afterward, the balloon burst and Americans had to come to terms with the fact that any human was capable of depthless and often irrational evil, a struggle that was explored in popular culture.

One of the most popular science fiction films of the 1950s tackles humanity's capacity for evil directly: *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.²⁴ The film follows an alien named Klaatu and an invincible robot named Gort who visit Earth for a mysterious purpose. Klaatu gradually becomes appalled by the way he finds Earthlings living. He says that he has a message for all of Earth's leaders but is repeatedly ignored and treated as a threat. Klaatu eventually escapes from the army and meets a young boy and his mother, Helen, who take him on a tour of Washington D.C. Klaatu is shocked to see so many war memorials, specifically the huge numbers of people buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Klaatu and Helen continue to avoid the army, although he is

²³ David Lawrence, "Where Is the Faith?," *United States News*, November 23, 1945.

²⁴ *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. Directed by Robert Wise, 1951; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox.

eventually shot and killed, but not before giving Helen a secret message to stop Gort. Helen is able to do so, and Gort revives Klaatu long enough to finally give his message to Earth. He says that since Earth has developed a space program and nuclear weaponry, it has grabbed the attention of other planets throughout the universe. However, unlike these other planets, Earth has a long history of devastating violence, and the rest of the universe is afraid that now this violence can spread. Deadly robots such as Gort have been created by these alien races to contain the threat of humanity, and if humanity continues its violence and evil in space as well, Earth will be destroyed. Klaatu ends his message with an entreaty to Earth that “The decision rests with you,” after which he enters the spaceship and departs the planet. Though the movie as a whole implies that humanity is capable of an evil unlike anything else in the universe, it does end hopefully. Klaatu, and hopefully the viewers, have faith that humanity is capable of overcoming their proclivity for evil acts.

Another filmmaker was concerned throughout his career with evil and the darker aspects of man’s personality: Alfred Hitchcock. Hitchcock, born in 1899, was a British director, writer, and producer who was at the height of his career while working in Hollywood in the mid-20th century. As a filmmaker, he is most famous for his innovative editing and camera movement that created an unsettling feeling of mimicking a person’s gaze. In Hitchcock’s films, the viewer is forced to feel like a sort of voyeur viewing the darkness and depravity of other human beings. His movies were extremely popular and terrifying, thus revealing a postwar obsession with and fear of humanity’s capacity for evil.

Hitchcock's best film to explore this obsession was *Rear Window*.²⁵ The movie stars Jimmy Stewart as a man named Jeff who is confined to his apartment after breaking his leg in an accident. To pass the time, he watches his neighbors through his rear window that opens up onto a courtyard. He eventually becomes obsessed with the idea that one of his neighbors, Thorwald, has murdered his nagging wife after witnessing an argument and then her disappearance. His girlfriend Lisa, played by Grace Kelly, worries about him and wonders when it became necessary to expect only the worst from your neighbors. These questions are continued later when a neighbor's dog is killed and the woman shouts out her window that people only focus on observing now and have stopped caring about life and death. Eventually, Jeff is able to draw Lisa into his obsession, and the two engage in a number of dangerous stunts to expose Thorwald as a murderer. They are able to prove that Thorwald did in fact murder his wife, and he comes to Jeff's apartment while he is alone and pushes him out of the window. However, he is caught by police and Jeff is seen at the end to have survived, now with another broken leg.

Though this film also explores a number of feminist themes, the truly terrifying theme that is being explored is humanity's evil and our resulting obsession with viewing it. Thorwald killed his wife for a nearly irrational reason; she tended to nag him. He had no real motive beyond this and really did not gain anything tangible from the murder. Jeff's own voyeurism of Thorwald mirrors the viewer's voyeurism while watching the movie. Movies such as this, and society's obsession with and fear of evil in general, have created a society in which humanity revels in the drama of violence and death. When the woman screams to her neighbors after her dog is killed, she is screaming at the viewers of

²⁵ *Rear Window*. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock, 1954; Los Angeles, CA: Paramount Pictures.

the film as well. Hitchcock reveals that humanity is capable of the great evil that postwar Americans were most afraid of, but he further shows the devastating effects this obsession and fear have had on society.

Psycho is another of Hitchcock's films that explores the depth of humanity's capacity for evil, but, in this film, he does so through a greater focus on the killer himself.²⁶ The movie begins by following Marion Crane, played by Janet Leigh, who steals money from her boss and then proceeds to flee the state, eventually ending up at the Bates Motel, run by the enigmatic Norman Bates. Marion and Norman get to know each other a bit, and she learns of Norman's unhappy relationship with his mother who also lives on the property. However, in one of cinema's most iconic twists, Marion is violently stabbed to death in the shower by a shadowy figure implied to be Norman's mother. The rest of the movie focuses on Norman's attempts to cover up the crime and Marion's sister's attempts to find her. The situation deteriorates as Norman's mother kills a private detective and Marion's sister and boyfriend come to stay at the motel as well. They search the house and discover that Norman's mother has been dead for a long time, and that Norman himself has been committing the murders dressed as his mother. However, he is detained by the police and studied by a psychiatrist that confirms that Norman has a split personality disorder through which he believes that he is his mother at times. The film ends with Norman sitting in his cell, with the mother's voice in his head, implying that she has finally taken over.

Psycho is notable for being the first film to ever depict a truly psychotic serial killer that was driven by his delusions and sexual depravity. Norman killed his mother because he could not handle her relationship with another man, and later when his

²⁶ *Psycho*. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock, 1960; Los Angeles, CA: Paramount Pictures.

mother's alter ego appeared, she killed anyone who Norman felt attraction to. Norman was thus a character motivated entirely by delusions and his sexual urges which together created a self-serving, evil character. However, Hitchcock implies that Norman is not an anomaly, but someone we should all relate to. His delusions were caused by an unhappy childhood, something that was obviously not his fault. Further, in one of his conversations about his mother early in the movie, he says that "I don't hate her, I hate the illness," a feeling Hitchcock seems to hope to impart to the viewer as well by making Norman a sympathetic character. Further, in the same conversation, he says, in one of the film's most famous lines, that "we all go a little mad sometimes." This line connects Norman as a character to even the viewers as it implies that insanity is a possibility in all humans. Thus, through *Psycho*, Hitchcock argues that evil of a terrible magnitude is possible, but it is created through no fault of the individual, but through an alienating society and biological exacerbations.

Many film historians have tended to view *Psycho* as an aberration of the period after which the landscape of horror was forever changed. However, this is a problematic claim, as best argued by Mark Jancovich in *Rational Fears*.²⁷ The usual argument is that *Psycho* is the first horror film to present what is horrible or monstrous as something located internally in American society, rather than externally as some sort of invader.²⁸ However, as seen through the previously examined horror and science fiction films, this is hardly the case. Jancovich further argues that *Psycho* was a result of 1950s obsession with the rational versus the irrational. The increasingly commercial culture of the 1950s

²⁷ Mark Jancovich, *Rational Fears: American Horror in the 1950s*, (New York: Manchester University Press, 1996).

²⁸ For an example of this argument, see Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

had crafted a society in which our unconscious desires are controlled by advertisements and other behavior modifiers. Jancovich argues that people began to fear this lack of control over the irrational, wondering what were true unconscious desires and what were defined by the media. This is reflected by the character of Norman who similarly cannot distinguish between rational and irrational desires. Thus, Jancovich fascinatingly characterizes consumer culture as a distinct type of mass evil that was destroying individual control.²⁹

Hitchcock himself may have been playing into these sorts of fears with his own advertising campaign for *Psycho*. The posters for the film revealed nothing of the plot, instead only providing the title of the film and the main actors. On one such poster, Hitchcock himself stood prominently on the poster as well as text that reads “No one..BUT NO ONE...will be admitted to the theatre after the start of each performance of Alfred Hitchcock’s *PSYCHO*.” Other posters encouraged viewers to not divulge the ending of the film to those who had not seen it. Hitchcock wished to preserve the integrity of the viewing experience without expectations, whether conscious or unconscious, being subverted by advertising. However, Hitchcock also used advertising strategies to control the expectations of the audience. For example, the main poster for the film features Janet Leigh prominently displayed in her bra with very few hints as to the plot of the film. This was unusual for the time as most posters would give at least some clue as to the film’s plot, but Hitchcock chose only to include a scantily clad, popular celebrity to advertise his film. Many viewers would thus attend the film with the expectation that Leigh was the main character, only for their expectation to be subverted

²⁹ Jancovich, 220-232.

as she is killed within the first act. Hitchcock was very aware of the power of advertising.

This fear of man's capacity for evil is handled terrifyingly on television as well in *The Twilight Zone* episode "It's a Good Life."³⁰ As opposed to most episodes that take place in the alternate dimension of the Twilight Zone, this one is immediately set up as being a product of this world. It takes place in a small town that used to be in Ohio, but it has been removed to an unknown location by the "monster" that lives among them, a six year old boy named Anthony. Anthony is a telepathic, violent boy who is capable of doing whatever he wishes to if he thinks about it. He controls everything that happens in the town as well, so everyone lives in mortal fear of Anthony, constantly reassuring him that he does "a good thing." However, his powers alone are not what make him so terrifying; it is his utter disregard for human emotions and his ability to inflict violence on anyone. He has an angelic face, but really he is a human incarnation of evil. In one of the most twisted and disturbing scenes of the series, Anthony turns a man who criticizes him into a giant jack-in-the-box with the man's face still on it. The episode seems to suggest that humans, even from a young age, are capable of producing entirely evil personalities.

This fear of children perhaps came about as a result of the growing gulf between the young and the old that was developing throughout the 1950s. This gulf is best represented by the Beat Generation and such writers as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. The Beat Generation were post-World War II artists who used their respective media to explore such topics as materialism, drugs, sexuality, and an overall rejection of traditional

³⁰ *The Twilight Zone*. Season 3, episode no. 8, first broadcast November 3, 1961 by CBS. Directed by James Sheldon and written by Rod Serling.

culture.³¹ Obviously, this would serve to threaten and even confuse many older Americans of the period, leading to a disconnect between the two. For example, Ginsberg's blatant discussion of sexuality and drugs in his famous poem, "Howl," was regarded as obscene and amoral. The opening lines are emblematic of the rest of the poem:

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness,
starving hysterical naked,
dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for
an angry fix,
Angel-headed hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection
to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night³²

This disconnect even carried over to the music industry in which Elvis Presley made his famous, sexualized appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1956, though he was purposefully only shown from the waist up. These factors fostered a tension between generations that Serling would have been aware of.

Finally, societal breakdown was a fear often seen in 1950s popular culture. Stephen Whitfield in *The Culture of the Cold War* has best explored early Cold War society's obsession with the changes that they were witnessing, especially as the 1950s wore on.³³ He argues that though the United States and the Soviet Union were not actually at war with one another, the United States still treated it like a war in which everyone must enlist. For example, he suggests that it was this concept that led to a communist fervor. Further, just as entertainers were expected to aid in the war effort during World War II, a similar view was established in Hollywood of the 1950s, leading

³¹ Steven Watson, *The Birth of the Beat Generation: Visionaries, Rebels, and Hipsters, 1944-1960*, (New York, Pantheon Books, 1998).

³² Allen Ginsberg, *Howl, and Other Poems*, (San Francisco: City Lights Pocket Bookshop, 1956).

³³ Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

to the blacklist era.³⁴ He also argues that conservatism became so prevalent after the war because so many other alternatives became nearly synonymous with communism. It was believed that liberalism, racial riots, and homosexuality were all codes for or caused by communist sympathizers. The FBI would often use association with an African American as a sign of communist sympathies, and a man on the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) even said that “If someone insists that there is discrimination against Negroes in this country, or that there is inequality of wealth, there is every reason to believe that person is Communist.”³⁵ Evidently, postwar white America was extremely disturbed by the direction that society was turning. A growing Civil Rights Movement seemed by many to be a sign, among others, that society was completely deteriorating, leading to an eventual fear of societal collapse.

The giant monster movies of the 1950s tackle this fear in a fascinating way. These movies may seem ridiculous and almost silly, but they are exploring a real fear of societal collapse and deterioration. These giant monster movies were extremely popular and always involved some sort of giant creature, from octopuses to lizards, attacking humanity. The most famous of all of these films was *Them!*³⁶ The movie followed an attack on the United States by giant ants that were radiated by atomic testing in New Mexico. A pair of entomologists, the FBI, and the Air Force investigate a series of mysterious deaths that eventually lead them to realize that giant ants were the cause. The ants prove extremely difficult to kill, and just when they think they have the situation under control, the entomologists realize that two queens had escaped New Mexico and

³⁴ For an excellent exploration of blacklist Hollywood, see Frank Krutnik and others, Eds, “*Un-American*” *Hollywood: Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

³⁵ Whitfield, 21.

³⁶ *Them!* Directed by Gordon Douglas, 1954; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros.

spread elsewhere throughout the country. The queens are eventually found, fought, and destroyed, but not before many more soldiers and civilians have been killed. After the situation has been resolved, the surviving characters reflect on what could have caused such a disastrous event. They realize that all of this violence had been caused by men and their inability to understand the ramifications of what they have created. One of the scientists comments that "When man entered the atomic age, he opened the door to a new world. What we may eventually find in that new world, nobody can predict."³⁷ Thus, *Them!* and other giant monster movies reveal the fear that society will collapse due to humanity's need to pursue scientific enquiries that they do not truly understand.

Another famous science fiction film of the 1950s to deal with this fear of societal breakdown is *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.³⁸ The film follows Miles Bennell, a local doctor in a small California town as he slowly realizes that something has gone extremely wrong among the residents. He begins to have a number of patients coming to him accusing other people of being imposters, even children and family members. Though he initially assumes it is a form of mass hysteria, he gradually comes to realize that there may be some truth in the claims. One of his friends finds a body in his backyard that looks exactly like him, but is lacking in facial features. A number of other bodies are found as well, though all begin to disappear. Eventually, Bennell and his neighbors find a greenhouse full of pods in which exact copies of every citizen of the town are being grown. They realize that slowly each member of the town is being replaced with pod person versions of themselves while they sleep. When Bennell and a girl, Becky, try to escape to find help, they find that most of the inhabitants of the town have already been

³⁷ *Them!* Directed by Gordon Douglass.

³⁸ *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Directed by Dan Siegel, 1956; Los Angeles, CA: Allied Artists Pictures Corporation.

replaced. Two of the pod people tell them that aliens are responsible for the takeover. They wish to eliminate human emotion, which they perceive to be messy and destructive. After Becky succumbs to the pod people as well, Bennell escapes to a highway where he tries to flag down a car to help him. No one stops, so he jumps on the back of a truck, looks inside, and discovers that it is full of pods to be spread to other towns. In the most famous scene of the movie, he then breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience, screaming “They’re here already! You’re next! You’re next!” He is eventually picked up by police from another town who come to believe his story and alert the authorities to begin fighting the aliens.

Though it is tempting to apply a simple allegory of McCarthy-era paranoia to an interpretation of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Siegel seems to be attempting a larger application, especially considering that the film was released in 1956, well after the height of McCarthyism. The emotionlessness of the pod people also suggests that this is not a McCarthy era allegory as many opponents of McCarthy accused him of acting without reason. Instead, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* seems to be a further exploration of the sort of immunity to violence and death that was explored by Hitchcock among others. While Hitchcock examines this phenomenon on an individual level, Siegel argues that this is the result of a society that closes off its emotions. It will not lead to a better society, as the aliens suggest it will lead to another species entirely.

The Twilight Zone again tackles the common postwar fear of societal breakdown. This is best seen in another of the series’ most popular episodes “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street.”³⁹ The episode opens on an idyllic, all-American suburban street where

³⁹ *The Twilight Zone*. Season 1, episode no. 22, first broadcast March 4, 1960 by CBS. Directed by Ronald Winston and written by Rod Serling.

adults go about their business and children play in the street. Suddenly a strange shape flies over the neighborhood, and the neighbors find that every house on the street has lost power and no technology works. They begin to discuss leaving the street to search for answers, but one of the younger boys suggests that this is an alien invasion and they would not want anyone to leave the street. As the neighbors are discussing this possibility, one of the men's cars begins to work again, marking him as a source of suspicion. Everyone begins to bring up his strange habits, such as standing out in the yard at night and staring at the stars. The situation rapidly devolves further, and everyone begins to accuse everyone else of being in league with the aliens. Tragically, one of the men is accidentally killed. After this, lights on the street begin to come on and go off randomly, further sparking a mob mentality and random accusations. As the camera zooms out, viewers realize that the street has fallen completely into chaos. The camera eventually reveals that there really are aliens who are watching the street and did indeed manipulate the neighborhood's power. One alien comments to the other that humans are so easily prone to panic and paranoia, and that they can effortlessly conquer Earth simply through allowing the Earthlings to destroy themselves. The episode ends with one of the most obviously didactic narrations in all of *The Twilight Zone*:

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 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.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *The Twilight Zone*. Season 1, episode no. 22.

This ending narration can obviously refer to the McCarthy-era paranoia associated with fear of communism, but it can also be taken more deeply than that. Serling seems to be suggesting that it is more than just fears of communism that could cause such a societal collapse as seen on Maple Street. As the situation on the street devolved, the stressor that truly began to divide people was an inability to understand differences. When it was discovered that the one neighbor would often stand out at night and stare at the stars, the other neighbors repeatedly commented on the “strangeness” of this. The same reaction was given to an awkward teenager and the man who built a radio in his basement. These differences had always existed on Maple Street, but the pressure of the alien blackout had finally pushed them to violently confront one another. Serling suggests that if they could have only understood and accepted the eccentricities of other people, the tragedy could have been entirely averted. Serling seems to have been personally very concerned with this, as another episode only a year later would deal with a similar theme. The episode called “The Shelter” followed another neighborhood under the threat of a nuclear attack.⁴¹ As in “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street,” the neighbors begin to fight amongst themselves as the fallout shelter on the street only has room for three people. When at the end of the episode it is revealed that it was all a false alarm, the main character wonders whether they will end up destroying themselves without a bomb. Thus, the two episodes reveal the real fear that it would not be the Soviets who would eventually destroy the United States; destruction would come from the inherent prejudices of Americans.

⁴¹ *The Twilight Zone*. Season 3, episode no. 3, first broadcast September 29, 1961 by CBS. Directed by Lamont Johnson and written by Rod Serling.

Isaac Asimov also decided to explore societal dynamics and instability in his short story “The Martian Way.”⁴² It was originally published in 1952 when the United States was at the height of McCarthy-era tension. Asimov compiled an anthology of some of his best work in 1974, with this story being among them, and he included an introduction where he gave his thoughts on the included stories. He wrote of “The Martian Way” that:

‘The Martian Way’ represents my reaction to the McCarthy era, a time, in the early fifties, when Americans seemed to abandon their own history and become, in some cases, witch-hunters; in some cases, victims; and in most cases, cowards.⁴³

Thus, the central tension in the story comes from a charismatic, but destructive, politician named John Hilder, whose many policies bear a striking resemblance to McCarthy. The story itself takes place in a future in which humans have spread to other planets throughout the Solar System, notably Mars. The two main characters are Mars-born “scavengers” whose job it is to scour space for leftover space material that can be used. Hilder, though, and his followers have been calling for an end to Earth’s support of these colonies. He argues that these men living on these other planets are nothing more than a drain on Earth, and should thus be forgotten and expelled from Earth’s society. He is eventually able to pass a bill that ends the shipment of water to Mars, thus dooming the inhabitants of the planet. The Mars-born humans do not stand by meekly, though, and after much debate, a group of ships takes a dangerous one-year-long trip to Saturn to take one of the rings, which are pure water, back to Mars. This gives the Mars humans a 200-year supply of water, essentially defeating Hilder’s reign of power over the other planets. The story ends with one of the Scavengers noting his confidence that it will be Mars and

⁴² Asimov, 87-131.

⁴³ Asimov, x-xi.

other space humans to colonize and explore the rest of the galaxy, not the weak, scared Earthlings.

At first glance, it may seem that Asimov is calling for a communist uprising in the United States against the similarly controlling McCarthy-era government. However, the rhetoric he uses throughout suggests that he is exploring something much deeper than that. Many of the speeches given by the Mars humans when discussing how to deal with the totalitarian Earth government resemble many of the arguments used by minorities in the United States, specifically Native Americans and African Americans. For example, when debating the possibility of taking water from Earth directly, one of the Mars humans says that:

“If it’s only getting water,” said Rioz in a sudden gush of words, “there’s only one thing to do and you know it. If the grounders won’t give us water, we’ll take it. The water doesn’t belong to them just because their fathers and grandfathers were too damned sick-yellow ever to leave their fat planet. Water belongs to people wherever they are. We’re people and the water’s ours, too. We have a right to it.”⁴⁴

This speech thus invokes the history of the planet and the right to live freely, just as the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement would often argue. The names of the Mars humans also connect them to American minorities. Along with the more typical Anglo-Saxon names, the other characters have Latin, Hispanic, Slavic, and Scandinavian names. Thus, Asimov, while playing into a fear of societal collapse, seems to be suggesting that this would be a positive event when a people have become so corrupt. Hilder’s subjugation of the other humans is treated as irrational, just as Asimov believed that McCarthy’s

⁴⁴ Asimov, 102.

policies were irrational. Asimov argues that a societal breakdown is necessary when humans have begun to turn on themselves.

Though each author, filmmaker, or writer seems to have a differing opinion on the best way to face the changes of postwar America, popular culture as a whole reflects the true concerns and fears of Americans. After World War II, Americans were faced with an increasingly isolated society in which the nature of evil and the ways that other groups challenged the perceived power structure were brought into question. Americans were just as concerned as their government with communism and the threat of nuclear destruction, but their true concerns went much deeper than this and can still be felt today. Postwar America could not process the changes they were experiencing, leading to fears of loneliness, humanity's capacity for evil, and societal breakdown. They used distinctly 1950s props and popular culture in general to explore deeper postwar American fears.

Chapter Two: Exhibit Brief

Many Americans assume that 1950's American culture was dry, conservative, simple, and often overly paranoid. Historians and scholars often exacerbate these preconceptions by glossing over the era as nothing more than an era mired in conservatism. However, human fears are never so one dimensional. People use the signs, symbols, and events of their time and culture to interpret the deeper, more psychological fears that are often universal. In American popular culture following World War II, communism and the atomic bomb were the common props used to explore such fears as loneliness, humanity's capacity for evil, and complete societal breakdown. Each of these fears, though distinctly rooted in the postwar historical moment, is universal and was commonly considered in any age. Popular culture, such as film, television, and literature, can be used as a unique lens to view and interpret these fears. Through an exhibit examining fear and popular culture in 1950s America, visitors will be able to understand the root of these fears beyond just the bomb and hopefully connect to the people who experienced them in new ways.

The theoretical framework of the exhibit will follow a thematic structure that will use popular culture in general to explore three main fears as subthemes. These three fears are loneliness, humanity's capacity for evil, and societal breakdown. The central area of the exhibit will be an introductory area which examines the historical moment of postwar America and introduces a preliminary exploration of popular culture. The key aspects of the core introduction area are a timeline and a "Cast of Characters" that together provide the visitor with an understanding of the people and events to be discussed throughout the exhibit. Radiating off of this central area are three additional areas dedicated to

discussing each of the aforementioned fears. This thematic structure will express the notion that though these fears are distinct, they are also related to and build off of one another. Further, placing the introduction area in the core of the exhibit stresses the unique historical moment that gave the props, such as nuclear weapons and communism, their power to explore deeper fears.

Finally, this exhibit is designed as a travelling exhibit that can easily be transported to a number of different museums. An exhibit on popular culture such as this would appeal to a broader audience than that which supports many museums, and could be used by museums to attract new and different visitors. The exhibit would consist primarily of interlocking panels that can be placed into the necessary configuration for the layout. The panels will mostly contain text and pictures, though there will also be display cases for original and recreated objects. There will also be stations throughout with touchscreen monitors to view clips of the films and television shows to be discussed. However, there are some drawbacks to travelling exhibits, notably reliance on objects that can be transported easily or put together from pieces. The layout must also be relatively simple so that it can be recreated easily by a variety of professionals and can fit into different spaces. Hopefully, this will be an exhibit that will engage visitors who actually experienced the period as well as those who have preconceived notions that can be complicated.

Thematic Structure and Floor Plan

The exhibit will begin with a central area of about 100 square feet that presents the material of the introductory exhibit. Branching off from this will be three areas of about 300 square feet corresponding to each of the defining fears. Each panel is about three feet across and the panels can be placed close to one another to define each space. This thematic structure can best be understood by this diagram in which the overlapping section is the introductory exhibit and the three sections flow off from it.

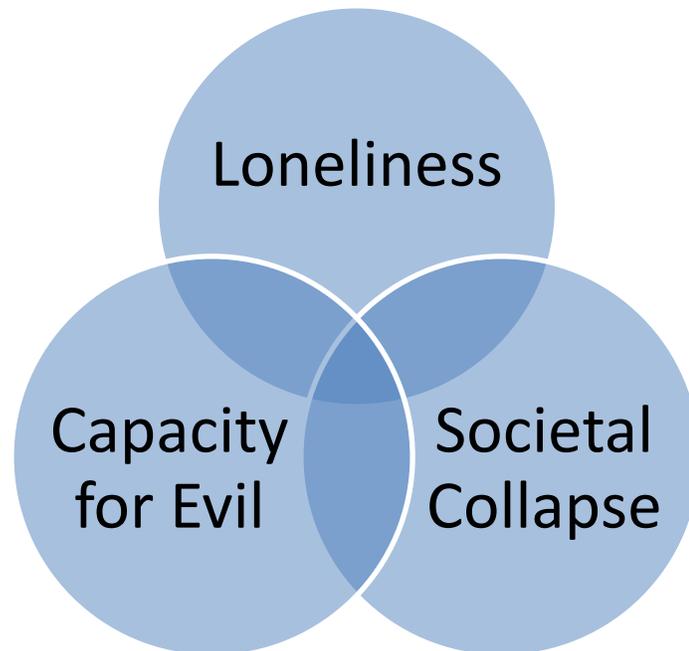


Figure 1: Thematic Structure

Table 1: Exhibit Storyline

Components	Communication Objectives	Story Outline	Means of Expression	Sites/ Objects	Area ft²	Comments
0.0 Introductory Exhibit and Orientation Areas					100	
0.0 Introductory Exhibit	To establish the themes of the exhibit and introduce the major people and subjects to be discussed throughout the exhibit		Timeline, recreated props from films, “cast of characters,” etc.			
0.1 Gort	To use one character from the films to be discussed to illustrate some typical themes	Gort, the robot from <i>The Day the Earth Stood Still</i> , can be used to illustrate the way films in the 1950s imagined a reaction from outsiders to humanity’s own capacity for evil	A to scale recreation of the Gort costume along with a text panel	Gort recreation		This would be at the center of the introductory area. The remainder of the text panels would circle around it.
0.2 Timeline	To introduce visitors to major events in postwar American history	Understanding the major events from 1946-1962 will help to give context to the	A horizontal timeline that visitors could walk through and follow chronologic	The timeline with touchscreen capabilities		

		popular culture objects and events to be discussed throughout the exhibit	ally			
0.2 “Cast of characters”	To introduce visitors to the main people that will be discussed throughout the exhibit	Some of these people are Alfred Hitchcock, Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, and Rod Serling	Enlarged photographs of the people, as well as text explaining their contributions and typical means of expression			
1.0 Loneliness					300	
1.1 Introduction to “Loneliness”	To introduce the concept of loneliness as a theme commonly seen in popular culture of the time period	Loneliness as a fear for postwar Americans may have been rooted in the massive death tolls caused by World War II, both through the Holocaust and nuclear weapons as well as rapid increases in technology	A text panel, photographs, items	Enlarged photographs of the devastation at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and soldiers dead on the battlefield. There are also a series of television sets from the era to reveal the rapidly advancing technology		
1.2 Works by Ray	To reveal Bradbury as a	“The Night” and “There	Text panels as well as	<i>Collier’s</i> (1950),		<i>Collier’s</i> had a

Bradbury displaying loneliness	science fiction writer using his medium to explore themes of loneliness	“Will Come Soft Rains” are both short stories that explicitly invoke a sense of loneliness as a fear despite living in an increasingly modern world	quotations from the stories, a copy of its original publication in <i>Collier’s</i> magazine and its interpretation in comic book form by <i>Weird Fantasy</i>	<i>Weird Fantasy</i> (1953)		reputation for being a social justice magazine, setting up science fiction as a means to explore societal issues
1.3 <i>The Twilight Zone</i> and loneliness	To explore <i>The Twilight Zone</i> as a means of exploring very specific fears, such as loneliness, in science fiction and alternate reality settings	The episode “Time Enough at Last” uses a post-apocalyptic world to tap into postwar American fears of the loneliness that would ensue following a nuclear disaster	Text panels and clips of the episode	A clip of the final scene of the episode, highlighting the famous last lines of “It’s not fair!”		
1.4 Isaac Asimov and loneliness	To use Isaac Asimov’s short stories to explore themes of loneliness in a modern society	Asimov used the highly modern world of <i>I, Robot</i> to question human connections in a world dominated by machines	Text panels and quotes from the story	Asimov’s famous “Laws of Robotics,” copy of <i>Astounding Science Fiction</i>		
2.0 Humanity’s					300	

Capacity for Evil						
2.1 Introduction to Evil as a Postwar Fear	To explain the historical events that framed Americans' fear of humanity's capacity for evil	Many of the horrors of WWII, such as the Holocaust and the nuclear devastation in Japan, shocked Americans into a new understanding of evil on a large scale.	Text panels and pictures	Pictures of liberated Holocaust victims, editorial from David Lawrence		
2.2 <i>The Day the Earth Stood Still</i>	To reveal the fear of humanity's evil that is being explored in <i>The Day the Earth Stood Still</i>	One of the major themes in the film is that humanity may be so irreparably damaging to the rest of the universe that we could potentially destroy it.	Text panels, pictures, film clips	A viewing station with selected clips from the film highlighting these themes		
2.3.1 Alfred Hitchcock- <i>Rear Window</i>	To explore <i>Rear Window</i> as a film that delves into the darker side of human nature. Together with 2.3.2, this section will present Hitchcock as a man with	<i>Rear Window</i> presents its characters as being naturally obsessive, paranoid, violent, irrational, voyeuristic, and unaffected	Text panels, film clips, interactive objects	Recreation of the apartment from the film that visitors can examine and take a quiz to test observation (would		

	deeply pessimistic views of humanity's depravity.	by violence and death.		create a sense of voyeurism for the visitor)		
2.3.2 Alfred Hitchcock- <i>Psycho</i>	To explore <i>Psycho</i> as a film that takes a similarly negative view on human nature. This section will further explore the growing obsession with serial killers in American culture, especially those not motivated by rational incentives.	<i>Psycho</i> focuses on a killer who is motivated by his own psychological disorders and sexual depravity. However, he is also humanized by the film, implying that he is a representation of the modern world.	Text panels, film clips, 1950s advertisements, original posters	The original posters and would be used to reveal the fear of advertising controlling the unconscious		
2.4 <i>The Twilight Zone</i> and "It's a Good Life"	To present an episode of <i>The Twilight Zone</i> that used a child as a personification of irrational evil and connect this to generational discord of the period	The episode suggests that some people are naturally born evil, but it also displays a complete breakdown in communication between the young and the old.	Text panels, pictures, clips from the episode, quotes from Beat Generation writers such as Kerouac and Ginsberg	Quotes from <i>On the Road</i> and "Howl" to reveal the version of youth culture that the episode may have been commenting on		
3.0 Fear of Societal Breakdown					300	

n						
3.1 Introduction to Fear of Societal Breakdown	To present Cold War culture from the top as being treated like a war in which every citizen was a soldier, leading to a society that feared an imminent collapse. This will further connect the war on communism to a war on liberalism, the Civil Rights Movement, and homosexuality.	The Cold War was a war on American soil and was focused on more than just communism in the 1950s for white America. This constant paranoia and flux manifested itself in a fear of imminent societal collapse.	Text panels, pictures, objects, etc.	The original “Hollywood Ten,” early speeches from Martin Luther King, quotes from HUAC, etc.		
3.2 Nuclear Fallout Shelter	To use a recreation of a typical basement fallout shelter to explore themes of paranoia and the myriad of reasons for which a family would build one	Fallout shelters became something of a fad during the 1950s and reflect the widespread fear of a complete societal breakdown.	A recreated fallout shelter, along with the typical items that would have been placed in it.	The shelter and stories of those that built them		There would also be a program here in which you could build and pack your own fallout shelter using limited finances.
3.3 Giant Monster Movies and <i>Them!</i>	To explore the fad of B-list giant monster	These films often depicted these	Text panels, pictures, original props, film	One of the ant props used from		

	movies that were prevalent during the period, especially <i>Them!</i> , and tie them to fears of societal collapse	monsters as being a result of human intervention or technology gone horribly wrong, revealing the fear that collapse would come from within American society	clips	<i>Them!</i> , original monster magazines		
3.4 <i>Invasion of the Body Snatchers</i>	To use this science fiction film as an example of a film that uses a fear of societal collapse to argue for a collapse being caused from within society	The film further explores the effects of an acceptance of violence and how a lack of connections to other human beings has had on American society, ultimately leading to its devolution and collapse.	Text panels, film clips, recreated props	The pod props, clips highlighting the ending scenes		
3.5 <i>The Twilight Zone: "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street"</i>	To explore this episode as a commentary of the typical distrust and paranoia that results among	Aliens invade the street and decide to force them to fight with each other as they	Text panels, episode clips, screen shots, newspaper articles connecting the episode	Episode clips would especially highlight the end, some newspaper		

	communities when there is a stressor, whether from outside or from within	know this will eventually cause them to destroy each other. This was an obvious display of the fear of societal collapse being caused by our own mistrust and infighting, not through any outside force.	to lynchings in the South	r article could focus on lynchings in the American South		
3.6 Isaac Asimov and "The Martian Way"	To explore Asimov's story as an allegory for McCarthyism and race relations in the United States, specifically suggesting that subjugated peoples can and should rise up against a group that is misusing its power.	This is an obviously different view of societal collapse as it is presented in a positive light.	Text panels, quotes from the story, quotes and pictures from the early Civil Rights movement and McCarthy era victims	Quotes and pictures		

Resource Plan

0.0 Introductory Exhibit

In the introductory area of the exhibit, text panels will be a key means of conveying information about the historical moment of the early Cold War. Photographs on the panels will also be important to help visitors understand the images that Americans in the period would have been familiar with.

0.1 Gort

A recreation of the Gort character from *The Day the Earth Stood Still* will set the tone at the beginning of the exhibit for the kinds of popular culture that will be explored throughout. Gort was the symbol of the effort that the rest of the universe put into stopping the spread of humanity's evil influence. The original Gort was a costume and the details of it, including the seams, can actually be seen in the movie. From a shot in the film:

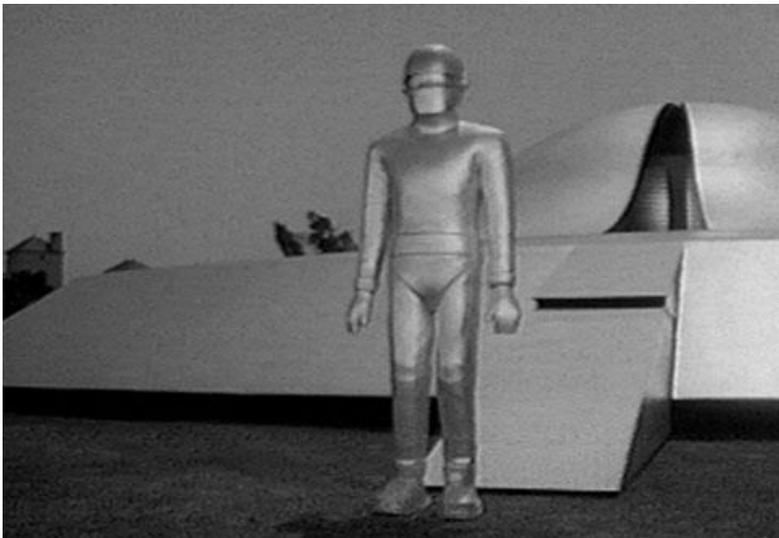


Figure 2: Gort costume

0.2 Timeline

The timeline will focus mostly on political, cultural, and technological events that best defined the time period. The text is included in the exhibit script. The timeline will be an interactive touch screen where visitors can touch the names of the events and bring up an explanation, pictures, and newspaper headlines.

0.3 “Cast of Characters”

This will include information on all of the major people who were responsible for the work discussed throughout the rest of the exhibit. Again, this will mostly consist of text panels, but there will also be photographs of these people including:



Figure 3: Alfred Hitchcock



Figure 4: Rod Serling

1.1 Introduction to “Loneliness”

The introduction to the section on the fear of loneliness will consist mostly of text panels interspersed with photographs, especially those stressing the nuclear devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Further, much of popular culture related to this fear stressed the dangers posed by technology and a growing lack of connection to other human beings. There will be a brief summary of some of the technology developed in this period, especially television and a *U.S. News and World Report* examining its effect on society. A series of televisions will be included to illustrate how quickly the industry was growing.



Figure 5: Pye television receiver, 1948



Figure 6: A McMicheal model television, c.1951



Figure 7: Murphy V210C television, 1953

1.2 Works by Ray Bradbury

This section will include quotations from Bradbury's work such as:

The essential impact of life's loneliness crushes your beginning-to-tremble body. Mother is alone too. She cannot look to the sanctity of marriage, the protection of her family's love, she cannot look to the United States Constitution or the City Police, she cannot look anywhere, in this very instant, save into her heart, and there she'll find nothing but uncontrollable repugnance and a will to fear. In this instant it is an individual problem seeking an individual solution. You must accept being alone and work from there.

The section will also include a copy of the magazine in which "There Will Come Soft Rains" originally appeared:



Figure 8: *Collier's*, May 6, 1950



Figure 9: "There Will Come Soft Rains" adapted into comic book form for *Weird Fantasy* in 1953

1.3 *The Twilight Zone* and Loneliness

There will be a monitor here with a touch screen that can select certain scenes from the episode “Time Enough at Last” to be viewed, especially the final scene. There could also be a recreation of the famous broken glasses that would illustrate the hopeless loneliness that was the true fear in the episode.



Figure 10: Bemis was left alone his glasses broke, and he lost the ability to see, leading to his crushing loneliness.

1.4 Isaac Asimov and Loneliness

Quotes will again be used here to illustrate the themes of *I, Robot* and his other stories. There will also be a discussion of Asimov’s “Three Laws of Robotics” which still influence the field of robotics today. These laws are:

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.

These laws reveal the ways in which popular culture was beginning to contend with how humanity related to technology, often at the expense of humanity itself. The laws were originally published in the magazine *Astounding Science Fiction*:

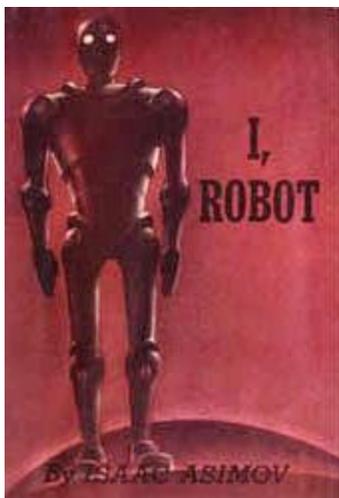


Figure 11: First Edition of *I, Robot*, 1950

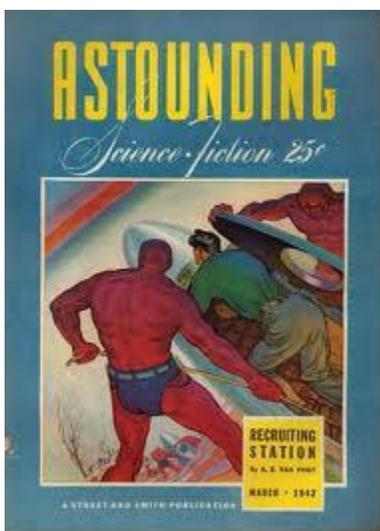


Figure 12: *Astounding Science Fiction* March, 1942

2.1 Introduction to Evil as a Postwar Fear

This brief section would mostly rely on text panels and photographs to orient visitors to the sorts of evil being confronted in postwar America, especially the results of the Holocaust and American guilt associated with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The quote from David Lawrence in 1945 about America's culpability in Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be used to illustrate the new ideas about evil.

Editorial by David Lawrence from November 23, 1945.

Quote: "The truth is we are guilty. Our conscience as a nation must trouble us. We must confess our sin. We have used a horrible weapon to asphyxiate and cremate more than 100,000 men, women and children in a sort of super-lethal gas chamber- and all this in a war already won or which spokesmen for our Air Forces tell us could have been readily won without the atomic bomb... We ought, therefore, to apologize in unequivocal terms at once to the whole world for our misuse of the atomic bomb."

2.2 *The Day the Earth Stood Still*

This section will use a monitor to display film clips as well as some stills to go on the panels with text. The section would also use photographs of nuclear testing during the period to highlight the fear of humanity's growing ability to destroy.

2.3.1 Alfred Hitchcock and *Rear Window*

Part of the larger Alfred Hitchcock section, this will also have film clips and stills, along with a recreated version of the window from the set. Visitors would be able to play a game where they look at the apartment for a set amount of time to observe an imaginary apartment full of details about both the room and the person in it. Visitors would then be able to take a quiz testing their skills of observation. This would underscore the theme of voyeurism from the film. Here are the binoculars in the original poster:

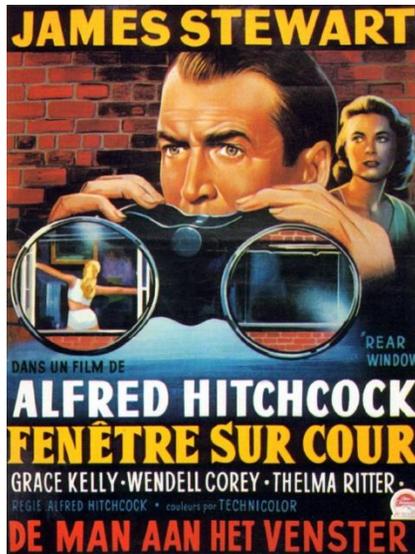


Figure 13: *Rear Window* poster, 1954

2.3.2 Alfred Hitchcock and *Psycho*

Along with film clips, there will also be posters from the film's original release to be compared with advertising from the period. This will illustrate the fear of unconscious desires being controlled by advertising that Hitchcock was exploring. Original posters:

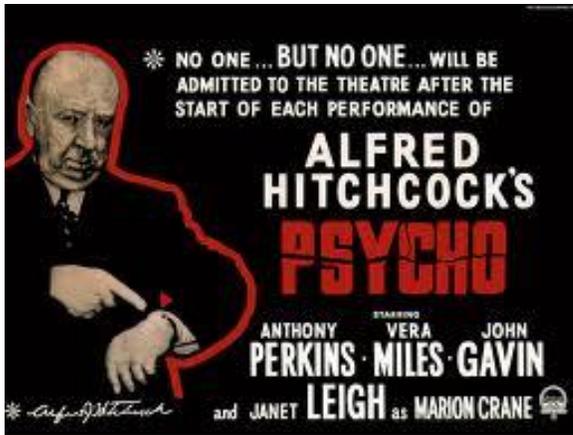


Figure 14: *Psycho* poster, 1960

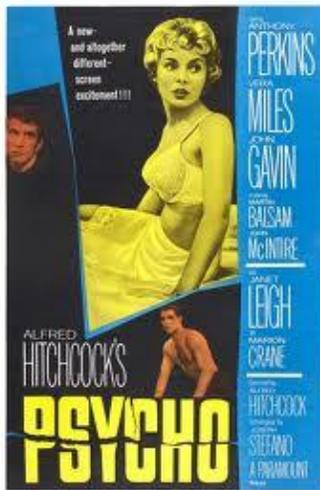


Figure 15: *Psycho* poster #2, 1960

2.4 *The Twilight Zone* and “It’s a Good Life”

This section would again use clips from the episode, especially highlighting the disconnect between the child and the older generations. This will compare to generational communication breakdown in other areas of popular culture such as with the Beat Generation. To highlight this, the exhibit will have quotes from “Howl” and *On the Road*.



Figure 16: Paperback version of *On the Road*, 1957

3.1 Introduction to Fear of Societal Breakdown

To introduce this section, there will be photographs of early Civil Rights events, HUAC quotes and policies, and “The Hollywood Ten.” There will also be clips from the trials of The Hollywood Ten in which they refused to talk. This will highlight the clashes between conservatism and liberalism that much of the popular culture being examined was reacting to.



Figure 17: The Hollywood Ten, 1947

Evening Meditation

For Personal and Family Devotions

Love waits as it is in his neighbor's dwelling in the building of the love—Kant's 12:08.

Christ taught us to love God without reservation and our neighbor as ourselves. In the days of today, Paul also points out that love of neighbor is the filling of the law of God and Christ. Paul might have said in a lot of detached supporters looked to give us a guiding principle that covers every situation. Real love will guide in every relationship. It will make us helpful to others in the line of their need and eager to be freed from their harm and danger.

Jesus: help us to be good neighbors to all who are in need and to those who need a guiding hand in Christ's holy name on our lives.

A&T Students Launch 'Sit-Down' Demand For Service At Downtown Lunch Counter

Greensboro Grist

BOOK CLUB TO MEET
Great Books Group No. 1 will discuss Shakespeare's "Macbeth" at an 8 o'clock meeting tonight at the Greensboro Public Library.

WATKINS ILL.
Greene M. Watkins of Wake County Court Administration was reported in critical condition at Wesley Long Hospital this morning. He is not allowed visitors.

DEAS TO SPEAK
J. Roger Deas, an official with American Can Co., will speak today at the 8:30 a.m. meeting of the local Industrial Management Club. The dinner meeting will be at the Mayfield Cafeteria.

PLAY ON AGAIN
"Love Remained Angel" is dramatization of a poem by Thomas Wolfe's book, will be presented again at 8:30 o'clock tonight at War Memorial Auditorium. The play, by Kerill Froye, stars Minnie Hopkins and Michael Elert.

MISS KISER SPEAKS
Miss Mary Kiser, director of Baptist Student Activities at Wake Forest College, spoke to the Providence Baptist Church Youth Conference last night. Her topic was "Ethical Decision Making and the Christian's Role."



Woolworth Made Target For Demonstration Here

BY HARVIN SYKES
Second Staff Writer

A group of 20 Negro students from A&T College occupied lunchroom counter seats, without being served, at the downtown F. W. Woolworth Co. store in this morning—stating what they declared would be a growing movement.

The group declared double that number will take places at the meeting tomorrow.

Employees of Woolworth did not serve the group and they sat from 10:30 a.m. until after noon. While customers continued to sit and get service.

Clarence Harris, Woolworth manager, replied "No comment" to all questions concerning the "sit-down" move about Woolworth custom, and about what he planned to do.

Today's 20-man action followed appearance at 4:20 p.m. yesterday of four freshmen from Zion Hill at A&T who sat down and stayed, without service, until the store closed at 5:30 p.m.

Students spokesman said they are seeking "better quality service and will increase their numbers daily until they get it."

Today's group came in at 10:30 a.m. Each made a small purchase one counter over from the lunchroom counter, then sat in groups of three or four at 10:30 because vacant.

There was no disturbance and there appeared to be no conversation except among the groups. Some students pulled out books and appeared to be studying.

The group today wrote in the newspaper at Greensboro, N.C.

STUDENTS BEGIN MOVEMENT Shows are four of the 20 A&T College students who sat down, without being served, at the lunchroom counters of F. W. Woolworth Co. today, to start a movement they declared is for ending discrimination against Negroes there. They are, left to right, Joseph McNeil and Franklin McLain, two of the four leaders in the movement, and Billy Smith and Clarence Henderson.

The Greensboro Record

Page 1—Section 8 Tuesday, February 2, 1960

Archive photos are News & Record file photographs. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 18: Greensboro sit-ins, 1960, to illustrate the fears of the Civil Rights Movement

3.2 Nuclear Fallout Shelter

As a program leading up to the exhibit, visitors could come to the museum to view and perhaps participate in the building of a Basement Concrete Block Shelter. These were do-it-yourself projects in the 1950s and 1960s and could be built for \$150 to \$200 at the time. Some of the plans, which would also be on display:

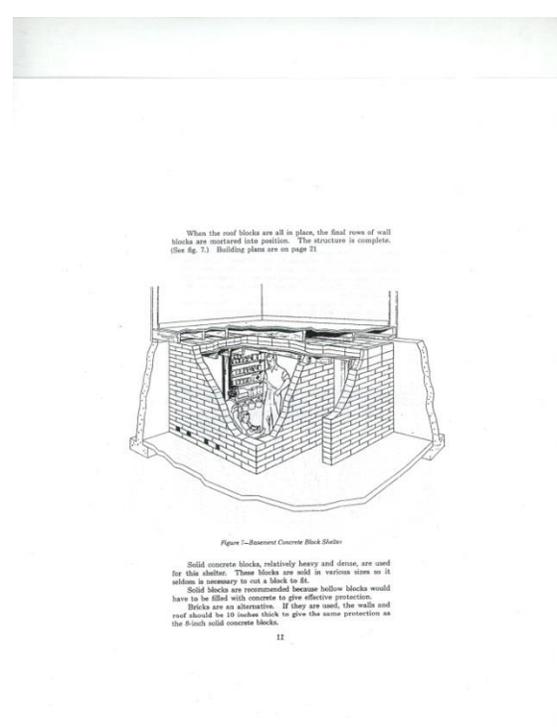
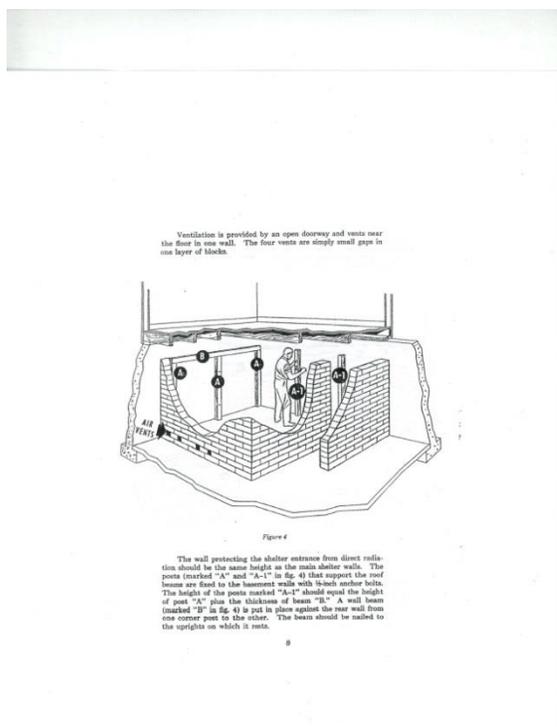
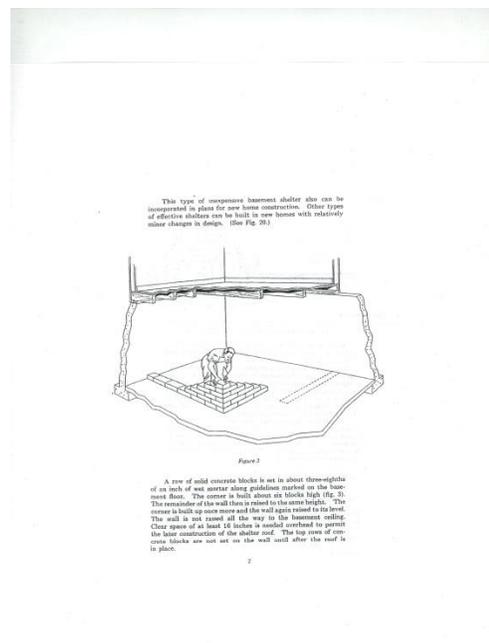
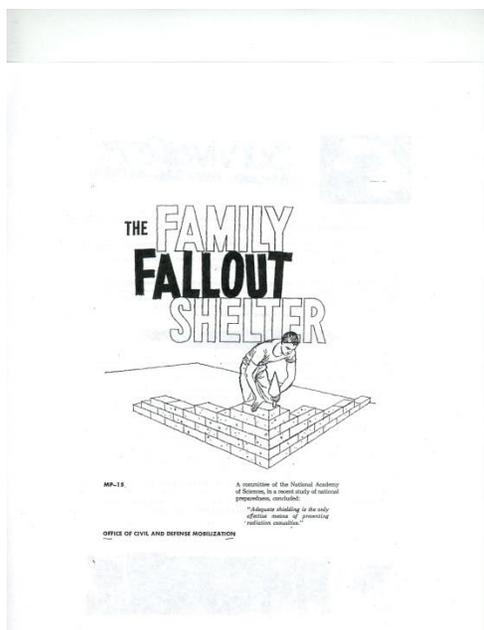


Figure 19: Fallout Shelter Plan. Related to this, in the exhibit there will be a program in which visitors have to stock their own bomb shelter using limited resources. The ideal list, given by this same manual was:



SHELTER CHECKLIST

Food and cooking equipment:

- Water (2-week supply, a minimum of 7 gal. per person)
- Food (2-week supply)
- Eating utensils
- Paper plates, cups, and napkins (2-week supply)
- Openers for cans and bottles
- Pocket knife
- Special foods for babies and the sick

Supplies and equipment for sanitation:

- Can for garbage (20-gal.)
- Covered pail for toilet purposes
- Can for human wastes (10-gal.)
- Toilet tissue, paper towels, sanitary napkins, disposable diapers, ordinary and waterless soap
- Grocery bags, newspapers for soil bags
- Household chlorine (2 pt.) and DDT (1 qt. of 5% solution)
- Waterproof gloves

Shelter equipment:

- Battery radio with CONELRAD frequencies (640 or 1240) marked, and spare batteries for 2-week operation
- Home use radiation meters, when available
- Flashlights, electric lantern, and spare batteries for 2 weeks
- Clothing
- Bedding (rubber sheeting and special equipment for the sick)
- A first-aid kit and supplies listed in OCDM Leaflet L-2-12, *First Aid: Emergency Kit; Emergency Action*
- Writing material
- Reading material
- Screwdriver, pliers, and other household tools
- Games and amusements for children

Items outside the shelter but within reach:

- Cooking equipment (canned heat, or camp stove) and matches
- Home fire-fighting equipment
- Rescue tools

Medical Publications:

Any one of the following publications from a list provided by the Bureau of Health Education of the American Medical Association would be helpful when a physician is not available.

Figure 20: Resource suggestions for the shelter

3.3 Giant Monster Movies and *Them!*

Along with pictures and movie clips, there would also be original monster magazines from the era that exhibit the same phenomenon. They would often tie into these monster movies directly and were extremely popular with the Baby Boomer generation. Some examples:

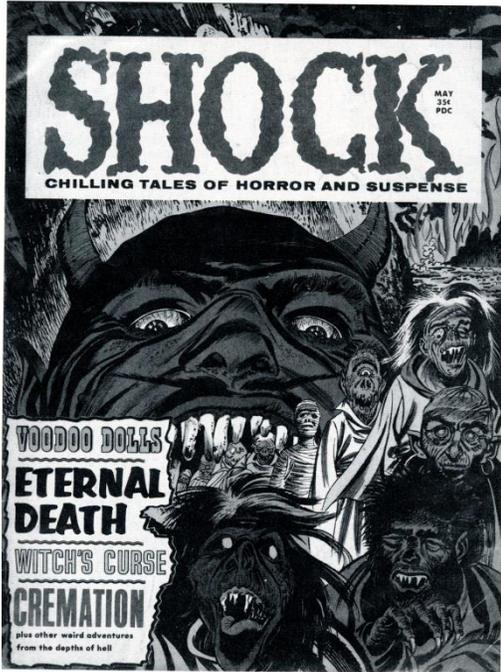


Figure 21: First Issue of *Shock*, 1953



Figure 22: Fin Fang Foom attacks Chinese communists, 1966



Figure 23: Monster magazine featuring the character of Gorgo

There will also be a copy of the original review of *Them!* from *The New York Times* in 1954. An excerpt:

“Dr. Edmund Gwenn's final, slightly doleful but strictly scientific observation in "Them!" indicates that when man entered the atomic age he opened new worlds and that "nobody can predict" what he will find in them. The Warner Brothers, fearlessly flouting this augury, have come up with one ominous view of a terrifyingly new world in the thriller that was exposed at the Paramount yesterday, and it is definitely a chiller.”

3.4 *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*

Film clips will be especially important to show the movie's themes of paranoia and breakdown from within that are also seen throughout popular culture in the period. The last scene of the movie especially illustrates this theme as the only survivor turns to the audience and shouts “They're here already!”



Figure 24: Scene where Bennell directly addresses the audience, a rarity in films at the time, especially horror films

3.5 *The Twilight Zone* and “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street”

The film clips would include the end of the episode when the aliens explain their method of conquering Earth. To highlight the unrest that the episode is examining, newspaper articles concerning lynchings will be included to highlight this as they often led to race riots by 1960.



Figure 25: Article from the *Los Angeles Times* referring to the murderers as “raiders,” 1959

3.6 Isaac Asimov and “The Martian Way”

This section relies upon quotes from the story, especially highlighting the multicultural heritage of the characters and the struggle against an overly powerful Earth that seems to be led by Americans. One such quote would be:

“If it’s only getting water,” said Rioz in a sudden gush of words, “there’s only one thing to do and you know it. If the grounders won’t give us water, we’ll take it. The water doesn’t belong to them just because their fathers and grandfathers were too damned sick-yellow ever to leave their fat planet. Water belongs to people wherever they are. We’re people and the water’s ours, too. We have a right to it.”

Public Programming

To get visitors interested in the opening of the travelling exhibit, each venue will host a program in the week leading up to it in which they can watch and take part in the building of a Basement Concrete Block Shelter. The shelter was originally designed to be made inside, usually in a basement, and the primary materials were cinderblocks and some lumber. They were meant to be built cheaply and easily, so they should be economically feasible for any museum to imitate in their own museum space. They were also non-permanent and can thus be easily taken down as well. This program would help to get visitors interested in the types of popular culture that will be explored in the later exhibit and also begin to question their own assumptions about postwar America.

Another program that would take place after the viewing of the exhibit would be an oral history program aimed at men and women who personally experienced the period. These oral histories would focus on memories of popular culture and how they experienced fear. There is an Apple app, developed by the Smithsonian Institution's Travelling Exhibition Service, that can record an interview spoken into the phone or a tablet and upload it to a central website. Then anyone can listen to the interviews on the website. A tablet would be sent with the exhibit to make this possible and engage the visitors even after they have viewed the exhibit. Some of these first hand experiences could even be added to a special area of the exhibit as people give their oral histories to make the exhibit specific to the community.

Chapter Three-Exhibit Script

0.0 Introductory Exhibit

1950s America holds a special place in our collective memory. We picture white picket fences surrounding homes with ideal, perfect families. We picture men in grey suits happily going to work in new cars. We use such words as “conformity,” “conservatism,” and “materialism.” The overall picture proves to be one dimensional and easy to digest. However, was this era really so simple? Through an exploration of fear, a dynamic, complicated, multi-dimensional picture emerges of postwar America.

To understand any society, it becomes necessary to understand what they feared. On the surface, it may seem as if 1950s Americans feared nothing other than communism and atomic weapons. However, by using horror and science fiction as a lens to view fear, it becomes evident that communists and bombs are often used merely as props to explore deeper, more psychological fears. Horror and science fiction are cultural mediums that directly attempt to channel the fear and paranoia of their historical moment. Through exploring them, we can understand the past.

Postwar horror and science fiction reveal a culture concerned with crippling loneliness and a diluting of human connections. They reveal a fear of humanity’s capacity for evil and an understanding that most people are capable of horrible actions. They reveal a fear of complete societal collapse and a distrust of the ways society was advancing. 1950s popular culture reveals an America struggling to understand a rapidly changing world. Explore this culture and understand the nature of their fears, and hopefully yours as well.

0.1 Gort

“Gort” costume, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, 1951

Originally designed by Addison Hehr.

In *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, Gort was the robotic protector of Klaatu, an alien diplomat sent to Earth to curb Earth’s careless use of power. In the film, Gort represents the fear that the power of humans was growing, and only an unstoppable force such as Gort could threaten them. The original Gort costume was primarily made of foam rubber and worn by American actor Lock Martin who was over seven feet tall.

0.2 Timeline

Following World War II, Americans experienced a number of political, technological, and cultural events that would come to define them. Here you can explore some of the events 1950s Americans would have been most familiar with.

- 1945
 - First Computer Built- ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer)
 - United States drops first atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki
 - Microwave Oven invented
- 1946
 - Nuremberg Trials put a human face to the horrors of the Holocaust
 - Winston Churchill delivers his “Iron Curtain” Speech, separating the democratic West from the communist East
- 1947

- The creation of the Marshall Plan commits the United States to rebuilding Europe and halting the spread of communism
- 1948
 - The United States aids the blockaded Berlin through a famous airlift, committing the country to action in Europe
 - “Big Bang” Theory formulated, igniting further interest in understanding space
- 1949
 - China becomes communist
 - North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) established, committing the United States to defend other member nations against the spread of communism
 - Soviet Union develops atomic bomb
- 1950
 - Korean War begins, the first of many conflicts associated with the Cold War
 - Senator Joseph McCarthy begins the era of paranoia known as McCarthyism
- 1951
 - Color TV introduced
- 1952
 - Polio Vaccine created
- 1953

- Watson and Crick discover DNA structure
- Joseph Stalin, the de facto leader of the Soviet Union, dies
- Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are executed for espionage, confirming the fears espoused by Joseph McCarthy
- 1954
 - USS *Nautilus*, the first nuclear powered submarine, is launched
 - *Brown v. Board of Education* rules segregation illegal
- 1955
 - Emmett Till was murdered, bringing American racism to the international stage
 - Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat begins the Montgomery Bus Boycotts
 - Warsaw Pact is signed by communist nations, placing these countries in contention with the powers of NATO
- 1956
 - Elvis appears on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, bringing sexuality to the American mainstream
 - The Suez Crisis, a conflict in Egypt between the major powers of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, reflects a deepening Cold War
- 1957
 - The Soviet Union launched *Sputnik*, the first satellite, beginning the Space Age
- 1958

- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is founded
- Mao Zedong launches the “Great Leap Forward” in an attempt to transform China into a modern communist economy and society
- 1959
 - Fidel Castro becomes the dictator of communist Cuba
 - Kitchen Debate in Moscow between Nixon and Khrushchev displays the gulf between the East and the West
- 1960
 - First functioning laser operated
 - Lunch counter sit-ins for racial equality in Greensboro, North Carolina
 - Birth Control is approved by the Food and Drug Administration
- 1961
 - Adolf Eichmann is put on trial for his actions as one of the primary organizers of the Holocaust
 - Bay of Pigs invasion by the United States fails to overthrow Fidel Castro in Cuba, strengthening the position of the Communist Party in Cuba
 - Berlin Wall is built, a physical representation of the divide between the East and the West
 - Freedom Riders begin to challenge segregation across the South, prompting violent reactions and increasing the legitimacy of the Civil Rights Movement
 - Soviets send the first man into space: Yuri Gagarin

- Soviets test “Tsar Bomba,” the most powerful nuclear weapon ever detonated
- 1962
 - Cuban Missile Crisis ramps up the pressure of the Cold War when nuclear missiles are placed within range of the United States, an event that would be the closest the world ever came to nuclear war

0.3 “Cast of Characters”

Isaac Asimov (1920-1992)

Isaac Asimov was one of the most famous science fiction writers of the 20th century who influenced not just fiction, but popular and hard science as well. Along with Ray Bradbury and many others, Asimov was a member of a movement known as Social Science Fiction that used science fiction scenarios to explore the human condition, often either to criticize the present or warn about the future. In his lifetime, Asimov wrote or edited over 500 books of various genres, though he is perhaps best known for his novels and short stories.

Ray Bradbury (1920-2012)

Ray Bradbury was an American writer most famous for his fantasy and science fiction novels and short stories. Though he often claimed that his stories were not strictly science fiction, Bradbury was also a social science fiction writer whose works usually used a dystopian future to explore a possibly disastrous future. Throughout his life, Bradbury was a great lover of books and was deeply critical of the ways in which modern

technology was directing how people learned and experienced the world. He is credited with writing 27 novels and over 600 short stories.

Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980)

Alfred Hitchcock was a British film and television director, writer, and producer who was one of the most innovative professionals in Hollywood's history. With over fifty films on his resume, he was an extremely prolific director who was at the height of his creative years in the 1950s. He is best associated with the horror, suspense, and thriller genres in which he often utilized twist endings, plot decoys, and editing techniques to imitate a person's gaze. Hitchcock was intensely interested throughout his career in psychoanalysis and the nature of crime, and thus many of his films delve into the nature of fear.

Rod Serling (1924-1975)

Rod Serling was an American writer and producer best known as the creator of *The Twilight Zone*. After a long career writing for radio and television programs, Serling became increasingly frustrated with the limitations of the industry, particularly corporate censorship, depictions of racism, and an inability to express political statements, particularly concerning war and violence. By 1959, he was eventually able to create *The Twilight Zone* which used science fiction elements to explore social realities. His show went on to be wildly popular and influential, forever affecting the science fiction genre and earning Serling a reputation as "The Angry Young Man" of Hollywood.

1.1 Introduction to “Loneliness”

Horror and science fiction of the 1950s reveal an American people greatly disturbed by loneliness and deteriorating connections to others. To invoke fear, films, television shows, and literature would invoke an overwhelming sense of loneliness through various means, revealing the ways in which it could affect the audience. Many of these fears stemmed from rapidly advancing technology that led to dramatic changes in technology.

Text to accompany the series of televisions:

Television was one of the most swiftly expanding industries throughout the postwar period. Mass production, increased leisure time, and greater disposable income made owning a television feasible following World War II. In 1946, only 0.5% of American households had a television set, but by 1962, 90% of homes had a television. This new inundation of television into American society accompanied shifting attitudes and behaviors that caused a great deal of concern among many Americans. Many feared that people were becoming more concerned with the latest episode of their favorite program, rather than interacting with family and friends.

Quotes from a *U.S. News and World Report* article in 1955:

“Everywhere, children sit with eyes glued to screens—for three to four hours a day on the average. Their parents use up even more time mesmerized by this new marvel—or monster. They have spent 15 billion dollars to look since 1946.”

“This is that television is changing the American mind and character, although nobody knows for sure just how. The evidence is too fragmentary. The analysts are disturbed by

some aspects of TV's effect on viewers. Some think TV is conditioning Americans to be 'other directed,' that is, getting the ideas from someone else. The early American, by contrast, is supposed to have been 'inner directed,' a man who thought things out for himself on the basis of his own reasoning.

"A fancy name for this suspected effect of TV is 'narcotic disfunction.' This means that more and more men come home in the evening, drop into a chair in front of the TV set after supper and slip into a dream world of unreality."

1.2 Works by Ray Bradbury Displaying Loneliness

"The Night" by Ray Bradbury (1946)

Quote: "The essential impact of life's loneliness crushes your beginning-to-tremble body. Mother is alone too. She cannot look to the sanctity of marriage, the protection of her family's love, she cannot look to the United States Constitution or the City Police, she cannot look anywhere, in this very instant, save into her heart, and there she'll find nothing but uncontrollable repugnance and a will to fear. In this instant it is an individual problem seeking an individual solution. You must accept being alone and work from there."

"There Will Come Soft Rains" (1950)

This story was originally published in *Collier's* magazine on May 6, 1950, and went on to become one of Bradbury's most famous short stories. The story is based upon a poem by Sara Teasdale originally published in 1920 that explored the inherent loneliness of

humanity on Earth, and what would happen to the planet after humans were destroyed. Bradbury uses a science fiction theme of nuclear destruction to explore this universal fear. The story follows the daily routine of an automated house that continues its functions long after its occupants have been killed by a nuclear disaster, creating throughout a sense of crushing loneliness and disconnect from the planet.

Text of poem by Sara Teasdale that inspired the story:

There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,
And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;

And frogs in the pools, singing at night,
And wild plum trees in tremulous white,

Robins will wear their feathery fire,
Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;

And not one will know of the war, not one
Will care at last when it is done.

Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,
If mankind perished utterly;

And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,
Would scarcely know that we were gone.

Text to accompany a copy of *Collier's* magazine:

Collier's was a magazine founded by Peter Collier, an Irish immigrant, in 1888. It continued weekly publications through 1957. From its inception, *Collier's* concerned itself with in-depth investigative reporting and perpetuating social reforms, a reputation it maintained throughout its existence. During World War II, *Collier's* was one of the first American magazines to begin reporting on the concentration camps in Europe, and it maintained a decidedly antiwar stance into the Cold War. Much of the fiction it published, including Bradbury's, was in keeping with these themes.

Text to accompany the *Weird Fantasy* comic book:

“There Will Come Soft Rains” proved to be immensely popular among science fiction and horror fans, and it was eventually transformed into comic book form by *Weird Fantasy* in 1953. The comic highlights the themes of loneliness as the only human presences in the comic are the imprints of the family's remains burned into one of the walls by the bomb's blast. The humans are markedly separated from each other even in death.

1.3 *The Twilight Zone* and Loneliness

“Time Enough at Last” written by Rod Serling (1959)

Originally airing in 1959 on *The Twilight Zone*, “Time Enough at Last” tells the story of a man plagued by loneliness and a disconnect from humanity both before and after a nuclear apocalypse. Henry Bemis wants nothing more than to read books but can never find the time, until every other person in the world is killed by a nuclear bomb.

Tragically, even though he now has plenty of time to read, his glasses break, and he descends into despair as he is faced with complete loneliness in a post-apocalyptic world.

Quote to accompany a monitor displaying clips of the episode: “The best laid plans of mice and men and Henry Bemis, the small man in the glasses who wanted nothing but time. Henry Bemis, now just a part of a smashed landscape, just a piece of the rubble, just a fragment of what man has dedded to himself. Mr. Henry Bemis in the Twilight Zone.”

Text with a recreation of Bemis’ broken glasses:

The glasses were originally worn by Burgess Meredith, the actor who played Henry Bemis in the episode. Though the glasses are obviously reading glasses, Meredith wore them in every scene as requested by Serling. Serling wanted the glasses to separate Bemis from the rest of the characters as “bookish,” as well as to foreshadow their part in Bemis’ eventual undoing.

1.4 Isaac Asimov and Loneliness

Text to accompany a copy of the book:

I, Robot by Isaac Asimov (1950)

Isaac Asimov explores the fear of loneliness in his book *I, Robot*. The book is a series of stories told by Dr. Susan Calvin, a scientist involved in the creation of robots, to a reporter. Through an examination of the psychology of robots, Asimov further explores the psychology of humanity. He reveals that humans have an inherent and tragic need for

connection that is not being met by the modern world; this is a problem that is meant to be resolved through robots. In the end, robots only exacerbate and reflect the disconnectedness and loneliness inherent in the human condition.

I, Robot is also notable for originating and applying Asimov's "Three Laws of Robotics" which still affect the field of robotics to this day. These laws reveal the extent to which humans were beginning to contend with technology in a way that was becoming psychological. Robots could be studied and explored in these fictional settings to compare with and understand the uncontrollable nature of humanity.

4. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
5. A robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
6. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.

2.1 Introduction to Evil as a Postwar Fear

World War II introduced Americans to death and destruction on an unprecedented scale.

It is estimated that over 60 million people died in World War II, including the mass genocide of the Holocaust. Much of this information was revealed following the war in events such as the Nuremberg Trials that forced Americans to confront the idea of evil.

Postwar Americans were also forced to confront their own actions following the bombing

of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As reports of this devastation surfaced, Americans were forced to confront the evil nature of humanity.

Text to accompany the quote from the David Lawrence editorial from 1945 in *United States News*:

Though many Americans would not have agreed with Lawrence's stance concerning the validity of the use of the atomic bomb, this is the sort of feeling that they would have had to contend with. How culpable were Americans in the death and destruction of so many people? Men such as Lawrence challenged Americans to take on this guilt.

2.2 The Day the Earth Stood Still

Text to accompany the monitor with clips from the film:

The Day the Earth Stood Still directed by Robert Wise (1951)

The Day the Earth Stood Still was a film following the contact between an alien visitor and humans in Washington D.C. The alien, Klaatu, is accompanied by an indestructible robot named Gort. They have arrived on Earth for mysterious reasons. The humans from Earth are immediately on edge and quickly turn violent toward Klaatu. Eventually, Klaatu reveals that his mission is to warn the Earth that their inherent destructiveness and violence have led to concern among aliens throughout the galaxy that humanity's evil will spread into space. If that were to happen, Gort and the other robots would destroy Earth. Klaatu informs the gathered people that only they can overcome humanity's penchant for evil and violence.

2.3.1 Alfred Hitchcock and *Rear Window*

Text to accompany the monitor with clips from the film:

Rear Window directed by Alfred Hitchcock (1954)

Rear Window, starring Jimmy Stewart and Grace Kelly, follows a man named Jeff who is confined to his apartment due to an injury, forcing him to challenge his internal voyeuristic impulses. He begins to spy on his fellow neighbors with no regard to privacy or ethics, eventually seeing what he believes to be the results of a murder in an apartment across the courtyard. Though he is eventually proven correct, his suspicions lead him to confront the inherent distrust that humans have for one another as well as our desire to view the evil in others.

Text to accompany the apartment exhibit:

What do you see when you observe others? Examine the apartments you can see from the window and look at how the occupants are behaving. Why do you think people act in the following ways?

2.3.2 Alfred Hitchcock and *Psycho*

Text to accompany a monitor with clips of the film:

Psycho directed by Alfred Hitchcock (1960)

As arguably Hitchcock's best known work, *Psycho* follows a series of mysterious murders taking place at the Bates Motel. The motel is run by Norman Bates and his

enigmatic mother, a woman who constantly proves to be a source of tension for Norman. Eventually, it is revealed that Norman was in fact the murderer, who killed while under the influence of his dead mother's personality. For the first time on screen, a murderer is motivated not by personal ambition, but instead by psychological and sexual urges beyond his control.

Text to accompany posters:

Hitchcock was very much aware of the effect that advertising was having on Americans. A common postwar fear was that irrational, unconscious desires were being controlled and manipulated by the media. People could no longer tell what was the conscious and what was the unconscious, a state that is mirrored by Norman.

Hitchcock was both aware of the fear of the unconscious being controlled and the power that could be wielded through manipulating it. The main poster for the film prominently displays Janet Leigh in a bra, giving the impression that she will be the scantily clad star of the movie. Instead, she is killed off within the first act. The second poster featuring Hitchcock pointing to a watch was only placed at the actual theaters. At face value, it seems to be only warning visitors that late-comers will not be admitted, but below the surface, it also suggests that the film is so engrossing that the experience must be preserved. He thus purposefully builds and manipulates expectations for his film, effectively controlling the unconscious.

2.4 The Twilight Zone and "It's a Good Life"

Text to accompany a monitor with clips of the episode:

“It’s a Good Life” written by Rod Serling (1961)

“It’s a Good Life” tells the story of a small town in America controlled by the whims of a three-year-old boy with godlike powers. The boy does not allow anyone to leave and when people upset him he sends them to the cornfield, from which they never return. Everyone around him is forced to put on a happy façade to avoid angering him, while he continues to inflict bizarre torture on even his own family members. No reason is given for the child’s actions, and he is presumed to be naturally and inherently evil.

Text to accompany an edition of *On the Road*:

Serling’s creation of a purely evil youth could perhaps be commenting upon the generational divide that began to develop between the so-called “Greatest Generation” that fought in and experienced World War II and the youth, specifically those of the Beat Generation. The Beats were led by writers such as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg who wrote works portraying a rejection of traditional values, fluid sexuality, equality between races, and a rejection of materialism. On the cover of this edition of *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac from 1957, young men and women are seen engaging in sexual activity, dancing, and mingling between the races.

Quote from “Howl” by Allen Ginsberg (1956):

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical
naked,
dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,
Angel-headed hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection

to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night

3.1 Introduction to Societal Breakdown as a Fear

From fallout shelters to giant monsters on film, a fear of societal collapse was omnipresent in postwar popular culture. A belief that society will disintegrate is a common concern in times of flux and upheaval, and this was certainly true of 1950s America. This fear was rooted primarily in a distrust of science, a clash between liberalism and conservatism, and a shifting racial order for white America. Horror and science fiction tapped into the fear of societal collapse in order to translate and channel this fear across multiple mediums.

Text to accompany the picture of the Hollywood 10:

The Hollywood 10 were ten film professionals that were suspected of communist activity during the McCarthy era. They were famously brought before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) and most of them refused to talk. This confrontation represents the sort of clash between liberalism and conservatism that was so distressing to many Americans.

Text to accompany the article on the Greensboro sit-ins:

The Greensboro Sit-ins were a series of non-violent protest in North Carolina that challenged racial segregation in the South, primarily at Woolworth's department store. They were a part of the greater Civil Rights Movement that had been simmering in the

American consciousness throughout the decade. The creation of new rights for minorities was treated with fear and paranoia by many in white America, further reflecting a belief in imminent societal collapse.

3.2 Nuclear Fallout Shelter

Text to accompany the recreated fallout shelter:

As the tension of the Cold War continued into the 1950s, fear of a nuclear attack grew and fallout shelters became increasingly popular in American homes. This fallout shelter was known as a Basement Concrete Block Shelter and was one of the more cost effective options. It was a do-it-yourself project that was built in basements around the country, costing between \$150 and \$200. Fallout shelters reflected a need for safety not just from a bomb, but also from society at large as it continued to change and deteriorate.

Text to accompany the “Stock Your Fallout Shelter” exhibit:

What would you need in your bomb shelter? After spending money on the materials for the shelter, some families would not have the additional funds to purchase every item that was recommended for the shelter. The list given here shows some of the items deemed necessary to build the shelter, ranging from pocket knives to special food to amusement for children. Using only \$25, what would you put in your shelter?

3.3 Giant Monster Movies and *Them!*

Text to accompany the monitor with clip from *Them!*:

Them! directed by Gordon Douglas (1954)

As one of the first “big monster” films of the 1950s, *Them!* epitomizes many of the themes common in such movies. *Them!* follows a group of entomologists and military professionals who must eradicate a swarm of giant, mutated ants. The ants were mutated by nuclear testing in New Mexico, but their exact nature is never entirely understood. They are framed as the monstrous result of scientific advancements of the atomic age that have moved beyond what anyone could predict.

Text to accompany original review from *The New York Times*:

The review reveals the very positive impression the film received upon its initial release, as well as what truly frightened viewers at the time. The reviewer points out that the atomic age has “opened new doors,” and it is the unpredictability of what has been created, and what will necessarily be destroyed, that will terrify viewers. The review also refers to the idea of giant, mutated ants as a potential reality, using phrases such as “scientific observation” and “seemingly factual.”

Group label to accompany the monster magazines:

Giant monster movies such as *Them!* proved to be extremely popular throughout the period, especially among adolescents. Their popularity led to the rise of such tie-in material as monster magazines. These magazines took on various forms, but usually focused on comics and articles depicting either original monsters or monsters derived

directly from films. They display many of the same fears of societal collapse due to the unknown effects of science.

3.4 Invasion of the Body Snatchers

Text to accompany the monitor with clips of the film:

Invasion of the Body Snatchers directed by Dan Siegel (1956)

Invasion of the Body Snatchers tells the story of a small California town haunted by a mysterious force that was eventually revealed to be alien invaders. These aliens replace the human residents with exact duplicates grown in pods, creating a sense of paranoia that eventually destroys the town. Though many have argued that the film is an allegory for communism, McCarthyism, or even divisive politics, the key fear being explored is societal collapse from within. Enemies cannot be separated from friends, just as internal debates continued to tear the United States apart.

3.5 The Twilight Zone: “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street”

Text to accompany the monitor showing clips of the episode:

“The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street” was one of the most creatively terrifying episodes of *The Twilight Zone* as the horror does not derive from any supernatural force. The residents of Maple Street see something that resembles an alien spacecraft fly overhead, followed almost immediately by a loss of power. As the situation deteriorates, various neighbors are accused of being in league with the aliens, leading to a witch hunt.

The paranoia this creates leads to mass murder and a complete breakdown of civility.

The final shots of the episode reveal aliens observing the scene, commenting on how easy it is to let humans conquer themselves.

Text to accompany the newspaper article on lynchings:

Rod Serling was concerned with race relations in the United States throughout his career, and “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street” was probably using a fear of societal collapse to comment upon the nation’s disunity. In this article from the *Los Angeles Times* in 1959, a group of lynchers are referred to as “raiders” rather than “murderers.” Serling was concerned with the ways neighbors could turn on one another, especially with lynchings.

A quote from the episode:

“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 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.”

3.6 Isaac Asimov and “The Martian Way”

“The Martian Way” by Isaac Asimov (1952)

This novella was originally published in the magazine *Galaxy Science Fiction* but would come to be one of Asimov's most reprinted stories throughout the decade. It tells the tale of Mars-born humans and the constant conflict they face with the humans living on Earth. This conflict reaches its dramatic apex when a radical Earth politician refuses to send water to Mars, arguing that Mars-humans have become a drain on real Earth-humans. However, the Mar-humans fight back and discover their own source of water, forever separating them from Earth's control. Asimov ends the story by explaining that it will be these humans, on the fringes of society, that will go on to explore the mysteries of the galaxy.

Quote from Asimov concerning the story:

“‘The Martian Way’ represents my reaction to the McCarthy era, a time, in the early fifties, when Americans seemed to abandon their own history and become, in some cases, witch-hunters; in some cases, victims; and in most cases, cowards.”

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