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Sign-Posts Up Ahead: *The Twilight Zone, The Outer Limits*, and TV Political Fantasy 1959-1965

Numerous commentators seem to agree on at least two propositions about science-fiction cinema. First, though the literary form has been around in some way or another for decades (even centuries), as a viable American movie genre science fiction was virtually born in the 1950s. Second, concomitant with the historical period of its ascendance, the genre was suffused with anxiety about The Bomb, alien Others, de-humanization, technology, invasion—in short, issues of the Cold War. Key movies in this regard include *The Thing* (1951), *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (1951), *War of the Worlds* (1953), and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), the last one regularly singled out as the preeminent '50s sci-fi movie that's really "about" the Cold War. Susan Sontag outlined these implications of the genre in her seminal 1965 essay, "The Imagination of Disaster," and the theme has since been amplified by critics including Peter Biskind, Carlos Clarens, Nora Sayre, Vivian Sobchak, and many others. The critical paradigm, "'50s Science Fiction Movies Yield Cold War Paranoia", has become so pervasive, the analysis could become the acknowledged basis for jokes between pompous intellectual Frazier and plebeian movie buffs Cliff and Norm in an episode of NBC's popular sitcom *Cheers* in the late 1980s.

While science fiction is by no means reducible to Cold War allegory, such tensions were manifested in films of the post-war era because the genre usually carries pointedly social reference and political inference. Though science fiction is often discussed in relation to the horror genre, a key difference between the two, according to Sontag and Vivian Sobchak, is both the site and the scale of the threat. In horror stories, the problem is acutely personal and individual, whereas science fiction is usually concerned with *social* dilemmas that escalate rapidly from the local to the cosmic.[1] Genre analyst Barry K. Grant concurs, arguing that science fiction revolves around three axes—technology, power, and society (Grant 79). As such, science fiction's allegorical bent assures that contemporary anxieties, whatever form they may assume, are likely subjects for treatment e.g., *The World, The Flesh, and The Devil* (1959) is as much about American racial tensions in the Civil Rights era as it is a post-Armageddon fantasy.

Proponents of literary science fiction especially proclaim it to be foremost a literature of ideas, and it is at this juncture that the often transparent social implication of the genre, deliberate or otherwise, appears. Rod Serling's *The*

Twilight Zone (CBS, 1959-64) and *The Outer Limits* (ABC, 1963-65), two well-remembered TV science fiction/fantasy anthology programs of the early 1960s, make a number of intriguing connections both historically and politically between television's first and second decades, while illuminating as well an era of Cold War confrontation and crises including the crucial years of progressive American immersion in Vietnam. Setting aside debates on the differences between science fiction and horror, we can observe that both *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits* were generally intended to frighten.[2] Because of the complex psychological and ideological ramifications inherent in tales of terror, it is instructive to consider what we find frightening in given periods as indicated by the definition, formal treatment, and resolution of social crises and threats in certain popular texts.[3] Though hardly at issue in every segment, many *Twilight Zone* and *Outer Limits* episodes exude the dominant political ideals and broad social anxieties of their time, reverberating Cold War America in the Kennedy era, and it is to these we will turn our attention.

As examples of a literature of ideas, television science fiction in the 1950s was particularly impoverished by the medium's basic conservatism and a repressive political climate that obstructed presentation of any ideas outside the commonplace. Broadcasting historian Erik Barnouw has stressed the importance of grasping the close relationship between the beginning of national television broadcasting and the timorous and fearful early years of the Cold War. Since broadcasters well understood the conjunction between political safety and economic security, the Red scare cast a pall over the medium that lasted for decades. (Barnouw 44-55). Then too, early TV science fiction programs such as *Captain Video and His Video Rangers* (1949-55), and *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet* (1950-55), reflecting the prevailing cultural opinion of the genre, were primarily aimed at children, and were usually no more than the good guy/bad guy adventure tales in exotic locales that characterized movie matinee serials of the past.[4] *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits*, however were aimed at a broader, more adult audience. Rod Serling's considerable professional stature as a writer-producer in "The Golden Age of Television" predisposed *Twilight Zone*'s reception as a "prestige "program.

1. *The Twilight Zone.* Whatever the topic of a given story, *The Twilight Zone* was overtly didactic. Serling's cryptic on-camera introductions of every segment were integral to the style of show. He also supplied verbal commentary at the conclusion of each episode, remarks that summarized the lessons to be taken from the story we are often encouraged to regard as a parable. His physical presence in each episode as the omniscient narrator—with an eerie ubiquity that usually finds him standing casually within the story's fictional setting—is a powerful determinant of how one should interpret the tale. Rod's all-knowing grin connotes the sage who comprehends more than the viewer but is willing to impart his wisdom to us if we will only listen and observe.

Most *Twilight Zone* episodes build to a twist ending in the manner of O. Henry, or perhaps given its supernatural premise, we might think more appropriately of the famous horror tale, "The Monkey's Paw," with its emphases

on human failure, limitations, and the intercession of fate. The twist ending of a *Twilight Zone* political parable, however, was often a lesson in New Frontier-era liberalism. Historians of Hollywood's anti-communist blacklist period concur that Kennedy's election helped finish this shameful practice. (Ceplair and Englund 418-21; Navasky 326-29). Yet as Barnouw argues, its scars hardly disappeared overnight. Two years before an Emmy-winning segment of CBS's realist courtroom drama *The Defenders* involved its heroes in defense of a blacklist victim ("Blacklist", originally aired 1/18/64), *The Twilight Zone* offered a weird anti-blacklist allegory scripted by Serling called "Four O'Clock" (originally aired 4/6/62). Such a parable would have been unthinkable on the medium just a few years before, which suggests not only an easing of restrictions on television content in the early '60s but a confluence of ideological interests between the domestic political agenda of the New Frontier and the social fables of *The Twilight Zone*.[5] Since we know the importance the Kennedy administration attached to television in various ways, it's worth noting that *The Twilight Zone* was one of the few programs specifically singled-out for praise by newly-appointed FCC Chairman Newton Minow in his May 1961 address to the National Association of Broadcasters, just prior to uttering the famous phrase "vast wasteland" (Minow 51-52).[6]

In "Four O'Clock" Theodore Bikel plays Oliver Crangle, a political bigot obsessed with purity and conformity who collects data on supposed subversives, then places threatening, anonymous calls to their employers ordering that the accused be fired. The vainglorious Crangle announces that through supernatural means he will shrink every "evil" person in the world to a height of two feet at a specified time, so they may be readily identified. Yet at the appointed hour, it is Crangle who abruptly contracts. The satisfied tones of Serling's closing commentary speak of "'F,' for fanatic and 'J', for justice" emanating from *The Twilight Zone*. "Four O'Clock "was less a major breakthrough than a subtle indicator of change. Indeed, it's likely the anti-blacklist subtext was more reverberant within the industry itself than the public at large. Apart from the usual complaint of too little, too late, the tale's main didactic failure lies in its implication that the red-baiters were a few individual cranks ("Crangles" making "crank calls") rather than high-placed and powerful members of the governmental and corporate establishment. Still, though the specific political views of Mr Crangle or his victims are never articulated, many would have ascertained Serling's anti-McCarthyite stance.[7]

"Eye of the Beholder" (originally aired 11/11/60) was a more subtle political allegory. The story is laid in a futuristic society where a young woman so congenitally deformed "normal" people cannot stand the sight of her seeks to have her face surgically corrected. We see her swathed in bandages until the end when we discover she is very beautiful and the doctors and nurses are monstrous beings with misshapen, pig-like faces. The story's hospital setting, rendered in shadowy, expressionistic *mise-en-scene* not only hides the punchline but provides a sense of noir menace that subtly condemns the society portrayed (we overhear a fascistic TV harangue celebrating individual fulfillment as conformity to the state) well before the viewer gains com-

plete knowledge. With its theme of bodily identity in conflict with dominant social standards of beauty, the story might be taken as a closeted meditation on racial prejudice, the most important domestic political issue of the early '60s, and one that several *Twilight Zone* scripts directly evoked.[8]

Yet the combination of stories told through a fantasy framework heavily dependent upon a moral universe of poetic justice and human helplessness before the hands of fate often clashed with the optimism of reformist liberalism the show tacitly espoused. At least by implication, the fatalistic premise could undercut the liberal intentions of such tales, producing ideologically conflicted messages. At the end of "Eye of the Beholder," for example, when the operation fails, the woman leaves to seek refuge in a village of other "freaks" like herself, a tacit endorsement of social segregation which suggests she will really be happier among "her own kind." While the futuristic setting reinforces the social jeremiad, the denouement typifies the inadvertent equivocations these science-fiction parables could display.

Tightly scripted and visually engaging, "The Monsters Are Due On Maple Street" (3/4/60) epitomized *The Twilight Zone*'s often confused treatment of contemporary socio-political themes. A suburban neighborhood succumbs to paranoia when a series of inexplicable power failures and other phenomena afflict the area. Terrified, once-friendly neighbors transform into an ugly mob, irrationally suspecting each other to be seditious aliens in disguise; a boy who reads comic books and a man who likes to gaze at the stars are early suspects. At the height of their panic, one man shoots an approaching shadowy figure only to realize the dead man was also a neighbor. As Maple Street goes completely berserk, we cut away to a pair of aliens coldly surveying from a distance the spectacle they have been manipulating. As scouts from an alien race preparing to invade the earth, they are heartened by how easily humans turn on each other when confronted with the unfamiliar. Says Serling's closing voice-over:

> 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*.

Serling's script signals his intent to link domestic politics to the larger dangers of the Cold War through the explicit mention of bombs and fallout. The term "Cold War liberalism" would thus succinctly describe *The Twilight Zone*'s prevailing ideological underpinnings of which "Maple Street" seems emblematic.[9] Also referred to by some commentators as "liberal consensus politics," the dominant post-war paradigm as practiced by both Eisenhower and Kennedy, the ideology differed from Cold War conservatism mainly in locating the source of the mutually agreed-upon communist threat. For conservatives, the danger was internal, from home-grown communists, their sympathizers, and dupes; for Cold War liberals, Soviet Russian military power became the true and quite tangible peril. Some liberals argued in the '50s that

reactionary demagoguery was actually helping, not hindering, communism by sowing dissension and suspicion within the U.S. Accordingly, when the residents of Maple Street turn on each other, they are actually leaving the earth/America open to alien/Soviet attack.

If read like "Four O'Clock" as a protest against narrow-mindedness and poisonous fear of the unconventional, "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street" succeeds—until the twist ending.[10] The coda reveals Maple Street's fears to be anything but delusional: There *are* powerful enemies "out there"; they *are* out to get us. While the story appeals for social reform by condemning irrational fears and intolerance, the penultimate scene describes total social breakdown. Lit for night, the tale's final minutes convey a chaotic nightmare rendered with madly tilted camera angles, rapid cutting, and distorted close-ups of screaming faces in a stampeding frenzy of violence. Yet the terror of the mob contrasts sharply with the preternatural calm of their alien observers. The tale first conveys how an American community's pleasant veneer hides seething anxiety and hatred, with a disposition to abandon rationality—attitudes from which we should recoil—then pulls back to re-establish "normality" for the viewer as the Cold War status quo, the implacable enemy at our doorstep against whom we must unite before it's too late. If we don't stop them in Vietnam, or anywhere else, we'll have to fight them on Maple Street.

While such ideological evasions can be taken in retrospect as cultural traces of the actual domestic struggle over Cold War foreign policy, some *Twilight Zone* scripts convey orthodox Cold War propaganda. In "The Whole Truth" (1/20/61), a shady used car salesman trades for an old Model 'A' that exudes a strange power forcing its owner to tell the absolute truth at all times. Naturally this ruins his business until in a moment of patriotic inspiration the huckster hits upon an ideal way to solve his problem: he presents the car as a gift to a visiting Nikita Khrushchev, reasoning that the world will reap great benefit if the dastardly Premier is forced to tell the whole truth about Soviet communism. Although played as comedy, the sanctimonious finale is indistinguishable from official indoctrination.[11]

Yet in the era of "peaceful co-existence" punctuated by various freezes and thaws in the Cold War, *The Twilight Zone* also demonstrated a tempering of anti-communist rhetoric. For the most part, "The Mirror" (10/21/61) is a typically self-righteous anti-communist sermon in which Peter Falk portrays Ramos Clemente, a thinly-disguised rendering of Fidel Castro complete with fatigues, beard, and cigar. Before he is shot, the deposed strongman shows Clemente a magic mirror in which one can see the faces of potential assassins. Growing increasingly paranoid, Clemente begins seeing his trusted comrades in the mirror plotting against him, so one by one he kills them instead. Finally, alone and unhinged, the new autocrat sees an image of himself committing suicide, then actually carries it out. An old priest who enters and solemnly intones, "They never seem to learn!," makes *Sic semper tyrannis* the familiar moral of the story.

In some ways though, the script is less hard on Castro than a casual reading would suggest.[12] At their introduction, Clemente and his lieutenants are

portrayed as decent men who laugh easily and sincerely seek to change their nation for the benefit of the people—a fairly positive portrayal of Latin revolutionaries, airing in this case only six months after the Bay of Pigs debacle. Moreover, in describing Clemente in the introduction, Serling suggests that local conditions of oppression and poverty were the genesis of his revolution, not Moscow's global battle plan:

> This is the face of Ramos Clemente, a year ago a beardless, nameless worker of the dirt who plodded behind a mule, furrowing someone else's land. And he looked up at a hot Central American sun and he pledged the impossible. He made a vow that he would lead an avenging army against the tyranny that put an ache in his back and the anguish in his eyes...

"The Mirror" seems suffused, however, with the post-war American pessimism that any utopian "-ism" is doomed to costly failure; radicals may begin with the best ideals, but power corrupts inexorably.[13] Yet because Clemente and his followers are so sympathetically portrayed at first, there is a palpable sadness when the revolution turns repressive. We finally tend to pity rather than hate Clemente especially when we recall how Serling initially set the scene by describing his movement as popular and legitimate.

Cold War orthodoxy aside, a number of *Twilight Zone* scripts took a different tack, warning of the imminent possibility of earth's total destruction in a nuclear war. For over a decade before, little debate or questioning of America's holy right to the bomb had transpired in the media, and only rarely in popular entertainment. According to Susan Sontag's analysis, widespread fear of the bomb in the '50s was culturally sublimated in juvenile fodder about rampaging atomic mutants and giant irradiated bugs, a psychological and dramatic strategy evidently less tenable or necessary by the early 1960s. The threat of nuclear war or its awful aftermath figured prominently in at least six *Twilight Zone* scripts throughout the show's run.[14] Even before the narrowly avoided apocalypse of the Cuban Missile Crisis—a watershed event from a number of historical standpoints—the series implied that whatever the avowed stakes of the Cold War, the ultimate price might have to be paid for enlarging nuclear arsenals and ceaseless hostility between the superpowers. That the series could come forward several times to muse on the threat of nuclear cataclysm even in the era of backyard fallout shelters and duck and cover drills, suggests a gradual transition in public perceptions of the Cold War and the nuclear arms race, at least as reflected by what was becoming acceptable for mass entertainment.

The earliest of the Armageddon parables, "Time Enough At Last" (11/20/'59) is one of the series' most famous segments. Burgess Meredith plays a hen-pecked and harried bank clerk who, yearning only for books, spends his lunch hours reading in the bank vault. While he is closed in the vault one day, nuclear war devastates the earth. Meredith emerges first shocked, then pleased that at least there is "time enough at last" for endless reading. But as he sits amidst the ruins of a library happily salvaging books, he breaks his only pair of glasses. Serling's script and Meredith's performance wring much pathos and irony from this minuscule tragedy superimposed upon the monumental tragedy of the end of the world.

An entire American community facing the aftermath of nuclear war was the subject of "The Old Man In the Cave" (11/8/63), aired about a year after the Cuban crisis. In 1974 a ragged band has survived ten years after the bomb by following the counsel of "the Old Man," a wise but reclusive patriarch who lives in a cave and speaks only to Mr Goldsmith (John Anderson). The arrival of some renegade soldiers led by Major French (James Coburn) precipitates a crisis when he demands to confront the Old Man after Goldsmith reports their leader has warned some canned food is contaminated and must be destroyed. As Goldsmith and the Major vie for the group's allegiance, they go to the cave and discover the Old Man is really a computer. Urged on by French, the people destroy it, then riotously feast on the canned food. However, an epilog finds a saddened Goldsmith standing over the poisoned corpses of Major French and the townspeople.

Like many *Twilight Zone* stories, politically, "The Old Man In the Cave" can't quite decide what attitude to take toward its material. The choices for the people seem limited to two authoritarian figures. That Goldsmith seems meant to embody a positive alternative to French's cynicism scarcely disguises their individual sway over the ignorant masses, who initially obey Goldsmith, then quickly become tools of their own destruction wielded by the Major (Zicree 371). Complicating things further, Coburn's charismatic Major French is a far more compelling figure than the ascetic Goldsmith. Perhaps there is no correct response to the aftermath of nuclear war; the story proffers the antagonism between Goldsmith and the Major and its consequence as a microcosm of the hostility that has already ravaged the world. The script betrays an antimilitarist bent nonetheless. When Major French arrives claiming to represent legitimate Federal authority, there is room for the townspeople and the audience to disbelieve him, to decide in fact that he is an outlaw opportunist exploiting the weak. His expressed desire to "restore order and discipline" employs the watchwords of fascism. The suspicion with which the soldiers are initially greeted implies that those responsible for the holocaust are about to impose their destructiveness on an unwilling people once more, a fear borne out by the poisoning of the town after Major French revels in the attack on the Old Man.

A cautionary tale with a more hopeful resolution was offered in "Two" (9/15/61). Though they are never directly identified as such, Charles Bronson and Elizabeth Montgomery play, respectively, a surviving American and Soviet soldier in a ruined town after a World War III conventional battle.[15] Initially frightened and hostile, they gradually settle an uneasy truce. Predictably, they fall in love, yet in the end when they discard their weapons and uniforms for civilian clothes, we are to regard them as new Adam and Eve figures. Once more, the implication seems to be that Americans and Russians must solve their conflicts short of apocalyptic warfare. "Two" seems indicative of a tentative shift to the détente era. Telecast in September 1961, the story may be the earliest fictional TV statement of this kind.

Of several major events in Cold War history occurring over the time of *The Twilight Zone*'s original network run—including the 1960 downing of a U-

2 spy plane over Russia and the 1961 Berlin tensions—the horrifying Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 was surely the most profound. The near-nuclear confrontation provoked a world-wide terror. Ironically, Serling's weird creation was not part of America's TV entertainment that fall, having been put on hiatus to retool for an hour-long format. (Zicree 292-93). Speaking of the aftermath of the Soviet/American nuclear showdown, foreign policy historian Walter LaFeber succinctly observed that "...the effects...will ripple on at least through the lifetime of the generation that lived through those October days" (226). That the Cuban crisis' widespread terror could not be fully dissipated with the removal of Russian missiles themselves assured its immediate and continuing influence on popular culture.[16] One of the earliest episodes continued in the vein established by Serling's successful creation. While following stylistic and thematic precedents set by *The Twilight Zone*, its ABC rival *The Outer Limits* displayed a distinctive post-Missile Crisis sensibility that took the threat of nuclear destruction and a dawning fear of the military-industrial complex as its most persistent themes. Moreover, this transpired as the slide into the Southeast Asian quagmire was beginning, providing some of the earliest glimpses in mass entertainment of the conflict that would split American society for the next dozen years.

2. *The Outer Limits.* The creation of producer Leslie Stevens and writer Joseph Stefano, *The Outer Limits* premiered in fall 1963.[17] While it may have been partially inspired by the success of Rod Serling's brainchild, *The Outer Limits* established an immediate identity of its own. The ABC series was more firmly grounded in science fiction as opposed to the rotational blend of sf, horror, and fantasy *The Twilight Zone* offered, and was noted for a gallery of inventive alien creatures and special effects. Like its predecessor, *The Outer Limits* at its best was marked by strong writing, skillful direction, and close attention to visual style.

Even so, *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits* tap different sources of fear, immediately apparent in contrasting the opening images of each program. In the title sequence of *The Twilight Zone*, Serling's voice-over explains that we are "traveling through another dimension," whose star-lit space superimposed with Dali-esque, dream imagery—doors and windows opening and cracking apart, clocks running backwards, an ethereal eye blinking, a doll tumbling through the void—associates the "twilight zone" with the uncharted depths of the human mind. The Stevens/Stefano series opened with a disquieting whine on the soundtrack visually accompanied by an oscillating sine wave and simulated picture interference, followed by a robot-like voice (called "The Control Voice" by the producers), whose vaguely threatening address seemed to invert the fundamental viewer relationship to the medium. Accompanied by concomitant alterations of the video image (including the then-familiar Indian-head test pattern), The Voice intones:

> There is nothing wrong with your television set. Do not attempt to adjust the picture. We are controlling transmission. If we wish to make it louder, we will bring up the volume. If we wish to make it softer, we will tune it to a whisper. We will

> control the horizontal. We will control the vertical. We can roll the image; make it flutter. We can change the focus to a soft blur, or sharpen it to crystal clarity. For the next hour, sit quietly and we will control all that you see and hear. We repeat: There is nothing wrong with your television set. You are about to experience the awe and mystery that reaches from the inner mind to *The Outer Limits*.

Significantly, the initial anxiety aroused by *The Outer Limits* centers on *the television medium itself*. The disembodied Control Voice becomes a threatening presence from the outside world that forcibly seizes our television sets right in our homes where we though we were safe, and commands us in authoritarian fashion to "sit quietly and we will control all that you see and hear." Against commercial television's official doctrine of bottomless entertainment and endless freedom of choice in how we wish to be amused, The Voice's cold imperatives and demonstrable power imply surveillance, indoctrination, interrogation—the functions of mass media in a totalitarian state most obviously referential to Orwell's *1984*. Unlike every other television program, this one seems to be watching us.

The effectiveness of engaging television itself as a source of tension was intuited by creator Leslie Stevens from the beginning, as the show's original title was to be "Please Stand By." (Schow and Frentzen 7-9). In radio or TV broadcasting that phrase precedes a statement that our station is "experiencing technical difficulties," or that an important official announcement is forthcoming; both seem to occur when the Control Voice speaks to us. In this regard, we may recall the periodic television and radio tests of "The Emergency Broadcast System" (EBS), which, like the opening of *The Outer Limits*, begin with a strongly unsettling high-pitched whine. While the EBS has been used to inform people of natural disasters such as floods or tornado, its avowed purpose in the Cold War era was to dispense official information in the event of a "national emergency," a euphemism for the threat of nuclear attack.

Though several *Twilight Zone* scripts and feature films such as Stanley Kramer's *On The Beach* (1959) had imagined the aftermath of nuclear war, *The Outer Limits* commenced production soon after the Cuban crisis, a context that gave its apocalyptic tales a more than hypothetical edge.[18] Indeed, this connection was consciously recognized as the series began production in mid-1963:

> [ABC]...objected to *Please Stand By* as a title. It was still less than a year after the Cuban Missile Crisis, and they did not want the program's opening to be misconstrued as a bonafide emergency alert. Stevens took a cue from his Control Voice speech, briefly renaming his new show *Beyond Control*. (Schow and Frentzen 53)

While the series soon became *The Outer Limits*, the title change did not alter the unique audio-visual form of the program's opening which remained reminiscent of the Emergency Broadcast System tests and announcements with which Americans had become uneasily familiar. Established by President Truman at the behest of the Defense Department in October 1951, amidst fear that combat in Korea might escalate into a disastrous U.S./Soviet clash, the EBS was wholly a product of the Cold War.[19] Discussing national defense, the Federal Communications Commission's 1952 Annual Report bluntly began:

"An efficient communications system is invaluable in time of peace but is vital in time of hot or cold war" (FCC Annual Report FY 1952, 27). Indeed, the level of national nuclear anxiety and heightened awareness of the Emergency Broadcast System in the years preceding the Missile Crisis are indicated by a series of thirty-minute nationwide alert tests, mandatory for all broadcasting stations, conducted annually from 1959-61. President Kennedy spoke on the air during the 1961 test declaring in the starkest terms that the EBS was "vital for our national defense," and the cooperation of private broadcasters "...essential to the survival of this Nation." (FCC Annual Report FY 1961, 31). In this context, *The Outer Limits*' distinctive opening sequence shrewdly invoked a reality both quotidian and alarming.

"The Architects of Fear" (9/30/63), aired less than a year after the Cuban crisis, begins with shots of panicked urban crowds fleeing an impending nuclear detonation as the Control Voice asks in funereal tones:

> Is this the day? Is this the beginning of the end? There is no time to wonder, no time to ask, 'Why is it happening, why is it finally happening?' There is time only for fear, for the piercing pain of panic. Do we pray? Or do we merely run now, and pray later? Will there be a later? Or is this the day?

The eponymous architects are a group of idealistic scientists who hope to scare the nations of the world into peaceful co-existence by surgically producing a threatening "alien" being against whom people will unite. Scientist Robert Culp voluntarily undergoes painful procedures to become the pseudo-alien, only to have the scheme fail when the "Thetan" is mortally wounded by frightened hunters. The chief scientist then pledges that to make Culp's sacrifice meaningful, all must work openly and directly for solutions to the nuclear quandary. The fanciful alien aside, the segment's opening images of mass panic in the face of nuclear annihilation invoked a chilling possibility of recent collective dread.

The fear broached by *The Outer Limits* was timely in other ways as well. By 1963 television had become a permanent fixture of American domestic life, and was becoming central to cultural and political life as well. Yet if by this time the medium had become our "window on the world," various events quite literally brought home to us that threatening "things" from outside could reach us with ease through this very same portal. Indeed, this is precisely what occurs in the *Outer Limits* pilot segment, "The Galaxy Being" (9/16/63), when an alien is inadvertently drawn to earth through a scientist's TV-like electronic gear. The fall 1963 premiere of *The Outer Limits* coincided with other important media developments with important consequences for the remainder of the decade. In early September, the networks expanded their evening newscasts from fifteen to thirty minutes, and about this same time, established permanent TV news bureaus in Saigon (Hallin 105). And there was more to come.

The assassination of John F. Kennedy and the related events televised over the next few days are often cited as the moment the medium reached maturity, making the murder and funeral of the President a collective and immediate experience for the entire nation. David Marc says of the Kennedy assassination:

> Its status as the heaviest event that had happened to America since Pearl Harbor was secured by the fact that it precipitated the extended suspension of all regular network programming. The relentless representationalism of daily transcontinental TV ceased for the first time since the medium had achieved ubiquity. Furthermore, it remained unclear for days as to when or even whether traditional proscenium distance would be reestablished.[20]

In this light, at the conclusion of each *Outer Limits* tale, the piercing audio whine sounded again as the Voice explained, "We now return control of your television to you, until next week at this same time, when the Control Voice will take you to the *Outer Limits*." These framing remarks played on the increasingly acknowledged tension between television as a fount of pleasurable entertainment as well as the source of news of potentially calamitous developments in the real world from the threat of nuclear war to the murder of the President, exploiting the viewers' knowledge that at any moment the permeable line between distraction and disaster could be crossed by another common broadcasting phrase, "We interrupt this program for a special report——."

The mortal danger of scientific knowledge out-pacing human wisdom was an insistent theme of many *Outer Limits* scripts such as "The Man With The Power" (10/7/63), an sf variation on *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, complete with the psycho-sexual undertones. The tale concerns Harold J. Finley (Donald Pleasance), a meek college professor who, with the aid of an electronic implant in his head, is able to tap heretofore unknown mental energy. But since science has raised the stakes enormously since the Victorian days of Dr Jekyll, the combination of advanced technology and Finley's unleashed libido produces a fearsome energy cloud that incinerates anyone who stands in his way. Realizing the implications of such capability, he commits suicide to prevent the destruction of the world. Finley's annihilating power manifested in the form of a cloud again connotes nuclear devastation.

"The Man With the Power" illustrates a recurrent pattern in *The Outer Limits*, stories structured around scientists, aliens (or here, malevolent unknown forces), and the military-industrial complex. Sometimes the aliens were traditionally threatening creatures bent on invasion. More often, Big Science allied with the military establishment became the chief threat. Government or quasi-governmental think-tanks, research institutes, and laboratories appear often in *The Outer Limits*, while soldiers and Federal agents hover round the scientists. A foreboding corporation called NORCO creates a malevolent energy that incubates within a household vacuum cleaner in "It Crawled Out of the Woodwork"; hardly experiencing a crisis of conscience, a defense industry researcher in "Keeper of the Purple Twilight" is driven to the verge of suicide by his inability to perfect an "antimagnetic disintegrator." The potential value of defense research seems clear in stories where luckless humans are threatened with or subjected to tortuous alien science, as indicated simply by their titles: "The Mice," "Controlled Experiment," and "A Feasibility Study." Yet most *Outer Limits* scripts involving scientists as protagonists are pervaded by ambivalence and antagonism. Indeed, about half of all episodes might be collected under the heading "The Military-Industrial Complex

and Its Discontents," for tales in which merging scientific and military experimentation transforms laboratory personnel into rampaging monsters or research teams release uncontrollably destructive forces (e.g., "The Brain of Colonel Barham," "Expanding Human"). These themes combine in "The Human Factor" (11/11/63), set at a polar Distant Early Warning station, which involves human consciousness transfers and a lunatic officer bent on launching nuclear weapons.

In "Nightmare" (12/2/63), set in the near future, Earth has united after a devastating nuclear attack from planet Ebon. When the story opens, six soldiers of "Unified Earth" are rocketing to attack Ebon but are captured by the bird-like humanoids. The drama depicts their struggle to survive in the alien prison camp and not break under physical and psychological torture orchestrated to make them suspect each other of collaboration. Yet after one man dies and another is driven insane, they discover the entire ordeal was manipulated by Earth's military leaders. Wracked by guilt over what proves an accidental attack on earth, the Ebonites have reluctantly agreed to help the generals study how soldiers behave in captivity, yet finally balk at sadistic treatment the aliens themselves call "inhuman." Learning the truth, a prisoner turns from throttling an Ebonite guard and shoots one of the generals instead.

"Nightmare" initially shapes up as a standard Cold War propaganda lesson with the cruel Ebonites easily substituted for sadistic Reds. Produced in 1963, the story cannot conceive a truly international force fighting for Unified Earth as Russians are nowhere in evidence. The six soldiers include two Americans, a Briton, a German, a black man from the nation of "Free Africa," and a Chinese whose political affiliation is curiously undisclosed. The lack of identifiable communist bloc troops is not too surprising and could lead to the conclusion they are "really" the Ebonites. The story also contains several direct references to the Korean War, which even in this science-fiction setting plays off audience awareness of the abuse and brainwashing of American POWs in that conflict, a matter of considerable anxiety for Americans afterward.

However, the twist ending provides a very different interpretation that emerges as a strong critique of Cold War orthodoxy. Despite the futuristic trappings, the Commanding General (Whit Bissel, who made a career playing smarmy officials and mad scientists) speaks in the Manichean language of the contemporary Cold War as he angrily rationalizes the experiment:

> It's a matter of shameful record that in the Korean War no prisoner successfully escaped. There was no organized resistance: one out of every group of ten prisoners was an informer. Thirty-eight per cent of our prisoners died. Many of what the psychologists call 'psychological surrender.'

The generals of Unified Earth have clearly lost touch with ethical issues of ends and means. Using the Ebonite ability to read minds and project illusions, the commanders do not hesitate to torture the guilt-stricken German soldier, Lt. Krug, with knowledge that he turned in his Jewish grandfather to the Nazis —in effect employing fascist techniques themselves. Senator Barry Goldwater would declare publicly a few months after the telecast of this story that "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice." Yet since our sympathy and

identification is with the helpless soldiers from the beginning, the tale discourages acceptance of such sentiments.

In "Nightmare"'s opening sequence, as we watch a nuclear detonation, the Control Voice declares, "To the eternal credit of the peoples of this planet Earth, history shall be able to proclaim loudly and justly that in this war between Unified Earth and the planet Ebon—Ebon struck first." This sci-fi replay of the attack on Pearl Harbor, for which our peace-loving nation can claim "eternal credit" for not initiating war, is counter-pointed near the end by the words of the Commanding General, who speaks of a "shameful record" in reference to American POW performance in Korea.[20] We realize in retrospect that the Control Voice spoke duplicitously in the opening, setting up the Ebonites as an aggressive enemy, which forces us to re-examine the notion of our "eternal credit." When science fiction imagines the future convincingly, we call it prophetic; had we been able to interpret it correctly at the time, the lie that "Ebon struck first" might have sounded an alarm. Less than a year before the fact, "Nightmare" gave us fair warning of a Tonkin Gulf Incident in outer space manipulated by a deceitful government.

The distanced science-fiction trappings of "Nightmare" proved to be more conducive to a critique of dominant ideology than the show's more direct treatment of contemporary geo-politics in "The Hundred Days of The Dragon" (9/23/63), a tale shot though with Cold War clichés. The plot owes a debt to John Frankenheimer's political thriller *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), which like this story hinges on an Asian communist plot to subvert an American presidential campaign. Employing a strange new "molecular rearrangement" technology to alter the shape of the human face, Li Chin-Sung (Richard Loo), an Asian despot, transforms a highly trained agent into an exact duplicate of William Lyons Selby (Sidney Blackmer), the soon-to-be President of the United States. After Selby is murdered and replaced and the impostor elected, he immediately stuns anxious Vice President Pearson (Phillip Pine) by inviting Sung to Washington and offering to negotiate an American troop withdrawal from the contested "Ling Valley." The dictator and his lackey are formulating plans to replace other key American leaders when the Vice President publicly unmasks the scheme.

"The Hundred Days of The Dragon" reveals the evolution of American containment rhetoric in the early '60s that increasingly identified Asian communism as the principal threat to American security. As the opening narration explains:

> Somewhere south of the Mongolian border and north of the Tropic of Cancer, in that part of the world we call the Orient, a slumbering giant has shaken itself to wakefulness. Passed over in most histories as a nation forgotten by time, its close-packed millions, in the short span of twenty years, have been stirred to a fury by one man—Li Chin-Sung. A benevolent despot in his homeland, Sung stands as an irresponsible threat to peace in the eyes of the rest of the world.

Sung's country is glimpsed only as a corridor and the laboratory where the experiment is first demonstrated, yet it is visually quite memorable—the bright sterility of modern research overlaid with twisted, expressionistic shadows and

oblique bars of darkness and light. Formally, science fiction and the horror film meet in perfect union. Director Byron Haskin, who began his career as a cameraman in the silent days, achieved an eerie effect in a simple way: the nighttime shadows of gently swaying tree branches play across the laboratory, adding a subtle, pulsing menace to the proceedings. The *mise-en-scene* subtly conjures teeming jungles just outside the modern laboratory, marking Sung's nation as both ancient and imminent in its threat to the West. In just a few minutes, the sequence encapsulates almost every racist stereotype of the Yellow Peril, from the god-like ruler and his obedient minions bent on domination of the West to the "evil genius" inventor in the mold of Dr Fu Manchu. Then too, the uniforms and emblems worn by Sung and his military attendants resemble Imperial Japanese regalia from World War II.[21]

In keeping with this other-worldly setting, Asians become irreconcilable Others, the episode's virtual substitutes for the usual weirdo aliens. As Sung keenly observes the transformation of his agent into Selby, the dictator's face is almost blacked out, yet his eyes, pin-pointed with light, glow cat-like and menacing. This shot is complemented later by a low-light close-up of the fake "Selby" (Sidney Blackmer's eyes are made-up for the shot to suggest Asian features) looking singularly inscrutable, the hint of a cruel smile tugging his lips as he hears his opponent's concession speech. Both sequences are accompanied by ominous oriental music.

Sung's disciple who impersonates Selby is unsubtly named Major Ho Chi Wong; the "slumbering giant" spoken of in the introduction would seem to be all of once and future communist Asia. A monolithic communist conspiracy is presumed though it's hard to say whether Sung is supposed to represent Chairman Mao or Uncle Ho. The confusion may be the point. Ho Chi Minh was widely regarded by American leaders as little more than a Chinese puppet, hence in the terms of the story the entire nation of Vietnam is reduced to one obedient servant and the Ling Valley—just a bit of strategic real estate between the super-powers. And in this light, of course we know who's ultimately sponsoring the plot: as Selby's suspicious son-in-law informs Pearson matter-of-factly, "The Russians have been conducting experiments in molecular rearrangement in living organisms for some time."

Science fiction aside, the bedrock premise of "The Hundred Days" is American globalism as the only response to an expansionist communist threat that, as in this story, can take many disguises. The domino theory is assumed: should America concede just one seemingly insignificant valley, the Reds are in Kansas. To accomplish his design, Sung must get rid of the real Selby, a Goldwater-like conservative unwilling to trust our enemies for an instant. Indeed, what first alerts the Vice President is Selby's abrupt conversion from unbending Cold Warrior into squishy liberal appeaser.[22] Chinese perfidy is assumed, thus American withdrawal from Asia is unthinkable, as Pearson explains in a condescending lecture to a wife who obviously doesn't understand the first thing about the geo-political balance:

> Wife: "Suppose both sides do pull out—no armies, no wars."
> Pearson: "Oh, Ann! Look, if Sung pulls out, he moves back across the border, five-hundred miles; if we pull out we come home—five-thousand miles. And

in a day, a week, or a month later, Sung sweeps back into the Valley and there's nothing to stop him."

Fortunately for Sung (and his "close-packed millions"), once Pearson becomes the Chief Executive, he is a model of level-headed restraint. With the plot foiled, the President is informed that SAC awaits his word to obliterate Sung's country. "There will be no order," Pearson says grimly. Clearly this is a man who understands the perils of the nuclear age, so Sung's people aren't headed for the Stone Age, at least not yet. But you can rest assured our boys definitely won't be pulled out of that vital Ling Valley now either.

The Outer Limits returned to a thinly-disguised Vietnam a year later in a two-part story called "The Inheritors" (11/21 and 11/28/64). In southeast Asia, four American soldiers suffer serious head wounds after being shot with bullets molded from metals in an asteroid found in the "Hui Tan province." Miraculously all survive, yet their brain-wave patterns now reveal the presence of an outside controlling force. Mentally elevated to super-geniuses, the soldiers work obsessively on an enigmatic project directed by aliens. The four are tracked by Adam Ballard (Robert Duvall), a wary Federal agent who eventually learns the aliens are planning to remove a number of handicapped children from Earth in a spaceship the soldiers have built. Ballard works to stop them, until the aliens are revealed as compassionate beings who heal the children and voluntarily take them and the soldiers to help re-populate the dying alien planet.

Only two sequences of "The Inheritors" take place in the unnamed Asian country that would have been apparent to contemporary audiences as Vietnam, yet what they depict is striking: American soldiers in combat. The story opens with images of battle where we see Lt Minns (Steve Inhat) felled by a sniper while directing artillery fire. A later sequence involves an in-country visit by Adam Ballard, whence we perceive the war is being well-managed by our local allies aided by such American "advisers." James Shigeta appears in a small role as Capt Ngo, a canny South Vietnamese officer who exudes competence and resolve along with his perfect English.

The original run of *The Outer Limits* was thus framed by oblique yet provocative images of the Vietnam War, which marked a period of crucial decisions leading to major American involvement. "The Hundred Days of the Dragon" identified the east/west face-off in Asia as central to American interests, and implicated China as the leading danger to world peace. Yet the time that elapsed between the telecasts of "The Hundred Days" and "The Inheritors," little more than a year, saw a substantial change in the actual American relationship to Vietnam. In the earlier show, we're steadfastly pledging American resolve to maintain a balance of power in southeast Asia; the Ling Valley is discussed, though never seen. A year later, after the Diem coup (Nov. 1-2, 1963) and the Tonkin Gulf Resolution (August 6, 1964), we're in a shooting war, which could be observed in both nightly news and, fleetingly, prime-time entertainment. There were more than fifteen thousand American advisers in South Vietnam that fall, some now openly undertaking combat missions against the Viet Cong (Karnow 681). On *The Outer Limits* in late fall 1964, we see American soldiers like Lt Minns fighting and dying

in jungle combat, while government bureaucrats like Adam Ballard tacitly direct the war, evidenced by a scene in which deferential "southern" soldiers capture and hold a "northern" guerrilla for Ballard to interrogate. After this, however, fictional representations of Vietnam in prime time virtually disappeared for roughly the next four years, even as the war overflowed American consciousness.

The Twilight Zone was actually one of the first TV entertainment programs to mention directly the most profound American obsession of the decade.[23] "In Praise of Pip" (9/27/63) opens with an American youth near death in a military hospital in a country that a title actually identifies as South Vietnam. Jack Klugman portrays a petty bookie who learns his son Pip has been wounded in action and is not expected to live. Saddened that he has not been a better father, Klugman takes pity on a gambler who owes money and is shot by his boss in revenge. Taking refuge in an abandoned amusement park, he apparently encounters Pip at age ten, and they profess their love for each other. Klugman pleads for God to trade his life for Pip's and the wish is granted. The epilog finds a convalescent Pip in army uniform memorializing his father at the park.

Asked at a press conference in January 1962 whether American troops were fighting in Vietnam, President Kennedy simply replied "No" before taking another question (Karnow 259). Rod Serling seemed to know better. When Klugman learns his son has been wounded he groans: "'Pip is dying. My kid is dying. In a place called South Vietnam. There isn't even supposed to be a war going on there, but my son is dying.'"

Both *The Twilight Zone*'s "In Praise of Pip" and *Outer Limits*' "The Inheritors" affirm and deny what lay in store for American soldiers over the next decade. Pvt Pip and Lt Minns are mortally wounded in combat yet miraculously reprieved by divine intervention. The stories admit the costs Americans would have to pay, then immediately disavow them while moving on to other concerns and trusting higher powers to deliver us from evil. Still, the on-screen "deaths" of Pip and Lt Minns are hard to shake, since they occur in a war that seems to have no real stakes for the society back home, where both stories are primarily set, and where life goes on as usual. Because we see Pip mostly as an innocent child, his death in a place where "there isn't even supposed to be a war" seems especially empty. In retrospect, perhaps no other popular television programming of this period so clearly indicates the cracks beginning to open in the Cold War consensus as certain eerie forays into *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits*, outings pervaded by sadness, ambivalence, and unresolved political and moral confusion. As expressions of contemporary fears as well as aspirations in a crucial period of our history, the titles of these two memorable programs seem more evocative than their creators realized.

NOTES

1. "The horror film is primarily concerned with the individual in conflict with society or with some extension of himself, the sf film with society and its institutions in conflict with each other or with some alien other." (Sobchak 29-30).

2. Leslie Stevens' writers' guide for *The Outer Limits* was unequivocal on this point. Under the heading "Story Requirements" Stevens declared: "There must be terror. The viewer must know the delicious and consciously desired element of terror." (Schow and Frentzen 370).

3. Thorough consideration is given to this theoretical issue in, for example Robin Wood's *Hollywood From Vietnam to Reagan* and by the authors collected in Gregory A. Waller's *American Horrors: Essays on the Modern American Horror Film.*

4. This is not to say they were free of political implication, however. J. Fred MacDonald argues that these apparently innocent children's science fiction shows "...plunged American youngsters directly into the political and philosophical struggles of the Cold War...The contemporary political relevance of such programming was explicit in the oaths of allegiance associated with many shows" (123-24).

5. Another factor that influenced TV content at this point was the economic rearrangement of the broadcasting industry occasioned by the transition from sponsor to network control of programming production. The networks had used the quiz show scandals of 1958-59 as a wedge to take complete control of programming from sponsors and their ad agencies. See Boddy, "Entering *The Twilight Zone*," for a thorough overview of these historical currents within the industry. Boddy sees Serling's creation as a particularly cogent example of the transition from the 1950s style of TV programming to that of the 1960s.

6. See Mary Ann Watson's *Expanding Vistas* for an excellent comprehensive history of television in the Kennedy era.

7. Though he was never blacklisted himself, Theodore Bikel was an interesting casting choice for the Crangle role as he was also a folk singer in the 1950s when radical folkies like Peter Seeger, with whom Bikel had been associated, were hauled up before HUAC and barred from mass media appearances. The far Right considered all folk-singing subversive. Interestingly, a year after his *Twilight Zone* appearance, Bikel was involved in a controversy within the folk music circle for singing on ABC's *Hootenanny* show. Pete Seeger was essentially blacklisted from TV since his uncooperative testimony before HUAC in 1955, and the urban folk community became divided over whether anyone should perform on the show unless Seeger could. For discussion of the controversy see Serge Dennisoff's *Great Day Coming: Folk Music and the American Left* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1971), 176-79, and David King Dunaway's *How Can I Keep From Singing: Pete Seeger* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), 213-17.

8. "The Big Tall Wish," a *Twilight Zone* segment with a predominantly black cast aired on April 8, 1960. Though the script had no direct reference to the Civil Rights issue as such, simply casting all-black speaking parts in a continuing network series amounted to both a conspicuous and rare decision at the time.

9. See Godfrey Hodgson, especially chapter four, "The Ideology of the Liberal Consensus," 68-98. The cultural inflection of pluralist ideology in post-war cinema is thoroughly surveyed in Peter Biskind's *Seeing Is Believing*.

10. In setting, style, and theme, there are suggestive comparisons between "Maple Street" and Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Both can be given to divergent political and historical interpretations. Samuels sees the Siegel film as an anti-McCarthy parable, while Biskind (137-44) argues for a far-right wing reading. This very indeterminacy may be at the root of the film's continuing interest, its stylistic panache aside.

11. Suppose Khrushchev passed the car along to Vice President Nixon during their next debate. Presumably Nixon would have immediately blurted out "I AM a crook!" and the course of history might have been changed here, too.

12. I am indebted here to Zicree's brief but insightful summaries of the Cold War subtexts of "The Mirror" (257-58) and "The Old Man in the Cave" (371).

13. Biskind (112-116) sees anti-utopianism as a crucial aspect of centrist Cold War pluralism, particularly in science fiction with its frequent settings in alternative societies of the future or as represented by alien cultures.

14. "Time Enough At Last" (11/20/59); "Third From the Sun" (1/8/60); "The Shelter" (9/29/61); "One More Pallbearer" (1/12/62); "The Old Man in the Cave" (11/8/63); "Probe Seven, Over and Out" (11/29/63).

15. In this nearly silent drama, Elizabeth Montgomery's only spoken word is "precrassny," the Russian word for "pretty." (Zicree 216).

16. Horror historian David J. Skal points out a grim irony in popular culture of the time: the number-one song played on radio during the thirteen dreadful days of the stand-off was Bobby "Boris" Pickett's "The Monster Mash," a novelty record featuring comic impersonations of Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi: "Throughout the Cuban nuclear threat, America's favorite pop song celebrated a mad scientist who presided over a dance of death" (279). See Skal, chapter 9, "The Graveyard Bash" 263-85 for a persuasive account linking the rise of post-war "monster culture" among children and adolescents with the nuclear threat generally and the Missile Crisis in particular.

17. See Schow and Frentzen for a detailed production history of *The Outer Limits*. The show's relationship to *The Twilight Zone* is discussed in the "Introduction" 1-4.

18. For history and commentary of nuclear war in fiction and documentary films see Jack G. Shaheen, ed. *Nuclear War Films* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1978). Apparently unaware of McCarthyism and the Hollywood blacklist, however, the various writers collected by Shaheen seem oblivious to why no nuclear war movies appeared between Arch Obler's *Five* (1951) and *On The Beach* (1959). For reasons that are not clear to me, 1959, however, became the year for renewed Hollywood depictions of the aftermath of nuclear war with *On the Beach*, *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil*, and *Twilight Zone*'s "Time Enough At Last." (Alain Resnais' heralded art house hit *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* also appeared that year.) McCarthy's 1955 censure by the Senate, the quickening erosion of the blacklist, and certain tentative relaxation of Cold War tensions in the "peaceful co-existence" period may have been factors (LaFeber 171-207).

19. The system's first version enacted in 1950 was called CONELRAD, an acronym for "Control of Electromagnetic Radiation," a plan worked out between the Department of Defense, the FCC, and private broadcasters to coordinate commercial broadcasting in the event of enemy attack, so that radio and TV station signals could not be unwittingly used to guide enemy bombers or missiles to civilian targets. Upon receiving a special emergency signal, some stations would leave the air while certain designated stations would continue broadcasting official information. From 1952 through 1967, the FCC's Annual Report to Congress contained an entire chapter headed "National Defense" that detailed the Commission's increasing involvement in the military and political affairs of the atomic age. By the late 1950s, CONELRAD, unofficially termed "the national emergency broadcast system," was increasingly used to warn of impending natural disasters and coordinate relief efforts, etc. CONELRAD was eventually declared obsolete and unnecessary and was terminated in August 1963 to be replaced by the new system now officially designated The Emergency Broadcast System (*FCC Annual Report* for FY 1952, 1958, 1963).

20. There's an inevitable charm to a science-fiction tale like "Nightmare" in which, within the same fictional time period, highly advanced spacecraft journey to remote alien planets while World War II and Korea are within living memory of the major characters. That most "futuristic" science fiction ages rather quickly at least provides a unique (if ironic) historical vantage into the contemporary values and beliefs of the time and place of its creation.

21. Aside from *The Manchurian Candidate*, there is also an interesting parallel to this story in an amazingly inept Monogram B-picture called *Black Dragons* (1942),

starring Bela Lugosi as a Nazi scientist aiding Japanese saboteurs in America by surgically disguising them as prominent American politicians and industrialists. Moreover, Chinese-American actor Richard Loo (Li Chin-Sung) thrived during World War II playing fanatical Japanese militarists and spies in movies such as *Bombs Over Burma* (1942), *The Purple Heart* (1944), and *Betrayal From the East* (1944).

For a sophisticated and illuminating discussion of American cultural images of Japan and China in the twentieth century and World War II particularly, see John W. Dower's *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War.* Dower argues that Sax Rohmer, author of the Fu Manchu novels "...succeeded...in drawing together in a flamboyant but concrete way the three main strands of an otherwise inchoate fear: Asian mastery of Western knowledge and technique; access to mysterious powers and 'obscure and dreadful things'; and mobilization of the yellow horde...Whether led by China or Japan, this was the essence of the Yellow Peril." (158-59). As "The Hundred Days of the Dragon" indicates, these tropes were clearly adaptable to Cold War culture as well.

22. Apparently having read all the appropriate John Birch Society pamphlets, the Reds clearly understand how to undermine America. In a private conversation with his agent in the Oval Office, Li Chin-Sung reveals plans to replace a steel magnate, the Secretary of Labor, the publisher of "The New York Chronicle," and (surely a little in-joke) the president of the Broadcasting Corporation of America (BCA). The bogus "Selby" nods confidently adding, "And not a single shot will have been fired."

23. Zicree 364. We can note as well, however, that in the fall of 1962, Glenn Corbett joined the cast of the continuing series *Route 66* (CBS, 1960-64), portraying Lincoln Case, an often troubled Green Beret veteran of an advisory tour in Vietnam. It's remarkable that nearly two years before the Tonkin Gulf resolution, perhaps our first fictional Vietnam veteran seemed palpably troubled by his experiences over there.

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ABSTRACT.

The historical and political implications of the science-fiction/fantasy anthology television series *The Twilight Zone* (1959-64) and *The Outer Limits* (1963-65) in the Kennedy era are considered. Science fiction is usually a politically reverberant genre, frequently given to social allegory. These two fondly remembered programs often presented speculative and unsettling political visions of American society. The article considers the issues, events, and ideology represented in these programs in the early 1960s as the nation gradually slid from global Cold War into a hot war in Vietnam. A marked transition in the portrayal of Cold War themes in popular culture from the 1950s to the 1960s is illustrated by segments of each show that explicitly take contemporary issues as their subjects. The episodes surveyed both build on themes from cinematic science fiction of the 1950s and depart from them in important ways. The programs' treatment of such themes, for example, the portrayal of the nuclear war threat before and after the Cuban Missile Crisis, yields historically intriguing equivocations and textual contradictions in sharp contrast to the categorical anti-communism of such McCarthy era programs as *I Led Three Lives* (1953-56). (RW)