

The Silence of Fallout:
Nuclear Criticism in a Post-Cold War World

Edited by

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CHAPTER THREE

QUEER TEMPORALITIES
OF THE NUCLEAR CONDITION

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When Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth* first appeared in 1982, its most talked-about passage was a graphic description of what would happen if a twenty-megaton bomb were detonated over the center of Manhattan. The ensuing account of how a full-scale nuclear change would likely extinguish humankind along with the majority of earth's species, leaving a "republic of insects and grass," completed the book's infernal vision. Largely owing to this vivid thought-experiment, Schell's book helped reenergize the anti-nuclear movement in the U.S., and its cautionary portrait of a dead, irradiated planet was absorbed into mass-culture such that, read now, it chastens but does not stun. But there *is* a still-astonishing moment in *The Fate of the Earth*. This occurs in a section called "The Second Death," where Schell adopts "the view of our children and grandchildren, and of all the future generations of mankind, stretching ahead of us in time." A nuclear extinction event, he argues, would wipe out not only the living but all of the unborn as well; this "second death" would be the death of a longitudinal, progenerative human future, the death of the supersession of generations and thus, as he puts it, "the death of death."² That we live in the shadow of the death of death, says Schell, is nowhere more apparent than in our growing ambivalence toward—and here is the surprise—*marriage*, an institution that consecrates a personal relationship by connecting it to the biological continuity of the species. "[By] swearing their love in public," he writes, "the lovers also let it be known that their union will be a fit one for bringing children into the world." In a world overshadowed by extinction, the biological future that endows love with social meaning begins to dematerialize, and love becomes, in response, "an ever more solitary affair: impersonal, detached, pornographic. It means something that we call both pornography and nuclear destruction 'obscene.'" Although Schell is not explicit about what

forms of sexual detachment he laments here, “The Second Death” clearly implies that any sex decoupled from biological continuity and seeking refuge in licentious, solitary, distant, or momentary enjoyment—any sex that deviates from a reproductive notion of the future—is a symptom of our nuclear extinction syndrome. Thus when Schell, oddly quoting Auden, says that the peril of extinction thwarts “Eros, builder of cities,” he doesn’t need to invoke “sodomy, destroyer of cities” for a link between queerness and extinction to be forged.³ By installing a reproductive futurism at the heart of his admonitory project, Schell implicitly stigmatizes as futureless anyone who stands beyond reproductivism’s pale: not just the homosexual but also the unmarried, the divorced, the impotent, the childless, the masturbator, the hedonist, the celibate.

Schell’s book did not, of course, invent the use of reproduction as a metonym for human futurity *tout court* or the figuration of the biological child as the chief beneficiary of future-oriented actions in the present. But it contributed to these figures’ prominent standing in the anti-nuclear imaginary. “Believe me when I say to you / I hope the Russians love their children too” went the absurd refrain of Sting’s 1985 single, “Russians,” which placed the (implicitly reproductive) body at a level more fundamental than political difference: “We, share the same biology / Regardless of ideology.” One could go on to compile a long list of 1980s movies, novels, speeches, and tracts that made the nuclear family stand in for humanity’s beset future or invoked the child as the figure in whose name apocalypse must be averted or at least survived. These conventions would outlast the Cold War and the waning or reimagining of the nuclear referent. Think of P. D. James’s 1992 thriller *The Children of Men*, whose protagonist must safeguard a miraculous pregnancy in a future where fertility has declined globally to zero.⁴ Or of how Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006) pares the matter of survival in a post-apocalyptic, ambiguously nuked landscape down to a father’s efforts to protect his son from rape and cannibalism. In both cases, the future is hanging either literally or allegorically by the thread of a single imperiled child.

My aim in this essay is not to trace the reproductivist energies of Cold War anti-nuclear works or of more recent post-apocalyptic fiction. Instead, I chart an alternate path through the nuclear condition,⁵ one that diverges from—and in places dissents from—the portrait of a future secured primarily for the sake of the biological child and reached along the straight lines of reproductive heterosexual coupling, familial property heritage, and linear time. This alternate path is one on which Nuclear Criticism today might keep company with recent work on queer temporalities, a body of scholarship that places dissident sexuality in a critical relation to

normative models of time and history. One of my broader aims, in fact, is to indicate some of the ways Nuclear Criticism might be reenergized by an encounter with queer temporalities scholarship. At the same time, I’ll argue that some of the key theoretical and literary works associated with Nuclear Criticism in its early years were themselves engaged in queering temporality and history. In doing so I don’t wish to claim Nuclear Criticism as the occulted or lost “origin” of queer temporalities work; in addition to straining credibility, such a privileging of origin in a narrative of linear development would install queer temporalities scholarship in just the sort of historical narrative it seeks to vex by its devotion to non-linear modes—the recursive, the discontinuous, the counterfactual. My point is, rather, that reexamining Nuclear Criticism through the aperture of queer theoretical writings on time allows us to see a muted or latent critique in the former—a critique whose object was not so much the existence of nuclear weapons as the straitened portraits of desire, culture, kinship, history, and futurity that were often appealed to in calling for both those weapons’ abolition and their necessity. What emerges is a redrawn Nuclear Criticism that both deplores the existence of nuclear weapons and declines to embrace sexually normative and historically reductive grounds for their elimination.

“Queer temporalities” as a theoretical rubric covers a broad range of scholarship by queer theorists and activists working, at least to date, predominantly in the U.S.⁶ More specific than a turn toward time as theme, this scholarship considers how heteronormative cultures perceive queer subjects in relation to history and futurity; how queer subjects experience and enact particular relations to history and futurity; and how queerness itself might be rethought as having less (or less exclusively) to do with sex and sexual typology than with dissident ways of being in relation to time. I have already referred to one of the chief temporalities from which queer subjects are variously excluded and dissenting: the “reproductive futurism” that conscripts the child as mascot for a heteronormative politics of hope and a linear conception of history as both powered and figured by biological reproduction and the modes of inheritance and political succession it undergirds.⁷ Such a conception of history militates against certain kinds of transgenerational affect, not least against the notion that the living could invest affectively in or form communities with the dead. In response, some scholars working on queer temporalities advocate just such a queer desire for history or “touch of the queer,” the kind of unpunctual, affective approach that could permit one to ask, as Carolyn Dinshaw does, “How does it feel to be an anachronism?”⁸ While acknowledging that the feeling of being out of step with one’s

contemporaries can be exploited to repressive ends, Dinshaw remains optimistic that transtemporal communities—living anachronisms in league with the dead—might produce politically salutary effects in a present whose dense multiplicity they help to restore.⁹ Others, contrastingly, refuse a politics of hope they see as irreducibly heteronormative, urging queer subjects to embrace the negative position assigned them by reproductivism. Embracing this negativity can take many forms: an insistence on the destructive, anti-communitarian, at once selfish and self-shattering dimensions of sex and particularly homo-sex; an identification of the queer subject with destrudo (i.e., the Freudian death drive) in its relentless opposition to a procreative understanding of libido; or a refusal of queer triumphalism and an embrace of the shame-laced backward look.¹⁰ Still others look to fuse the negativity of these anti-social, arguably apolitical positions to a radical anti-racist and anti-capitalist stance, calling for a “punk negativity” whose oppositional politics declines the language of hope, redemption, and futurity and turns instead to vandalism, masochism, pessimism, and despair.¹¹ Real differences inhere among these approaches. But they share a core conviction: that temporality—and perhaps futurity even more intensively than historicity—cannot be thought apart from the sexual norms through which it is figured, licensed, and imbued with or emptied of affect.

Owing to its semi-dormancy since the early 1990s, Nuclear Criticism has largely missed the chance to think through queer theory, a field whose principal interventions have happened in the interim. You occasionally see comparisons between queer coming-out narratives and a nation’s coming out as a nuclear power or a military person’s coming out as an anti-nuclear activist. But the more suggestive commonalities between Nuclear Criticism and queer theoretical writing—most of them under the sign of temporality—remain unexplored. These include an intimate acquaintance with and even an embrace of the death drive; a related acquaintance with portraits of the future as negated or foreclosed; a commitment not to reopen the future under repressive terms; and the alternative, in the face of a seemingly barred future, of soliciting the queer touch of the dead whom for various reasons we suddenly apprehend as our contemporaries. Exploring these commonalities seems the more urgent, given that queer temporalities scholarship could provoke debate about what nuclear abolitionists and their opponents have most in common: a practically automated recourse to reproductive futurism in arguing for their respective positions. Schell’s equation of low marital indices with a general sense of species futurelessness is an extreme but not an exceptional case of anti-nuclear rhetoric, which continues today to invoke “a world safe for our

children” in terms nearly indistinguishable from the pro-nuclear side of the aisle.¹² The radical negativity exhibited by some queer temporalities scholars might also expose the limits of a politics of (procreative) optimism on both sides of the nuclear debate—the limits of acting as if the world could be made safe for “our children” or anyone else by either retaining or abolishing our nuclear deterrents.

Queer theorists, for their part, have turned occasionally during the last twenty years to Nuclear Criticism, although usually to jump-start an argument headed away from the nuclear referent. Peter Coviello’s essay “Apocalypse from Now On” (2000) nods in its title to both Jacques Derrida’s inaugural work of Nuclear Criticism, “No Apocalypse, Not Now (full speed ahead, seven missiles, seven missives)” (1984) and Susan Sontag’s 1989 *AIDS and Its Metaphors* (Sontag: “Apocalypse is now a long-running serial: not ‘Apocalypse Now’ but ‘Apocalypse from Now On’”).¹³ But Coviello’s essay invokes the nuclear condition principally in order to set up what he sees as its succession, after 1989, by AIDS as the apocalypse du jour. “Du jour” in the way a daily special marks the everyday’s domestication of the exceptional: for Coviello, AIDS differs from the nuclear condition in quotidianizing apocalypse, making it a condition rather than a threatened event and thus particularly useful to the day-to-day biopolitical operations of the state. Coviello, in other words, sets sail from Port Derrida for Port Sontag—from Nuclear Criticism to a critique of AIDS and governmentality—without, understandably enough, booking return passage. Before leaving the nuclear behind, however, he notes “how intimately bonded the nuclear and the sexual actually were, before the advent of AIDS gave to such bonding a ghastly quality of inevitability.”¹⁴ Coviello’s emphasis is not on the usual string of references to the heteronormative sexualization of nuclear weapons (e.g., “Little Boy,” Bikini atoll, the population bomb, and the nuclear family, although he mentions these in passing). Instead, he reads nuclear discourse as having limned, before AIDS, a “gay death drive” that figured queerness as incarnating (and more rarely as rebuking) the extravagant sovereignty of nuclear weapons. Glossing Martin Amis’s characterization of the nuclear arsenal as a cocked gun in the mouths of the procreative, Coviello writes that “*power in the nuclear age is horrifying and unlivable because it makes me—or wants to make me—thoroughly, irremediably queer.*”¹⁵ Thus the homophobia of certain anti-nuclear discourses anticipated homophobic responses to AIDS as an apocalyptic threat emanating from queer subjects. What’s more, Coviello hazards, the apocalypticism that pervaded debates around both nuclear weapons and AIDS made for strong continuities between Nuclear Criticism and queer theory, both bodies of

work responding to high concentrations of state power in the management of populations, bilateral depictions of the biological family as under siege, and the pervasive rhetoric of the death wish.¹⁶

We have already seen how hospitable both pro- and anti-nuclear writing could be, and for that matter remains, to reproductive futurism and a range of homophobic rhetorics. One of the signal features of Nuclear Criticism (as opposed to anti-nuclear discourse writ large) has been to read nuclear discourses of all kinds with skepticism and thus to hesitate on the threshold of a reflexive apocalypticism. One result of this circumspection, I suggest, is that Nuclear Criticism is a repository of alternatives to heteronormative portraits of the future. Derrida's "No Apocalypse, Not Now" serves as my cardinal example. I do not revisit it for the warrant of professional competence it gives humanists writing on the nuclear debate or for its bold claim that literature has always belonged to the nuclear epoch, both of which I have discussed elsewhere.¹⁷ My interest is in two other of the essay's features: its unconventional portrait of the futurity imperiled by nuclear war and its critique of the use of the name as chief rationale for both making and avoiding war. Two years after *The Fate of the Earth*, "No Apocalypse, Not Now" refers to the extinction hypothesis advanced by Schell and others—"that in nuclear war 'humanity' runs the risk of its self-destruction, with nothing left over, no remainder"—as a "rumor," adding that in the speed race of the nuclear condition, a few seconds "may decide, irreversibly, the fate of what is still now and then called humanity—plus the fate of a few other species."¹⁸ The sardonic end to that sentence registers an impatience with anti-nuclear rhetoric's shrill anthropocentrism and anticipates the critique of the human/animal binary that emerges in Derrida's work of the 1990s. What's more, although the essay goes on to reclaim rumor as the discursive ground of the nuclear condition ("one can no longer oppose belief and science, *doxa* and *episteme*, once one has reached the decisive place of the nuclear age"),¹⁹ it absolutely declines to join Schell et al. in invoking humanity, human progeny, or human biological survival as the thing in whose name Nuclear Criticism ought to proceed. In the course of responding to its other, more assertively phrased provocations, commentators on the essay have largely missed its stunning refusal to take up this most ready-to-hand rhetoric of the anti-nuclear movement.

Where "No Apocalypse, Not Now" invokes the question of survival, it does so not on behalf of biological individuals, genealogies, or species but in respect to self-referential, self-constituting elements of the symbolic order that could not be regenerated out of lived experience or by way of scientific method. These hothouse flowers include written as opposed to

oral literary modes and literary criticism—anything that would perish without the archive from which it derives its conditions of possibility.

Now what allows us perhaps to think the uniqueness of nuclear war, its being-for-the-first-time-and-perhaps-for-the-last-time, its absolute inventiveness ... is obviously the possibility of an irreversible destruction, leaving no traces, of the juridico-literary archive—that is, total destruction of the basis of literature and criticism. Not necessarily the destruction of humanity, of the human habitat, nor even of other discourses (arts or sciences), nor even indeed of poetry or the epic; these latter might reconstitute their living process and their archive, at least to the extent that the structure of that archive (that of a nonliterary memory) implies, structurally, reference to a real referent external to the archive itself.²⁰

What kinds of writing, Derrida asks, could be regenerated in the wake of the archive's destruction by a nuclear war? Certain literary modes (lyric, epic) and discourses (sciences, non-literary arts) whose archive is grounded in a "real referent" external to itself might return; not so, forms of literature whose chief referent is the "stockpile" of textual antecedents and legal precedents that give literature its internal meaning and its social significance. The latter forms, Derrida adds, have brooded on their precarity since their emergence in the Enlightenment—so much so that their total effaceability is also their transcendental referent. "The only referent that is absolutely real is thus of the scope or dimension of an absolute nuclear catastrophe that would irreversibly destroy the entire archive and all symbolic capacity, would destroy 'the movement of survival,' what I call '*survivance*,' at the very heart of life."²¹ Texts pondering the erasability that is the precondition of writing; a criticism dedicated to preserving the archive of its own possibility and thus the *survivance* at the very heart of life: against the heteronormativity of reproductive futurism, the queerness of an *archival* futurism.

We might object that a call to preserve the archive must be made, at least implicitly, *in the name of* something other than the archive itself—in the name of some future user or of the dead whose traces repose in and constitute the archive. "No Apocalypse, Not Now" closes with a meditation on names and naming that responds, at least in part, to such an objection. A war that destroyed all symbolic capacity would negate the transmissibility of any name in which it was waged. As Derrida puts it, and with a repetitive cadence that mimics invocation, "that name in the name of which war would take place would be the name of nothing, it would be pure name, the 'naked name.' That war would be the first and the last war in the name of the name, with only the non-name of 'name'...

Beyond all genealogy, a nameless war in the name of the name."²² No worldly entity—not nation, not dynasty, not ideology, not genealogy—could justify a war that threatened to annihilate all worldly entities. Yet curiously, having cited genealogy as the thing transcended by the “naked name,” Derrida forbears to call on genealogy as the rationale for *not* waging a nuclear war. He abstains, too, from invoking a name (“our children,” “posterity,” “the future of humanity”) for whose benefit the archive should *not* be destroyed. Instead, the essay offers an alternate vision of a divine entente with the sons of Shem, who built the tower of Babel “to make a name for [them]selves.” Here, instead of escalating to the point where the tribes are scattered and thrown into linguistic confusion, the war between God and the sons of Shem is suspended out of mutual ignorance that “they were confronting each other in the name of the name, and of nothing else, thus of nothing. That is why they stopped and moved on to a long compromise.” The seeming fullness of the name is what produces “deterrence” and with it the long monolingual standoff in which “tradition, translation, transference have had a long respite.”²³

But nuclear war is the absolute knowledge, Derrida continues, that God and the sons of Shem lacked and that we possess—the knowledge that a war that would put an end to all naming could only be waged in the name of the name itself, and of nothing else, thus of nothing:

We have absolute knowledge and we run the risk, precisely because of that, of not stopping. Unless it is the other way around: God and the sons of Shem having understood that a name wasn't worth it—and this would be absolute knowledge—they preferred to spend a little more time together, the time of a long colloquy with warriors in love with life, busy writing in all languages in order to make the conversation last, even if they didn't understand each other too well.²⁴

What follows that “Unless,” suspending the lethal name game that Derrida anatomizes, is the essay's vision of survival in the shadow of nuclear war. It is not a vision in whose name, or of those in whose name, war should be waged or averted. Knowing the irreversible limit toward which the logic of the name in war tends, it sidesteps that logic in favor of tarrying and writing—in favor of the writing that is a form of tarrying, the “tradition, translation, transference” that allow the conversation to last in all languages despite or because of imperfect comprehension. The monolingual name, with its power to license war *or* disarmament for the sake of a particular territorialized future, was the weapon that had to be laid down all along.

This is not the place to survey the importance of Derrida's work in general for queer theory.²⁵ But even in the foregoing brief discussion of

archival futurism in “No Apocalypse, Not Now,” we can see certain strong compatibilities with queer temporalities scholarship: in its quiet demurrer from reproductivism and species egotism; in its commitment, amid precarity, to refusing security on the wrong terms; and in its view of the archive as the primary site of long colloquies across time. In the hands of queer theorists, something like this survival or *survivance* of the archive indispensably grounds a conception of queer history as a “touch across time.” Rather than knot Nuclear Criticism more deeply into recent queer temporalities scholarship, however, I will devote this essay's second half to a transtemporal reach in the other direction, reading “No Apocalypse, Not Now” by the light of an earlier Cold War post-apocalyptic speculative fiction—indeed, reading it implicitly *as* a work of this type of fiction. Here I mean to point up something other than the essay's much-discussed speculation as to Nuclear Criticism's coming institutionalization in the university.²⁶ My focus will instead be Derrida's hypothetical *mise-en-scène*: a devastated future in which the human race survives but confronts a “total and remainderless destruction of the archive.”²⁷

Imagine for a moment a post-apocalyptic novel endowed with the reproductive futurism of Schell's “Republic of Insects and Grass” but in which *Homo sapiens* is *not* extinguished by a nuclear holocaust. A story of endurance and resourcefulness against the odds, it tells how a few hundred survivors return from the brink of extinction, struggle to produce viable offspring, and labor to reestablish kinship structures in the face of a hostile, irradiated environment. Key elements of this multi-generational narrative involve questions of tribal structure, hierarchy, and scarce resources as well as the tradeoffs between endogamy and exogamy, monogamy and polygamy, primogeniture and other forms of birthright and property dissemination. As the genetic mutations catalyzed by high radiation levels begin to appear, the survivors' colony depicted by the novel must also find ways of ensuring that the mutants don't reproduce and create more disabled, possibly sterile offspring who will weaken the collective chances of survival. For those chances depend on strong, healthy, fertile offspring who will help guarantee the future of humanity—and whose faith in that future will be indexed by their willingness to marry and procreate. Subplots might address the loss, rediscovery, or transmission of pre-apocalyptic knowledge and technologies. But because this imaginary novel defines survival exclusively as biological perdurance, it will be interested in questions of literacy, technology, and the archive only insofar as they abet an unbroken species perpetuation.

Now imagine the inverse: a post-apocalyptic novel that foregrounds the loss of literacy and scientific knowledge as well as the problems of

preserving the written remains of the pre-collapse civilization; a novel of archival futurism in which the survival that matters has only minimally to do with questions of parentage, inheritable property, clan, courtship, and reproduction. We have just such a novel in Walter M. Miller, Jr.'s *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, an early Cold War classic that appeared between 1955 and 1957 in the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and was republished, with alterations, in 1960. Miller's book has been studied for its engagements with Catholic theology and witness, its transgenerational ethics, its cyclical model of history, and a host of other traits. But we're now equipped to read *A Canticle* as something else besides: an encyclopedia of non-reproductivist forms of narrative, character, historiography, and anti-nuclear politics. The novel opens 600 years after a global nuclear war, the Flame Deluge of the late twentieth century, and is set in the desert of what used to be New Mexico. In an abbey there, the monks of the Albertian Order of the Blessed Leibowitz gather, guard, copy, and memorize the Memorabilia, the paltry written remains of the pre-collapse civilization. These writings have survived both the Deluge and a kind of second Babel or "confusion of tongues" culminating in the Simplification—the destruction, by the survivors, of the knowledge-archive they blame for having made the war technologically possible. The surviving documents include everything from circuit diagrams and physics textbooks to even more abstruse messages ("Pound pastrami, can kraut, six bagels—bring home for Emma"; "Remember—pick up Form 1040, Uncle Revenue").²⁸ Written in pre-Deluge English, the fragmentary Memorabilia are largely unintelligible to the monks, who lack the scientific knowledge, linguistic competency, and range of contexts needed to restore their sense. Yet they protect the documents nonetheless.

It mattered not at all to them that the knowledge they saved was useless, that much of it was not really knowledge now, was as inscrutable to the monks in some instances as it would be to an illiterate wild-boy from the hills; this knowledge was empty of content, its subject matter long since gone. Still, such knowledge had a symbolic structure that was peculiar to itself, and at least the symbol-interplay could be observed. To observe the way a knowledge-system is knit together is to learn at least a minimum knowledge-of-knowledge, until someday—someday or some century—an Integrator would come, and things would be fitted together again. So time mattered not at all.²⁹

Although the promise of an Integrator-to-come lends a messianic structure to the monks' vigil, the emphasis here is less on a particular future in whose name the Memorabilia should be preserved than on the intrinsic

value of keeping intact a singular and internally consistent symbolic system, regardless of its intelligibility. Without hope of benefiting themselves, without even the motivation of a scriptural promise that the Memorabilia will one day become legible, the members of the Order maintain their vigil over the millennia.

Which means that *A Canticle for Leibowitz* also spans millennia. Where the Schellian novel I imagined above might have encompassed several generations—enough to get its protagonists through war, social and environmental collapse, and genetic mayhem to the beginnings of a new societal and procreative equilibrium—Miller's book is massively longitudinal, its three books being separated by 600-year intervals.³⁰ As if to underscore its dedication to divergent models of continuity and futurity, its protagonists are celibates whose parentage goes unremarked, whose childhoods are largely dark to us, and whose values, vows, offices, and property are passed on to other celibates through apostolic succession. Because *A Canticle* traces the *Bildung*, or re-*Bildung*, of literacy and technology across 1800 years from the Flame Deluge, it cannot tarry over the development of individual characters. The novel's commitment to the *longue durée* of civilizational recovery shapes its conception of protagonism, which is distributed not only among a range of characters during each of its three books but also across those books. Characters who occupy us in the earlier books are absorbed into the remote historical backgrounds of subsequent ones, their deaths narrated with pitiless brevity or simply taken for granted. Instead of playing to the temporality of the individual, the novel is keyed to a different "organism, the community whose cells were men, whose life had flowed through seventy generations... The organism lived as a body, worshipped and worked as a body, and at times seemed dimly conscious as a mind that infused its members and whispered to itself and to Another in the lingua prima, baby tongue of the species."³¹ One effect of this passage is to resignify the word "species," which refers less to *Homo sapiens* than to the collective organism of the monastic community, a kind of eukaryotic algal colony that perpetuates itself through the recruitment of celibate human cells.

Miller's novel has frequent recourse to such metaphors of biological form and descent, as well as to figures of (usually patriarchal) kinship. Monks are addressed as "Brother" or "Son," nuns as "Sister," and higher clergy as "Father." Genetic mutants, whose possession of immortal souls and thus of the right to live is secured by papal edict, are known as "Pope's nephews" or "Pope's children."³² A ship leaving earth for another star system will establish an "independent daughter house" of the Order, and once that house sets up its Patriarchal See it will become, in turn, "a

mother house of the Visitationist Friars of the Order of Saint Leibowitz of Tycho."³³ The cumulative effect of these metaphors is not to consecrate the biological descent that grounds them but rather to populate the novel so densely with alternative, often elective family structures that biological kinship is remanded to the margins, occupying the foreground only through analogy. On the margins, the procreative figures are not human ones but the vultures who appear at the ends of books one and two, laying their eggs in season and lovingly feeding their young, often on the meat of the novel's more hapless human characters. These carrion birds allow the narrator to satirize anthropocentrism ("[The buzzards'] philosophers demonstrated by unaided reason alone that the Supreme *Cathartes aura regnans* had created the world especially for buzzards"),³⁴ but they are not figures through which biological generation is equated with death. Rather, they establish predation and procreation as both baseline and limit: as constant processes that are preconditions for narration and for the creation and maintenance of the symbolic order without being themselves narratable. We might think of the buzzards as hospice figures for narrative in *A Canticle*, accompanying both human characters and narrative epochs to darkness even as they hold the novel's procreative line. That the last buzzards we see, in the novel's final pages, are likely dying of radiation poisoning even as they wait for a human protagonist to die indicates the dire pass to which the second Flame Deluge has brought life on earth. The novel's final image is neither of human death nor of the archival safe-house but of the disruption of the marine food chain: "The ash fell into the sea and into the breakers. The breakers washed dead shrimp ashore with the driftwood. Then they washed up the whiting. The shark swam out to his deepest waters and brooded in the old clean currents. He was very hungry that season."³⁵ All while the Memorabilia are hurtling into space to become the treasure of a daughter house that will become a mother house.

We might expect a novel with so dispassionate a view of its protagonists, so longitudinal a view of biological, symbolic, and institutional processes, to be uninterested in the ethical stakes of a single death. Brother Francis, one of the central figures of the first section, meets his end in two lines—"The arrow hit him squarely between the eyes. / 'Eat! Eat! Eat!' the Pope's child cried"—and the philoprogenitive vultures will descend to finish what the cannibal mutant leaves behind.³⁶ If *A Canticle for Leibowitz* were interested solely in the perpetuation of the monastic Order and its Memorabilia, individual lives would be valuable only insofar as they contributed to that end. But Miller's novel, for all its detachment in relating death, avoids instrumentalizing its characters to the project of the monastic organism. Reproductive futurism subordinates the life of the

adult to that of the child, justifying the sacrifice of the parent in the name of the child's, the genome's, and thus the future's continuity. In an extraordinary scene in *Canticle's* middle book, abbot Dom Paulo thinks ruefully of "us monastic ignoramuses, children of dark centuries, many, entrusted by adults with an incomprehensible message, to be memorized and delivered to other adults." Yet this figuration of the child as present-tense messenger rather than future-tense messiah does not evacuate the present of its ethical importance. As he begins to suffer from the illness that will eventually kill him, Dom Paulo thinks, "Does the chalice have to be now right this very minute Lord or can I wait awhile? But crucifixion is always now. Now ever since before Abraham even is always now."³⁷ "Are you ready to get nailed on it?" Abbot Zerchi, Dom Paulo's book three counterpart, asks a younger monk apropos of a plan to send the Memorabilia away from Earth in the event of a second Flame Deluge. And the younger man, looking for guidance during his Gethsemane, thinks, "Destiny always seems decades away, but suddenly it's not decades away; it's right *now*. But maybe destiny is always right now, right here, right this very instant, maybe."³⁸ Linear time entrains the present in a consequentialist flow, subordinating the decision to its authorizing origins or to its impact on a future seen putatively in advance. Rather than rely on a past crucifixion that redeems all subsequent sin, or on a future child, messiah, or Integrator who will justify present suffering, *A Canticle* loads the present with the stakes of a perpetual crucifixion.

This ethical saturation of present suffering becomes the ground of the novel's final dilemma, one that occupies much of book three. After a limited retaliatory strike obliterates the nearby city of Texarkana, Zerchi's monastery becomes the site of a public health station that treats radiation victims and offers to euthanize and cremate those exposed to supercritical dosages. Although this state-sanctioned euthanasia requires due legal process, Abbot Zerchi opposes it on the grounds that the Catholic Church forbids suicide under any circumstances. The ensuing arguments Zerchi has with a doctor from the aid station and with an irradiated woman seeking euthanasia for herself and her child look like a simple standoff between Church and state, God and Caesar. But in circuit with the notion of perpetual crucifixion, these arguments can be seen to entail rival *temporalities* more than rival sets of permissions and interdictions. As Zerchi observes to an aid station doctor, any state that makes euthanasia provisions in advance of the nuclear war that would activate them presupposes either its own commission of a war crime or its catastrophic failure to avert the war crime of another nation. "[I]nstead of trying to make the crime impossible, they tried to provide in advance for the

consequences of the crime,” says Zerchi. To the doctor’s assertion that mercy-killing is better than condemning victims to a slow, painful death, Zerchi responds, “Is it? Better for whom? The street cleaners? Better to have your living corpses walk to a central disposal station while they can still walk? Less public spectacle? Less horror lying around? Less disorder? A few million corpses lying around might start a rebellion against those responsible. That’s what you and the government team mean by better, isn’t it?”³⁹ The state produces its futurity not by a commitment to spare its citizens from radiation exposure at all costs but by making provisions to cut short, in the name of mercy, the agonizing and politically disruptive futures of the citizens it fails to protect. Mercy thus becomes a license for perpetuating the state through war, setting the state’s future in an inverse relation with that of its injured citizens. Against this weaponization of mercy, with its chilling applicability to the euthanizing or sterilizing of disabled and sexually dissident subjects, Zerchi’s exhortation to the sick woman—to pray in the face of pain rather than yield to “despair, anger, loss of faith... [or the] false god of expedient mercy”—amounts to a queer temporality: a replenishment of the present, the crucifixion that is always now, in the face of the warfare state’s attempt to territorialize the future.⁴⁰ To read *A Canticle for Leibowitz* for its resistant temporalities is to find the novel queerest where it is most Catholic.

After a losing altercation with the aid station guards, Abbot Zerchi returns to the monastery to hear the confession of a bicephalous mutant. This is Mrs. Grales the tomato-seller, who has been seeking baptism for her childlike, seemingly vestigial second head, whom she calls Rachel. But the “genetic festering” caused by the war eighteen centuries ago continues to blur distinctions between generations and even between ensouled beings, to the confusion of the Church; as Zerchi puts it, “There’s some question as to whether Rachel is her daughter, her sister—or merely an excrescence growing out of her shoulder.”⁴¹ Mrs. Grales surprises her confessor by announcing her desire to forgive “Him who made me as I am... Mayn’t an old tumater woman forgive Him just a little for His Justice?” But before her confession is complete, a blinding flash announces the arrival of a full-scale nuclear exchange, bringing the church down around Zerchi, Mrs. Grales, and Rachel. Pinned in the rubble, the abbot finds the collapse has broken open the crypts and disgorged the bones of his forerunners, including a skull with a hole in the forehead where the remains of an arrow are lodged. “Brother,” says Zerchi to what may be the skull of Brother Francis, and as he blesses it the two celibates touch across time, each having played a role in preserving the Memorabilia. Far from delegitimizing their work for having transmitted the deadly viruses of

literacy and technology, the tender communion of the dying man with the dead suggests their vigil over the remains of the archive was no less worth keeping for having produced another Flame Deluge; that the future was not foreordained but open; that in keeping watch, giving Christ to human beings, and warning them that culture “could never be Eden” they had done what was given them to do.

The last stage in the Passion of Abbot Zerchi is the strangest, bringing home how dissident temporalities both prop up linear time and bloom in its ruins. Although Mrs. Grales’s primary head seems dead or asleep owing to the blast, the radiation seems to have wakened the Rachel-head, who now repeats Zerchi’s words in a childlike voice and looks on him with curious eyes and “a young shy smile that hoped for friendship,” her head supported by the suddenly rejuvenated body of the old tomato-seller. Zerchi tries to fulfill Mrs. Grales’s wish of baptizing Rachel but the latter recoils, then picks up the ciborium he had been holding before the church collapsed and offers him, without conventional words or gestures but “as if by *direct instruction*,” the Host. “Now he knew what she was, and he sobbed faintly when he could not again force his eyes to focus on those cool, green, and untroubled eyes of one born free.”⁴² Earlier his fellow monk Joshua had dreamed in a “blasphemous nightmare” of Rachel saying, “Accurate am I the exception... I commensurate the deception. Am... I am the Immaculate Conception.”⁴³ The second head of a bicephalous woman, born of one nuclear war and awakened by another, daughter or sister or excrescence or co-vivant of Mrs. Grales, is the second coming of the Virgin Mary, conceived without stain of original sin and therefore needing no baptism. Even as linear time is spiraling back on itself with the arrival of the second Flame Deluge, the miracle of Rachel—“Accurate am I the exception”—takes place at the crossroads of aberrant temporalities: cyclicity, parthenogenesis, innocence in apocalypse, wakening amid death. The obverse of the carrion birds, she escorts Zerchi from his life under the signs of miracle, sacrament, transubstantiation. Her cool touch on his forehead is the last thing he feels; hers is the last word he will hear before he dies: “Live.”

The final chapter of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* opens with a rare glimpse of children. These are boarding a spaceship bound for an existing colony in a neighboring star system: “They sang as they lifted the children into the ship. They sang old space chanteys and helped the children up the ladder one at a time and into the hands of the sisters. They sang heartily to dispel the fright of the little ones. When the horizon erupted, the singing stopped. They passed the last child into the ship.”⁴⁴ As the ship departs against the backdrop of the second Flame Deluge, the echoes of Noah’s

ark are clear. But instead of ferrying the animals two-by-two—the procreative minima of species regeneration—to the Alpha Centauri colony, this ark carries monks, nuns, and orphans; a few scientists and staff; three bishops, who alone will be able to ordain more priests; the Chair of Peter so that the next Pope can be crowned off world; and, on microfilm, the Memorabilia. All this as part of *Quo peregrinatur grex, pastor secum* (“Whither wanders the flock, the shepherd is with them”), an emergency plan for “perpetuating the Church” on another world should Earth become uninhabitable.⁴⁵ A one-species ark without animals, the *Quo peregrinatur* ship is less concerned with perpetuating *Homo sapiens* than with ensuring the survival of a single transtemporal organism, the Church.⁴⁶ In concert with the theologically informed miracle of Rachel, this final emphasis might seem to reorient *A Canticle* away from the preservation of the Memorabilia and toward that of Catholicism. By such a reading, the Memorabilia would be preserved only as a means to the end of securing the Church’s worldly power and spiritual authority. But while the novel’s middle chapters feature the odd abbot leveraging possession of the Memorabilia for political advantage, they more often show us how the monastery is exposed by its archive to risk of attack, to ideas that run counter to the Order’s doctrine, and to hi-tech secular powers that owe their rise to the Memorabilia but, having exploited it, no longer need to consult it or to kowtow to its guardians. In preserving the Memorabilia, the Church carries the seeds of its loss of monopoly on metaphysics and its prospective obsolescence as a worldly power. Yet like Rachel, the other child who bears a message to an adult, the Church is awakened from this dormancy by the self-destruction of worldly technological states whose impatience for earthly paradise—the Eden Zerchi and his predecessors warned against expecting in this life—is their own death drive. In Miller’s novel, church and state are braided in a chiasmic chain, one waning while the other waxes, each with a death drive lodged, paradoxically, at the very heart of its plans for self-perpetuation.

A Canticle for Leibowitz attributes a death drive not only to church and state but also to the archive itself, an ineliminable tendency in writing to stockpile and disseminate the prospective conditions of its effacement: it is thanks in part to the Memorabilia—not just the particular holdings of the abbey but the techno-scientific archive generally—that the Memorabilia are imperiled and must be conveyed off the planet. In this respect, as in so much else, Miller’s *mise-en-scène* anticipates Derrida, who would theorize what he variously names “archive fever,” the “death drive of the archive,” the “archivolithic force,” and “the violence of the archive itself, as archive, as archival violence.” “It is at work,” he writes

in *Archive Fever* (1995), “but since it always operates in silence, it never leaves any archives of its own. It destroys in advance its own archive, as if that were in truth the very motivation of its most proper movement. It works to destroy the archive: on the condition of effacing but also with a view to effacing its own ‘proper’ traces.”⁴⁷ A decade after “No Apocalypse, Not Now,” Derrida’s master-figure for the immanent violence of the archive remains the nuclear. He refers repeatedly to the archive as “a series of cleavages [that] will incessantly divide every atom of our lexicon”; as “haunted from its origin” by “the possibility of its fission”; as haunted, too, by secrets that are “the very ash of the archive.”⁴⁸ For Derrida, the fission of the word is inherent in its inscription, the effaceability of writing its indispensable precondition. This fissibility of the word inheres at every possible scale: in the cleft etym, divided against itself by its lexically unstable components and its capacity for resignification; in the catastrophes, both slow and split-second, that destroy writing’s material and digital traces; in the linguistic drift that can efface the intelligibility of writing even when it survives; in writing’s way of making my death and absence present to me. But if indeed the archivolithic destroys in advance its own archive, we cannot point to it, cannot even point to its remains. We can only speculate about it as we speculate about death: hence the strange compatibility of the archivolithic, the archival death drive, with speculative fictions of the nuclear, the event that has so far occurred, at its fullest blown, only in discourse, as a purely theoretical event.

Neither Miller’s speculative fiction nor Derrida’s work on the archive addresses queer sex head-on, although celibacy, a major element in *Canticle*, is currently being rethought as a queer sexuality—rather than, say, as the absence of sexuality, or as closeted homosexuality—in its relation to reproductive time.⁴⁹ Bringing queer temporalities frameworks into conversation with Nuclear Criticism will certainly give us new ways to think about nuclear conditions both pre- and post-1989 in conjunction with queer sex and sexuality specifically. What Patrick R. Mullen calls the “vehicular mobility” of the term *queer* “as a capacious index for a series of non-normative desires, sexualities, people, politics, and cultural expressions” will also allow us to consider forms of dissidence that maintain, say, a temporal connection to queer sexuality even when the latter does not figure, or figures obliquely, in a work’s diegesis or propositional content.⁵⁰ This second kind of work, which I have tried to undertake here, can crucially spoil the non-stick surface of “history,” which presents itself as the only authorized finish for frying the egg of time. Resisting even the notion of a queer theoretical “turn toward time” as conceding too much to

“the motionless ‘movement’ of historical procession obedient to origins, intentions, and ends whose authority rules over all,” Lee Edelman would pose against it the life-in-death—or we might say, echoing Miller, the crucifixion that is always now—of the drive’s cussedness and recursivity, which the queer subject is made to figure.

Whether polyphonous or univocal, history, thus ontologized, displaces the epistemological impasse, the aporia of relationality, the nonidentity of things, by offering the promise of sequence as the royal road to consequence. Meaning thus hangs in the balance—a meaning that time, as the medium of its advent, defers while affirming its constant approach, but a meaning utterly undone by the queer who figures its refusal. This is the truth-event, as Badiou might say, that makes all subjects queer: that we aren’t, in fact, subjects of history constrained by the death-in-life of futurism and its illusion of productivity. We’re subjects, instead, of the real, of the drive, of the encounter with futurism’s emptiness, with negativity’s life-in-death. The universality proclaimed by queerness lies in identifying the subject with just this repetitive performance of a death drive, with what’s, quite literally, unbecoming, and so in exploding the subject of knowledge immured in stone by the “turn toward time.”⁵¹

The subject, Edelman insists, is not who overcomes the death drive but who is identified with it, and whose universal queerness inheres in this identification with repetition and the traumatic real. Such a subject stands in a queer and unassimilable relation to historical narratives grounded in procession, continuity, and reproductive futurism. A Nuclear Criticism that heeded an insistence like Edelman’s would write against time’s collapse into history; against the script that says our children are safe now that nuclear weapons are no longer such a threat; and against the heteronormative logic that exceptionalizes queer subjects as non-reproductive bearers of the death drive. And it would wrest from history’s chronologizing authority the dissident temporalities that get subjected to it: cyclical, uncanny, and preposterous ways of being in time; discontinuous and transtemporal ones; births without conception and second comings that are at once awaited and unprecedented; and those evidently barred futurities in whose face we make some of our severest refusals to unbar the future on deplorable terms. Such a criticism would think the nuclear condition not only in numbers of warheads, ages of missiles, degrees of alert, or locations of fissile material but also as metonymizing and materializing the death drives of church, state, archive, and subject. It would recognize that we might dismantle every nuclear weapon on the planet—as we should—without coming close to dismantling the nuclear condition. To a history that placed the nuclear condition firmly in the past,

back then, such a criticism would respond: the nuclear condition, like crucifixion, is always *now*.

Notes

¹ I would like to thank Patrick Moran and the editors of this volume for commenting on drafts of this essay.

² Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth: and The Abolition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 154, 119.

³ *Ibid.*, 157-58.

⁴ James’s scenario, although unkeyed to a nuclear event, bears a striking resemblance to one Schell envisions as a sequel to a survivable nuclear exchange: “It is possible...at least to imagine that, through sterilization of the species, the future generations could be cancelled while the living were left unharmed...They would experience in their own lives the breakdown of the ties that bind individual human beings together into a community and a species, and they would feel the current of our common life grow cold within them. And as their number was steadily reduced by death they would witness the final victory of death over life.” *Ibid.*, 168-69.

⁵ By the phrase “nuclear condition,” I do not mean the simple existence of nuclear weapons. Even if the last nuclear weapon were dismantled the nuclear condition would persist, inhering in our knowledge that nuclear weapons cannot (short of a knowledge-loss even more catastrophic than the one imagined by *A Canticle for Leibowitz*) be uninvented, that our history has been irreversibly shaped by nuclear weapons, and that future arsenals might again contain them. I also mean the phrase to reactivate, without fully embracing, Derrida’s argument that literature has been “nuclear” since the Enlightenment insofar as it depends for its meaning on an archive susceptible to physical destruction, and that inscription is therefore premised on the possibility of its own effacement. Finally, the notion of a nuclear condition is counterposed to the nuclear event whose prospective arrival nonetheless defines the nuclear condition.

⁶ This rubric was consolidated in a special Queer Temporalities issue of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13, no. 2-3 (2007), edited by Elizabeth Freeman. The issue’s opener, “Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion” (pp. 177-95) brought together nine of the critics most often associated with this area of study (Carolyn Dinshaw, Lee Edelman, Roderick A. Ferguson, Carla Freccero, Elizabeth Freeman, Judith Halberstam, Annamarie Jagose, Christopher Nealon, and Nguyen Tan Hoang).

⁷ The expression “reproductive futurism” is developed in Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁸ Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 151; Dinshaw et al., “Theorizing Queer Temporalities,” 190.

⁹ See also Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); and the

work of Melanie Micir, particularly “‘Living in Two Tenses’: The Intimate Archives of Sylvia Townsend Warner,” forthcoming in *Journal of Modern Literature*; and Micir’s doctoral dissertation, “Public Lives, Intimate Archives: Queer Biographical Practices in British Women’s Writing, 1928-1978.”

¹⁰ See, respectively, Leo Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?” *October* 43 (Winter 1987): 197-222 and *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Edelman, *No Future*; and Heather K. Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹¹ See Judith Halberstam, “The Anti-Social Turn in Queer Studies,” *Graduate Journal of Social Science* 5, no. 2 (2008): 140-56.

¹² Compare: “The only hopeful and sustainable future for our children, the cities and people of this world is a nuclear weapons free future” (Tamara Lorincz, Halifax Peace Coalition, 2007); and “While nuclear weapons exist, we cannot leave ourselves and our children open to the threat of nuclear blackmail” (UK Liberal Democratic Party’s “shadow defense review consultation paper,” 2012). See *Welland Tribune* (August 3, 2007) <http://www.wellandtribune.ca/ArticleDisplay.aspx?archive=true&e=638569>; and Richard Norton-Taylor, “UK’s Nuclear Weapons in the Frame,” *Guardian* (March 6, 2012) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/defence-and-security-blog/2012/mar/06/uk-nuclear-trident>. The point here is not that the nuclear weapons debate has a monopoly on reproductive futurism. As a security question with long-term geopolitical and environmental ramifications, however, the nuclear weapons debate deploys reproductive futurism in particular ways and with special intensities that should be distinguished from the general invocation of “our children and grandchildren” as the chief beneficiaries of, and thus the master rationale for, policy-making.

¹³ Jacques Derrida, “No Apocalypse, Not Now (full speed ahead, seven missiles, seven misses),” trans. Catherine Porter and Philip Lewis, *diacritics* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 20-31; Susan Sontag, *AIDS and Its Metaphors* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1989), 88.

¹⁴ Peter Coviello, “Apocalypse From Now On,” in *Queer Frontiers: Millennial Geographies, Genders, and Generations*, ed. Joseph A. Boone et al. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 45, 49; original emphasis.

¹⁶ Pace Coviello, the chronology of the 1980s suggests a narrative of overlap and feedback rather than of strict succession between Nuclear Criticism and queer theory in the HIV age. AIDS was named during the same year in which *The Fate of the Earth* was published, and HIV identified as its cause in 1984, the year of the Nuclear Criticism conference at Cornell University.

¹⁷ See Paul K. Saint-Amour, “Bombing and the Symptom: Traumatic Earliness and the Nuclear Uncanny,” *diacritics* 30, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 59-82.

¹⁸ Derrida, “No Apocalypse, Not Now,” 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

²² *Ibid.*, 30-1.

²³ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁵ See Michael O’Rourke, “Queer Theory’s Loss and the Work of Mourning Jacques Derrida,” *Rhizomes* 10 (Spring 2005), <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue10/orourke.htm>; and the forthcoming *Derrida and Queer Theory*, ed. Michael O’Rourke (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

²⁶ Derrida writes: “[O]n the topic of this name, ‘nuclear criticism,’ I foresee that soon, after this colloquium, programs and departments in universities may be created under this title, as programs or departments of ‘women’s studies’ or ‘black studies’ and more recently of ‘peace studies’ have been created... .” In Derrida, “No Apocalypse, Not Now,” 30.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁸ Walter M. Miller, Jr., *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 62, 26; original emphasis. Miller was a tail gunner and radio operator in U.S. Army Air Force bombers during the Second World War, and in 1944 his crew flew in the missions that destroyed the abbey at Monte Cassino, Italy, the oldest monastery in the West and the site where St. Benedict wrote the *Regula Benedicti*. Allied commanders were convinced—wrongly, it turned out—that the abbey was being used by German forces as an artillery observation post. Fortunately, two German officers had arranged the previous year for the priceless contents of the abbey’s archives, library, and gallery to be evacuated to the Vatican. Miller evidently did not realize until he was drafting *A Canticle*’s penultimate scene that the novel was his response—perhaps, in part, a reparative one—to his wartime experience.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁰ The novel’s three books are set in 2560 C.E. (“Fiat Homo”), 3174 C.E. (“Fiat Lux”), and 3781 C.E. (“Fiat Voluntas Tua”).

³¹ Miller, *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, 273.

³² *Ibid.*, 96.

³³ *Ibid.*, 282, 289.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 239.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 334.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 153-54.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 282, 286.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 292-93.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 314-15.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 275, 272.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 330, 332.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 333.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁴⁶ One important transtemporal figure I don’t discuss in the body of the essay is the hermit Benjamin, or Eleazar, the one character who seems to persist through all

three books of *A Canticle*. His age (he claims to be 3,209 in the year 3174 C.E.) would make him the same Lazarus resurrected by Christ, as if having been raised from the dead he could not then die. Benjamin appears to be the last Jew in the Catholic world of the novel; his longevity associates him with the medieval figure of the Wandering Jew, who taunted Jesus on the Via Dolorosa and was cursed to wander the earth until the second coming. Despite Benjamin's status as the narrative's exception (to mortality, to Christianity), his persistence across millennia allies him with the novel's other figures and forms of recalcitrant temporality. For an engaging discussion of Benjamin and of the broader importance of Jewishness for Miller's account of the abbey and its mission, see Amy Hungerford, *The Holocaust of Texts: Genocide, Literature, and Personification* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 67-71.

⁴⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 10. The essay was first read at a colloquium in London in 1994.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1, 100.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Benjamin Kahan, "'The Viper's Traffic Knot': Celibacy and Queerness in the 'Late' Marianne Moore," *GLQ* 14, no. 4 (September 2008): 509-35; and *Celibacies: American Modernism and Sexual Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

⁵⁰ Patrick R. Mullen, *The Poor Bugger's Tool: Irish Modernism, Queer Labor, and Postcolonial History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 6.

⁵¹ Lee Edelman comment, in Dinshaw et al., "Theorizing Queer Temporalities," 181.