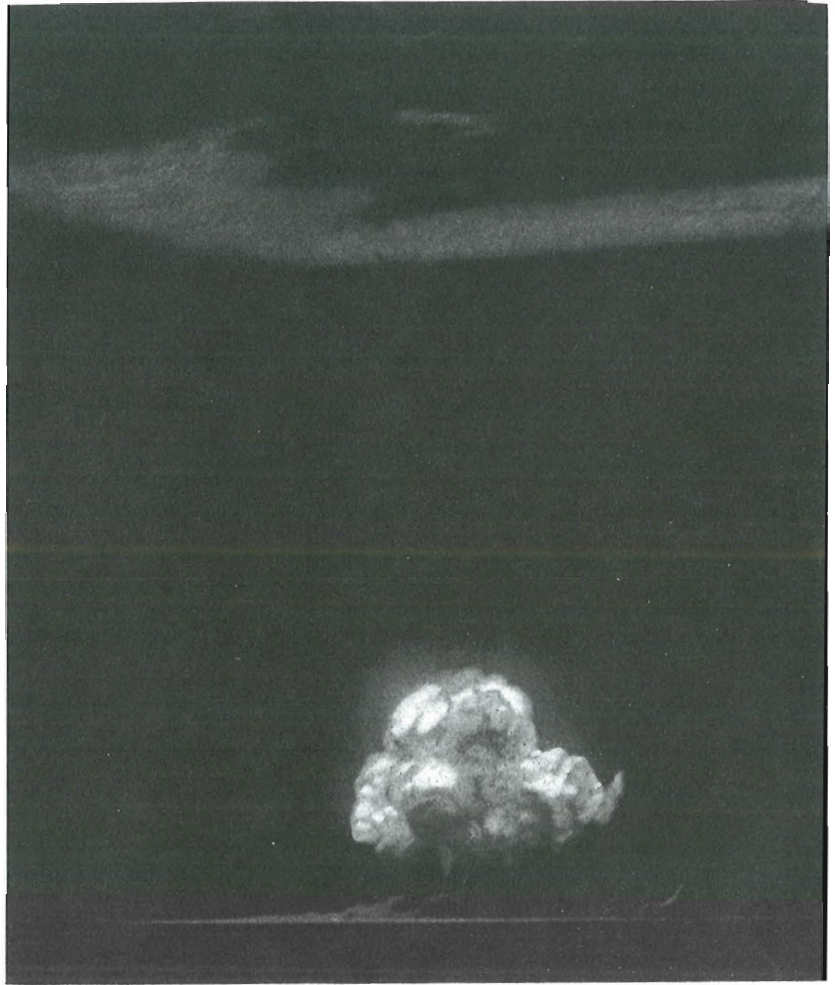


IMAGINING THE ATOMIC AGE

Life and the Atom

Central to the atomic age is the visual: pictures that promise to carry the meaning of this epoch, to represent its complexities with new forms, so that we might understand and embrace it. Declaring a universal event, universal hope, and universal peril, the atomic age has presented itself as a global age, transcending boundaries of language, class, education, and culture, and demanding a new universality of form and rhetoric to match. Yet it is a peculiarly American mythos—promoted and exploited throughout the world, but originating here, where the atomic age began.

To the people of Japan, and to most of the peoples of the world, the dominating image of the atomic age is one of holocaust—horrible pictures of blindness, deafness, pain, disease, loss, and death. But this is not what Americans saw when they opened their magazines, journals, and newspapers from August 1945 to the comprehensive test-ban treaties of the early 1960s. For them, the dominant image was the atomic cloud, rising mightily from an indeterminate landscape, towering to the sky (Figure 5.1). Though there were important exceptions to this campaign of imagery, the dominant American version of the atomic age was a presentation for a witness, a passive consumer located at some distance, protected and privi-



TOWERING ABOVE THE NEW MEXICO DESERT THE COLUMN OF HOT GASES CREATED BY FIRST ATOMIC EXPLOSION LIGHTS THE GROUND AND THE CLOUDS OVERHEAD

FIRST ATOMIC BOMB

Epoch's opening is shown in color

The first atomic explosion, which has been called the beginning of the second epoch in history, is the only authentic epoch-making event to be recorded in full color. In the picture above, color film has preserved an infinitesimal fraction of the explosion's overwhelming light. It shows the great mushroom cloud which zoomed into the stratosphere after the first brilliant

flash. Inside the cloud were lattices of atoms of the gas surrounding the explosion and of the vaporized steel tower which had held the bomb. Nine miles away, saturated with ionizing fission to protect them from long range ultraviolet harm, were the scientists who developed the bomb. As they watched the light of the explosion the earth trembled and they listened for cry-

Figure 5.1. "First Atomic Bomb," *Life*, November 19, 1945.

leged. And the dominant theater of presentation was America's premiere picture magazine, *Life*.

Through *Life* the atomic age truly found its form, as symbol and myth—that is, as a visual icon and as a narrative, whether condensed into a photo-essay or stretched across a decade of sustained presentation and modulation. Inserted into *Life*'s universal visual democracy, into its combination of folksy intimacy and

overbearing authority, into its breathy pseudodocumentary seaminess and its cult of visual pleasure, the atomic bomb and its terror found a form of cultural legitimacy. If we wish to study the atomic age, we must start with the pages of *Life*.

The iconography of that atomic era is interesting. From the earliest representations of the atomic explosion to the last, we can observe subtle variations on a

single, compelling, ever-repeated image: the mushroom cloud, rising above enemy lands, paradise islands, or wasteland deserts. One theme of *Life's* presentation of the atomic age was the reassuring pleasure of that sight. But to study this magazine and its complex dance with the forces of atomic destruction and promise is to find something far more interesting than a string of illustrations; it is to discover a narrative, sometimes forceful and sometimes hesitant, but rarely direct, that proposed the path from a terrifying dark present to a shining future. To look at *Life* in this regard is to discover a complex set of stages in America's accommodation to the atomic bomb, beginning with incomprehension and ending with something beyond dispassion, something closer to acceptance. More than a simple response to the realities of atomic warfare and the exigencies of time, this myth of the atomic age was also a process of cultural adaptation in which the dominant cultural institutions of the time directed the flow of images and meanings.

Using the mass-market picture magazine *Life* to propose this narrative of accommodation affords us more than the benefit of condensation. *Life* was the preeminent popular outlet of the immediate postwar years. From its first issue in the fall of 1936 *Life* was a sellout; by 1937 it was selling a million copies every issue; in 1956 circulation peaked at 5.8 million paid subscribers, with a pass-through readership estimated at 75 million or more.¹

To reach this level of success, *Life* mastered a form of mass-culture production that spoke to and spoke for middle-class Americans. *Life* reflected its audience's beliefs and predilections, and re-presented those beliefs in a language of comfortable and comprehensible symbols. But *Life* also directed and modified the beliefs of its audience: it was a teacher of values, shaping American attitudes by careful choices in what made up the weekly "news" and how it went into American homes, doctors' offices, dentists' waiting rooms, and all the other places where a copy might be found.

Writing in 1948, *Life's* publisher, Henry Luce, pro-

posed for his magazine something close to a mission: "Life as it is lived in America today is a strange and wonderful tension between the particular problems of little people (all of us and our families) and the surge of great 'historic forces.' . . . If we can bring together in one magazine a feeling for all the little 'human' problems and all the little episodes of human life together with an awareness and intelligent disclosure of the 'great historic' forces—that surely will be a great achievement."²

The politics of the atomic age formed one of the central strains in *Life's* combination of reportage and propaganda. Week after week through nearly two decades between the end of World War II and the development of a comprehensive test-ban treaty, *Life* found something of interest in the atomic age and its products for "the little people" and something for the "surge of great historic forces." For *Life's* editorial staff and its readers, the atomic age was one of the central issues facing postwar America; looking at the atomic culture, *Life* found the basic lessons facing American democracy in a time of peril and promise.

The role of interpreter and spokesperson conformed to the larger vision *Life* had of itself. From its first issues, *Life* was a magazine devoted to the modern consolidation of technology, power, capital, and government, and it consistently advocated programs and projects that reflected this centralization. Beginning with the cover story of the first issue on the Fort Peck dam project, *Life* had used its trademark blend of photographs, visual layout, captions, and human-interest stories to create a broad if unspoken narrative celebrating the taming of nature in service to human progress.

To intervene in this moment of doubt and confusion, to still fears (or direct them), and to awaken and direct middle-class America's image of itself and its country was a natural extension of the larger mission *Life* had carved for itself. And yet the magazine was but one part of a larger chain of cultural and political institutions not only reassuring, but also exploiting the fears and doubts of a nation in the uneasy transition between two eras.

A JAP BURNS

He refuses to leave Barneo hiding place so flamethrower kills him

MISTAKEN SOLDIER ON BURNED DEER FLAMETHROWER ON JAP HIDING PLACE
 MOMENT LATER JAP WHO WOULDN'T GET OUTKICKED ENVELOPED IN FLAMES
 WITH LIQUID FIRE BATING AT HIS FEET JAP BATTERED THROUGH UNRECOGNIZABLE
 REMAINS AND STILL BURNING HE MARKS ADVISORY READY FOR SUPPORT, PAPER

MUSHROOMS *fresh from the hothouse*

—make a truly wonderful soup

From the first spoonful you know this is going to be delicious soup — that you'll make it again. Choose the bottom of the plate. For Campbell's Cream of Mushroom Soup is a happy combination of mushroom and cream.

The fact is, the mushrooms are actually cooked from the hothouse for Campbell's. It's here we that all their freshness, tenderness and delicate flavor go into the soup. And the cream, added for smoothness and richness, is pasteurized in advance. Heating the two is a soup-making art — mixing the soup is it real? For if you enjoy an everyday fresh meat.

Campbell's
CREAM OF MUSHROOM SOUP

BY ORDER OF UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Figure 5.2. “A Jap Burns” and advertisement for Campbell’s soup, *Life*, August 13, 1945. (Courtesy Campbell Soup Company)

Life's coverage of the atomic age began on August 20, 1945, two weeks after the bombing of Hiroshima. Printing lag time had made it impossible for the magazine to rush a pictorial account into print, and editors chose to use the time to devise a complex and comprehensive coverage of the atomic bomb and its implications. This delay was significant, for it reminds us of the particular role *Life* proposed for itself—not as a journal of news competing with radio and daily newspapers, nor even as a “news weekly” that organized and edited the week’s events (that was the role of *Life's* sister-publication, *Time*), but rather as an interpreter and director of interpretations, a shaper of attitudes. *Life's* editors saw the events of early August as so momentous that to present them in disjointed form, to present them without appropriately spectacular visual materials, would be to abrogate their position in American mass culture.

It is worth noting what *did* show up in the magazine

during that week of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Japanese surrender (August 13, 1945), because it provides important clues to the context within which *Life's* editors and writers presented the circumstances of atomic warfare. The cover story represented one theme: a celebration of the new Air Force jets, presenting technology as the key to a new, victorious democratic alliance. But this was actually the third of three articles that anticipated the final days of the war against the Japanese. First was a double-page spread called “The Jap Homeland: Allies Give It a Terrific Beating,” which included nine photographs depicting the aerial and sea attacks on the islands of Honshu. “Besides the . . . lands . . . over which U.S. ground troops may soon have to fight,” the article said, “these pictures showed what an unmerciful beating the Jap has been taking.” The final paragraph accompanying this spread contained the only direct report of the atomic bombing, a brief statement inserted at the one

point in the issue where its absence would have compromised *Life's* reputation for newsworthiness. "And something far more terrible was yet to come," read this insert. "On August 5 an American plane dropped the first atomic bomb on the Jap base at Hiroshima. Said President Truman, 'If [the Japanese] do not now accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth.'"³

Life's photo-essay packaged the atomic bombing of Hiroshima as a continuation of conventional warfare, intensified by divine right. Truman's warning of "a rain of ruin from the air" echoed warnings from the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation and proposed that the atomic bombing was a divine act rather than one of human retribution.

This sense of retribution depended on that most essential of wartime propaganda strategies, the dehumanization and demonization of the enemy. The air force pictures of August 13 showed no people—only ships, buildings, and landscapes battered by Allied attack. But turn the page, and you would have seen in gruesome sequence, from flamethrower attack to final grisly death, the immolation of a Japanese soldier in Borneo (Figure 5.2). This essay presented the Japanese in their most demonic guise, as "the enemy," implacable, fanatical, "the Japs" who "fought from caves, from pillboxes, from every available hiding place." "Easily the most cruel, the most terrifying weapon ever developed . . . but so long as the Jap refuses to come out of his holes and keeps killing, this is the only way." This concluding paragraph, originally meant to describe the flamethrower, had by August 13, 1945, come to suggest instead the new and more powerful superweapon, even more cruel, yet by implication equally necessary to punish the inhuman enemy.⁴

These early pieces had three of the essential elements that dominated the postwar presentation of atomic warfare: packaging the bomb as a continuation of other, accepted forms of conventional aerial warfare; presenting its use as a necessary shocking strike to halt an irrationally suicidal enemy; and marking its dif-

ference as an indicator of Biblical retribution, the product of God wielded by the righteous against the unrighteous.

Between the immolated soldier and the striking flight views of America's first jet airplane were pages of very different pictures and text. Opposite "A Jap Burns" was a color advertisement for Campbell Soup Company's cream of mushroom soup titled "Mushrooms: Fresh from the Hothouse." On the next page was a pair of spreads full of happy Caucasian babies—one a color ad for soaps, the other a black-and-white piece on the orphaned children of German ss soldiers. These images provided the context within which atomic warfare was couched—a context of normalcy, of safety and pleasure, of innocence and continuity. This duality—of violence and disruption set against the reassuring safety of the everyday—recurred repeatedly as *Life* developed its stance on the atomic age.

On August 20, 1945, *Life* published its full treatment of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the end of the war, and the opening of the atomic age. In so doing, the magazine's editors asserted their postwar role as interpreters of a disturbing new era in human history. The boldly graphic spread on the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with its telegraphic headlines and air force aerial views, formed the opening salvo in that first presentation. It proposed the bombings as the end of things; "B-29s Almost Finished Job," the headline said, between views of the atomic cloud and aerial photographs of the destroyed cities. "Strategic bombing . . . had already ripped the guts out of Japan's great cities," the article said, and the pictures of Tokyo and Kobe were virtually indistinguishable from those of Hiroshima. And the text ended with a quote from an air force general: "Wouldn't it be an odd thing if these were the only two atomic bombs ever dropped?"⁵

The second spread, symmetrically located toward the end of the issue, proposed a great beginning, "a new era," in which American "scientists have harnessed nature's basic force," "the end of one world and the

start of a new one.” In an uncharacteristically wordy history of the Manhattan Project, *Life* proposed that the atomic bomb was the result of high intellectual and moral courage, sacrifice, and utopian planning.⁶

Surprisingly, within this reassuring package of words, images dominated. They dominated as pictures, and as word-pictures. The unifying element of the Manhattan Project history was the story of the Alamogordo test explosion some months before, “that stormy morning on that outlandish terrain,” the event “no one really could describe . . . a phenomenon unique in human experience” and an event shot through with visual spectacle, pleasurable and terrifying—the atomic sublime.⁷ Into this tale of endings and beginnings, these first visuals of the atomic age overlaid a different duality—of panorama and of microcosm. Aerial views of cities destroyed offered a distanced, omniscient rationality within which Hiroshima before and Hiroshima after looked not significantly different: cleaned, perhaps even sanitized, of the traces of an unpleasant and now impotent enemy. What was missing were pictures of the destruction from below, from the human standpoint rather than the gods’. Such pictures remained censored and suppressed for years, leaving the field to these dispassionate representations of rationalized destruction.

In the panoramas of the second essay, however, a more complex discourse appeared—a discourse of spectatordom and spectacle. *Life*’s staff artists presented paintings of men at work in a dramatic desert landscape dominated by a looming tower, turning, overwhelmed, from the blast of this new creation and, as tiny silhouettes, staring in awe at the rising “pillar” that, the caption tells us, “blossoms” before them. “Here was . . . the prize at the end of a death race between nations,” “a light of unearthly brilliance . . . awesome . . . so spectacular that observers were too stunned to pay much attention to the air blast and the sound . . . a huge fiery cloud of many colors, . . .” a sight so intense that “an observer who had the temerity to face the explosion suffered temporary blindness and permanent damage to his vision. . . .”⁸

This last word-picture is important: it presents a symbolic first casualty of the atomic age—“an observer,” not a victim but one whose folly was lack of self-restraint and whose punishment was loss of sight. The image is drawn obliquely from the ancient Greek stories of Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods and was punished for eternity, and of the inventor-scientist Daedalus, whose overambitious child flew too close to the sun and fell into the sea after his father’s invention failed.

This opening on the atomic age thus served to locate the new in ancient Western myths and contexts. But more prominent, and more significant, was the imbedding of this new age within the European Romantic traditions of visual pleasure, spectatordom, emotion, and nature known as the sublime.⁹ *Life*’s presentation of the atomic test at Alamogordo proposed atomic holocaust as a natural phenomenon, in which Promethean science awakened natural forces, and these forces released visual spectacles that overwhelmed the witness with visuality rather than death or injury. In this opening document of the atomic age, humans did not die; no one suffered radiation injury or burns, no one was underneath the explosion or within it. Instead, they, and we, were above it, or far away, in some zone of spectatordom. I say “we” because it is important, I think, to propose two interrelated sets of spectators: the observers who we see in the pictures and *Life*’s middle-class readers then (and ourselves, now). Opening the pages of *Life*, readers became witnesses, and that witnessing was visual first and most of all an essential part of the atomic sublime.¹⁰

Life’s viewers accepted a passive relationship with the overwhelming destruction they witnessed; they were neither threatened by, nor responsible for, this phenomenon of nature. They found themselves in league with Truman, echoed by *Life*, who said that the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were forms of Biblical vengeance upon an aggressor for which Americans need not feel guilt.

Such a picture, literal and figurative, proposed an

impossible equation, or at least, an equation contradicted by other elements of the emerging mythology of the atomic age. Humans had created this new nature; they must then somehow be implicated in its effects. But this was where a different iteration of the atomic sublime applied: an awesome nature located not in the vast powers of the mushroom cloud but in the submicroscopic order and beauty of the atom. This was a theme proposed in August 20, 1945, in the photo-essay "The Atomic Bomb," *Life's* attempt to educate its readers about the physics of the atomic age. In images that alternated representations of minuscule particles with accounts of near-infinite releases of energy, "millions of electron volts," "enormous atomic explosion[s]," and the creation of a new element, plutonium, the article offered magical entry into the subatomic universe. Viewers turned the page to see dramatic pictures of mysterious "atom-smashing machines" and dark-suited, serious scientists ministering to the machines or grouped in the foreground discussing their experiments.¹¹

To look at *Life's* articles, picture-essays, and news reports on the atomic age over the next decade is to be struck by how fully that August 20, 1945, issue encompassed the developing mythology of the atomic age. To trace this path in issue after issue is to see not so much transformation or development, but an unfolding of the implications contained in that first issue. As the pictures of Hiroshima and Nagasaki appeared in the magazine, for example, they served not as shocking counters to this aestheticized view, but as variations on the romantic sublime, as meditations on ruins rather than condemnations of the makers of ruins. Both types presented the deflection of horror into the distance, in photographs of destruction that presented the wrecked city without inhabitants, a ruin brought on by natural cataclysm, earthquake, perhaps. Or, like the paintings of the German romantic Caspar David Friedrich, they offered moral lessons—as was the case, for example, in a photograph in the October 15, 1945, issue titled "Statue of Christ Lies Intact in Bombed Nagasaki."¹²

Against this dispassionate, distanced view came the recurrent and increasingly spectacular images of atomic explosions. In November 1945 the Manhattan Engineer District released the first color photographs of the New Mexico test. "First Atomic Bomb: Epoch's Opening Is Shown in Color," blared the *Life* headline (see Figure 5.1). The full-page picture showed a brilliant eruption set against a dawn sky, a spectacle of nature set in a mass-culture icon of nature worship: the desert at sunrise.

The text was in its own way even more radical, for it endowed this beauty with the power of absolution. Here is the accompanying paragraph:

The first atomic explosion, which has been called the beginning of the second epoch in history, is the only authentic epoch-making event to be recorded in full color. In the picture above, color film has preserved an infinitesimal fraction of the explosion's appalling light. It shows the great luminous cloud which zoomed into the stratosphere after the first brilliant flash. Inside the cloud were battered atoms of the air surrounding the explosion and of the vaporized steel tower which had held the bomb. Nine miles away, smeared with sunburn lotion to protect them from long-range ultraviolet burns, were the scientists who developed the bomb. As they watched the light of the explosion the earth trembled and they danced for joy.¹³

Here was the bright sublime, "appalling," yet "brilliant," "luminous," "great," and "authentic."

This joyous, celebratory, and redemptive dance with divinity did not encompass the mythology of the atomic age as *Life* presented it. Instead, it served as one pole of a radical bifurcation, between spectacle and victim, between the omnipotent eye watching over all and the helpless subject, small, terrified, powerless. This was the theme presented in the photo-essay immediately preceding "First Atomic Bomb." Titled "Imaginary 36-Hour War," the discussion of an early report on the possibilities of atomic warfare proposed a dark sublime of terror and impotence, laced with adjectives of gothic disintegration: the "ghastli-

est," most "terrible," "devastating" catastrophe.¹⁴ This proposal, of the reader as victim, and the human brotherhood a brotherhood of pain and death, drew, if only obliquely, on references in a pair of earlier reports on the destruction at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Hiroshima account, titled "What Ended the War," contained most of the benevolent tendencies we have traced: presenting the ruins of Hiroshima as vestiges of a natural catastrophe, mediating the images of destruction with its remarkable view of the mushroom cloud over Nagasaki, and even reasserting the image of the bombing as a return of the "terrible swift sword" of divine vengeance. But it also reported the lingering torture of radiation injury.¹⁵

Look at an October 1945 photo-essay titled "Tokyo Express Arrives in Bomb-Scarred Hiroshima." Here again, the pictures and captions in a nine-page spread sought to normalize the bomb. Beginning with a picture of the train arriving at Hiroshima station, the article said the "bomb blast blew away sheds but did not destroy track bed" and "Tokyo's stationmaster, who sold Photographer Eyerman a second-class ticket to Hiroshima for 165 yen (\$11) and thought Americans should not pay." Featuring pictures of soldiers jamming a coach, the scenery, including mountains, a "rural shrine, a quaint structure," and "schoolchildren, carrying their books and parasols," the photo-essay finally ended with pictures of the victims. Yet even these showed children of Hiroshima in "colorful, full-length knickers" and parasols, marred only by their "nose and mouth masks of gauze." And the morbid connotations of those masks, *Life's* caption editors reassured readers, was that this was simply a common Japanese custom, originally adopted by "the Japs in the '20s as a safeguard against influenza," which suggests a correspondence between the plague of Hiroshima and the flu, both in intensity and in natural origin.¹⁶

The last double-page photo spread showed "atomic bomb victims . . . suffering from burns and fractures." But even these two views were defused by their caption. The first criticized the medical conditions of the hos-

pitals, an indictment, it seems, of Japanese response rather than Allied generosity. The second caption was more striking—"Photographer Eyerman reported their injuries looked like those he had seen when he photographed men burned at Pearl Harbor . . ."—a double reference to the continuousness of atomic and conventional warfare and the atrocity of Pearl Harbor.¹⁷ The final picture, a full-page image, showed a family praying at a Buddhist temple in Hiroshima.

This early presentation of human injury hinted at the November warning on the consequences of atomic warfare. The double image—the dark sublime of the victim and the bright sublime of the witness—did not include the Japanese casualties of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They were, as article after article recapitulated, the legitimate casualties of war, provoked by Japanese imperialism and contained only with this overwhelming retributive weapon.

This, then, was the way *Life* introduced the atomic age. On one side, the bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the powerful ends of an older era, in which a wise and divinely sanctioned Allied leadership conquered tyranny and imperialism. On the other side was the beginning of a new age—the atomic age. Here the atomic bomb was subsumed under a larger rubric: atomic energy, a force of divine origins, a force of nature, benignant and awesome when folded within the larger rationality of science and the benevolent meritocracy of the American scientific establishment.

Over the next decade, this double narrative of endings and beginnings reappeared in more and more sophisticated form. It was perhaps most effective in the story of "Peace City," published in September 1947. There, *Life* reported, "a startled world read that Hiroshima, proclaiming itself the new world mecca for peace, had held a carnival. . . . Hiroshima seemed to have risen from the dead." From this day forward, *Life* said, Japan had relocated itself from the narrative of endings to the narrative of beginnings. To emphasize this proposal, *Life* ended its narrative with the story of Kiyosji Kikawa, "a survivor [who] hopes his wounds will

serve peace." Here for the first time, *Life* called a Japanese casualty of the atomic bombings a "victim," a telling shift from its previous terms—"casualty" and "survivor," morally neutral terms for military losses. Yet it was this victim's wish "to be sent to the U.S. so doctors can experiment with my body. It does not matter if I die as long as I can be of some use to a world at peace." Named a "victim," Kiyosji Kikawa ended up a self-proclaimed martyr, sacrificing himself to absolve his fellow Japanese for their wartime aggression, absolving the Americans for the horror of their retribution.¹⁸

If "Peace City" declared the absolution of the Allies, it also accompanied anxiety in America. Articles on the radiation injuries of the Japanese surfaced periodically; their goal was to remind American readers not of what had happened to the Japanese, but of what might happen to Americans. As Russian advances in atomic and nuclear technology brought the possibility of massive atomic warfare home to middle-class households, however, the visual imagery of *Life's* photo-essays rose eloquently to respond with the beauty and managed theatrics of the atomic sublime. Picture spreads on the scientific miracles of atomic energy ranged from the homely (as in "25 Million-Volt Cancer Treatment" of 1949) to the spectacular. Scientists posed heroically, deep in thought or tending their technological tools, reinforcing the call for "the little people" (to remember publisher Luce's words for his readers) to place their faith in a centralized scientific, governmental, and military elite, and embrace the receding mirage of world-government and global weapons control. These themes represented the mediating forces over atomic terror. At the other extreme was an evermore sophisticated, and seductive, aesthetic of atomic pleasure and witness. Between 1948 and 1952 we can see such a mythology evolve, as the images of spectatorship recurred, bringing the celebrity and the everyman soldier before the altar of atomic grandeur, and as the images appeared in more and more compelling and seductive guise.

This mythology did not develop spontaneously. Between 1945 and May 1952 the images *Life* published

came not from their photographers but from the army's Manhattan Engineer District (the M.E.D. was the formal military entity known colloquially as the Manhattan Project) and its quasicivilian successor, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). At M.E.D. headquarters, military leaders, like Gen. Leslie R. Groves, and public-relations specialists, like George Robinson, worked with civilian press representatives to orchestrate and regulate the mythology of the atomic age.¹⁹

Life, then, served as one within a chain of institutions shaping the postwar narrative of the atomic age. To see the AEC releases and to trace the carefully managed events where the press first watched an atomic test from News Nob in Nevada is to witness an orchestrated propaganda campaign designed to create obedience to the centralized powers of the state. In this early, tightly controlled stage of atomic imagery, the most-repeated narratives told of benevolent militarists and benevolent scientists seeking permanent global peace through the development of preventive atomic weaponry. And *Life* obediently presented this narrative in stories about the first atomic tests at Bikini, in special reports from the various atomic weapons labs, and in full-page or even double-page spreads of spectacular color photography of atomic clouds. That is one aspect of the atomic culture: a campaign by centralized forces to neutralize or direct fear. But it is not the only theme nor, I suspect, the dominant one. Too many disruptions and counter events unsettled this crusade, and each disruption tore at this program of directed propaganda.

To a large extent, this undermining force resulted from the failure of the government and military authorities to fully regulate press coverage. As long as the M.E.D. and the AEC maintained strict controls over the content and form of reportage and imagery, the result was a coherent and persuasive knitting of ideology and mythos. Before 1952 these agencies controlled who entered the test sites, where they stood, what they saw, and when they left. At such events, "staged" took on an increasingly literal flavor, and the resulting texts



WHEREVER YOU LOOK THERE'S DANGER IN LAS VEGAS

Figure 5.3. "Wherever You Look There's Danger in Las Vegas," *Life*, November 12, 1951. (Courtesy Corbis)

Little Las Vegas, Nev., is a wide-open town that is quite accustomed to spinning as dizzily as a roulette wheel. But even for Las Vegas last week was a full week. The first shock came Tuesday night when the town's 13 bookies met and decided to quit business rather than pay a 10% federal tax. Only a few hours later, at 3 a.m. on Wednesday, Marion Davies flew into town with an old friend, "Uncle Horace" Brown, and married him (p. 11). Dozens of citizens, and some newsmen too, forgot all about the

bomb tests at nearby Frenchman Flat and swarmed to the ceremony instead. After the surrender by the bookies and Miss Davies, residents of Las Vegas were hardly surprised on Thursday morning when a fleecy white atomic cloud drifted in toward the city, producing a picture (*above*) that illustrates two of the riskier aspects of life in the 20th Century. The cloud's performance, however, was not just for Las Vegas—it announced that U.S. GIs had been given an awesome preview of the war of the future (*next page*).

came to resemble official scripts and the pictures either came directly from the press kit or were made under close watch by public affairs officers and security police. The results sounded and looked like stage dramas, even down to the lighting and the proscenium-style angle of view.

In 1952, after seven years, the AEC loosened its hold. Reporters and photographers were given freer access to the sites, especially the newer ones in the deserts of Nevada. Tests in the South Pacific had meant press representatives stayed on naval vessels or they landed on small cordoned beachheads at neigh-

boring atolls, locations scouted and designed by military representatives.

Everything changed in Nevada. While the sites themselves remained off-limits and AEC or army vehicles shuttled press representatives to and from designated locales, the visual boundaries of those sites were porous. In part this was the result of a change in the venue for atomic testing and the establishment of testing seasons in the deserts of Nevada. Enterprising photographers began to stake out the test sites, producing memorable pictures. One of the most celebrated was *Life's* "Wherever You Look There's Danger in Las Vegas," a "Picture of the Week" published in November 1951 (Figure 5.3).²⁰

At first, this new freedom did not bring a corresponding counterimagery. As the army began bringing soldiers into the atomic testing arena, it sought to reassure Americans that the dangers were minimal. One method was to invite newsmen to the spectacle zone; the result was better than the AEC had imagined. Not simply recapitulating the older controlled views from the South Pacific sites, these new pictures dramatically increased the theatrical effects and inserted them within familiar American landscapes and stories: the Great American Desert and the movie western, most of all. There were now images of awestruck observers and spectacular pictures by *Life's* star photographers using state-of-the-art lighting techniques and trademark photographic tricks and novelties (shots into concave and convex mirrors, mushroom clouds reflected in military sunglasses or goggles, and the like). These brought an upsurge in the aesthetics of the sublime, with soldiers and newsmen vying to look more awestruck about the visual pyrotechnics and more blasé about the dangers.²¹

This was, however, only half of the strategy. At Eniwetok atoll and Bikini, where the first hydrogen-bomb tests were being concurrently held, strict secrecy took precedence. Such a bifurcation was essential from a security standpoint; the desire of American political and military figures to keep the H-bomb far from Russian

eyes was powerful, and the experiments themselves were highly speculative. Whereas the events at News Nob in Nevada were predictable, controlled, and photogenic, the events at Eniwetok atoll were not.

Two trends quickly surfaced to undercut the monopoly on the atomic mythos. The disconcerting flow of events formed the first: from accidents at Eniwetok to the Russian development of the H-bomb came a situation no military censor could control, nor patriotic editorial board ignore or suppress. But these events could be interpreted within the pages of the magazine; and here, in the decisions of editors and writers, lay a second phenomenon—a decisive trend toward a certain darker and more alarming vision on the part of *Life*.

The period from mid-1949 to spring 1954 did not lack disturbing events to feed this trend. In September 1949 President Truman announced that the Russians had exploded their first atomic weapon. Three years later, American scientists blasted their first hydrogen thermonuclear device, and within a year the Russians had followed suit. Just months into 1954, a hydrogen-bomb test at Eniwetok atoll went out of control, shooting fallout far into the atmosphere and claiming the atomic age's first innocent victims—Japanese fishermen on a trawler named the *Fukuryu Maru*.

None of these events could be ignored, but there were ways of interpreting and presenting them that might ameliorate their terror and downplay their implications. In this regard, *Life's* editors seem to have chosen a double path. On the one hand, the magazine presented its readers with spectacular images that might rouse any adult to panic and any child to nightmares. Such was the case, for example, with its presentation in September 1952 of the earliest images of the human effects of atomic war—the Japanese photographs of the hours and days after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Figures 5.4 and 5.5). These images, crumbling and damaged, showed people—no longer "Japs," no longer "the enemy," but simply people—hurt and helpless, terrified, wandering in shock,



Above: Figure 5.4. Dazed victim, from "Nagasaki," *Life*, September 29, 1952.

Opposite: Figure 5.5. Advertisement for Glamorene carpet cleaner and "When Atom Bomb Struck—Uncensored," *Life*, September 29, 1952.

"burned children," half-destroyed hospitals, and desperate families caring for their doomed offspring.²²

The editor's opening text, with its melodramatic declarations and compelling language, amplified the powerful new imagery. Here for the first time, Americans saw pictures of the radiation-sick "walking dead." They read captions like HURT AND HOMELESS, DOOMED CHILD, STRIPPED HOSPITAL, LAST DRINK, and longer descriptions drenched with emotional and symbolic power.

Such a potent combination was also applied to *Life's* April 1954 special photo-essays on the implications of the H-bomb for domestic terror. "5-4-3-2-1 and the Hydrogen Age Is Upon Us," in the April 12 issue, included images of worried American scientists and military men and views of American cities overdrawn with graphic circles of destruction and underscored by phrases like "scientists were astonished" and "a stunned nation." *Life's* writer used the code word of the sublime—"awesome"—early in this issue-spanning series, but countered with words like "menace" and "horror" toward the end.²³

Both the magazine and the larger culture the era produced undercut the effect of this darker, more terrible face on the symbolism of the atomic age. The immense popularity of the atomic sublime had, by 1954, made spectacular images of atomic tests a virtual staple of the magazine, and after each terrifying disruption came the recurrent images of awe and beauty, reinserting atomic holocaust in the context of spectacular nature, succoring fears and neutralizing terror. Thus, the week after "5-4-3-2-1 and the Hydrogen Age Is Upon Us," *Life's* editors chose to run the first cover image of the atomic sublime, "The Awesome Fireball," on April 19, 1954 (Figure 5.6). One week later, the "Speaking of Pictures" section of the magazine featured an interior decorator who liked to collage images and had used an early color picture of the atomic cloud in his work. The next week, "Fire and Ice" devoted two double-page spreads to the beauty of atomic destruction.²⁴

This process had a double effect. On one hand, the

newly emboldened writers and editors may have been supporting (inadvertently or purposefully) the national agenda by awakening fear and then leaving political figures to direct it toward patriotism and subservience to the state. We must not forget, after all, that this was not only the period of atomic escalation but also the era of the Korean War, when American men were drafted, fought, and died in Asian lands to counter an intangible communist threat. To demonize communism as a global menace rather than a local Korean dispute, to set the hardships of conventional war against the greater horrors of atomic war, was to press American democracy further toward a warlike culture of sacrifice and obedience.

The recurrent imagery of atomic sublimity served in some senses both to render acceptable the concept of atomic war and to neutralize it. This tendency—to numb emotion through repetition—was one side. The other was the more diffuse and uncontrolled process of normalization and domestication that occurred as pictures of atomic explosions and even of atomic-war ca-

sualties appeared inserted in the complex texts of the magazine itself. For readers did not just read one article or look at one picture-essay. They paged through the magazine, and what appeared before and after the atomic imagery served to recontextualize it—a process graphically brought home to us now when we come upon spreads of atomic images set next to an ad asking if readers had “trouble sleeping,” or thin columns of pictures of mushroom clouds set beside parallel columns of ads for headache medicine and shoe polish, or a promise of an auto-adjusting television set with images promising domestic salvation, opposite a multipicture spread titled “A-Bomb vs. House” (Figure 5.7).²⁵

Some of the double-page spreads seem on the face of it almost impossibly fortuitous: to sell insurance with one spread, to propose the anxieties of the atomic age as the rationale for insomnia with another. But the circumstance that brought these conjunctions ranged from pure chance to a highly complex and orchestrated program of sequencing watched over by the editors and approved by advertisers.

SHOE POLISH
DRINKS
SOOT
GREASE
even **GUM and TAR**

all vanish from rugs
with this magic new **CLEANER!**

GLANORIN
CARPET CLEANER

\$2.29

Leaves rugs bright, dry... Ready to walk on in minutes!



WHEN ATOM BOMB STRUCK—UNCENSORED

A collection of rare and shocking photographs, accompanied by the text of the original LIFE magazine issue, is now available in a new book. For the first time, the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are shown in their own words, as they describe the horror of the atomic bombing. The book is a powerful and moving account of the lives of the survivors, and the impact of the atomic bombing on the world. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of the atomic age.

WHEN ATOM BOMB STRUCK—UNCENSORED

Includes a view of Hiroshima.



COLOR PHOTOGRAPHS ADD VIVID REALITY TO NATION'S CONCEPT OF H-BOMB

The nation's awareness of the hydrogen age, to which it was introduced three weeks ago, grew in intensity last week as civil defense workers and other groups saw a different version of the televised film of "Operation Ivy." This was in color. Instead of a black and white shadow of the explosion, viewers saw in glaring redness the lashing fireball of the hydrogen device which vaporized Elugelab Island at Eniwetok on Nov. 1, 1952. Photographed through filters so dark they evoked all trace of the bright Pacific sunlight, the fireball lit up the clouds

above and the sea around as it seared away sands and coral beneath it. The Ivy color film has an "unclassified" security status, which means that it contains no information of use to a possible enemy. LIFE presents scenes from it in the spirit of President Eisenhower's address last week on the subject of the fears raised by threatening aspects of the world today, including the hydrogen bomb: "The greater awe of these apprehensions, the greater is the need that we look at them clearly, face to face, without fear, like honest, straightforward Americans..."

Right: Figure 5.6. "Color Photographs Add Vivid Reality to Nation's Concept of H-Bomb," *Life*, April 19, 1954. *Opposite:* Figure 5.7. Advertisement for Westinghouse televisions and "A-Bomb vs. House," *Life*, March 30, 1953. (Courtesy Westinghouse and J.R. Eyerman/TimePix)

In this regard, exigencies of printing technology shaped the narratives within each issue, but so did the decisions of advertisers. The process of setting up the "book" on each issue illustrates this complex interconnection. In the office of the managing editor, each week the walls became vertical mock-up boards for the final version, and as the week went on, the editorial and advertising sales staffs arranged and rearranged the sequence, the size of ads and articles, the scale of indi-

vidual pictures, and all the other elements that made up the finished product. Because color was slower to produce and more expensive, the location and nature of the color essays and ads were determined relatively early and remained stable.²⁶ The pictures of the atomic sublime, then, were fixed set-points in the issue's sequencing, and the rhetoric of the entire issue revolved around them to a marked degree.

To see the effects of this, look at the full-page spreads

New Westinghouse TV Picture adjusts itself automatically



WOMAN DARK OR LIGHT—PICTURE IS BRIGHT AUTOMATICALLY

Over 1000 times for first contrast, you need never touch the picture. From room light on to all the glare in that picture, picture itself automatically for the best brightness and contrast you want. Lights on... no washout. Lights off... no glare. You always see a perfect picture.

No Strains, No Flicker, No Flicker—choose you low Advanced Electronic Circuit keeps that picture clear automatically.

New Auto Selective automatically adjusts for optimal reception of local details of any in between station.

New Advanced Kinescope 100-miles-plus focus picture clear picture from longer distance than ever before possible.

Complete UHF Fixability lets you add one channel, or all channels, to any Westinghouse with UHF reception built in.

Never before has any television set offered so much for so little. Imagine Westinghouse with any other make. Now model at your dealer's store.

Photo Model for Home for \$100. For more info, see page 100 of *Life* magazine.

See the new model of Home for \$100. For more info, see page 100 of *Life* magazine.

YOU CAN BE SURE... IF IT'S

Westinghouse

made in U.S.A. by Westinghouse Electric Corporation, WESTINGHOUSE STUDIOS ONE, ... every week since 1914



A-BOMB CLOUD seen from inside the house... (Caption text is partially obscured)

A-BOMB VS. HOUSE

American had heard of all planes... (Main text of the article is partially obscured and difficult to read due to image quality and layout)



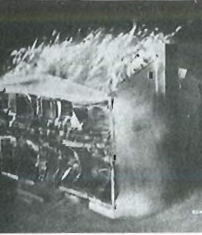
AT 10.15... (Caption text is partially obscured)



AT 11.15... (Caption text is partially obscured)



AT 11.30... (Caption text is partially obscured)



RECORDED BY BERT...

from the August 13, 1945, issue (Figure 5.2) and the September 29, 1952, issue in which "Uncensored" appeared (Figure 5.5). In the 1945 issue, the Campbell soup ad was the prime determinant of the spread and its location, for the Campbell Soup Company had a contract for a preordained location within the magazine and a set color format. Thus, *Life's* editors included the image of the flamethrower death, knowing what it would run against. In the 1952 issue, editors made a deliberate choice to use "Uncensored" as their lead editorial essay, literally putting the imprimatur of *Life* on the upper-right corner of the image of huddled victims at Nagasaki. This bold editorial decision, with its significant shift in stance and its spectacularly horrifying visual imagery, required that the editors conclude (quite possibly in consultation with the advertisers) that the combination would be neither offensive nor ineffective.

It is striking to look at this particular double-page spread not simply for its juxtaposition of a domestic interior with the flattened terrain of atomized Nagasaki, but for its counterpoising of two forms of domestic anx-

ity, in both of which families are threatened and sundered by environmental poisons, one of a supremely terrifying sort, the other of a mundane and everyday variety. To look at these two is to see the ways in which the editorial page must have served to awaken anxieties about family disintegration by an outside threat—a phenomenon similar to the ways neighborhoods experience a sudden rise in the purchase of fire extinguishers after a local house has burned. To say that this response trivialized the atomic holocaust would, however, be to misunderstand the ways *Life* penetrated into the intimate spheres of domestic life and the ways its horrifying imagery awoke a nationwide huddling fear.²⁷

In the end, *Life's* weekly interpenetration of images and themes served to insert the atomic age into the narrative of everyday life. Holocaust pictures might increase the sales of insurance, but ads for tourist havens and bad-breath cures served to neutralize that atomic anxiety as well, by presenting it as only one among many bodily, family, domestic, national, and global concerns. Just how effective was this neutralizing may

have been hinted at in a series of articles and editorials that appeared in *Life* and elsewhere in the late 1950s and early 1960s. There, politicians and editors wondered just why it was that Americans were so much less willing to respond to warnings about atomic warfare. On July 20, 1959, *Life's* editors went so far as to decry "public apathy" toward fallout-shelter programs. And both politicians and editors looked with alarm at the appearance of a large, articulate nuclear-protest movement in the United States and abroad.

The editors of *Life* never appear to have noticed the possibility of a connection between their magazine's marketing the imagery of the atomic age and a developing immunity to political and cultural exploitation of atomic fear. When *Life* presented its viewers with the last glorious, even-mannered representations of the atomic sublime in 1962, it marked the end of an era and signaled the immersion of atomic imagery into the sea of symbols that made up postwar American,

and global, culture. Today, a new generation of Americans has reached adulthood, a generation for whom the mushroom cloud is a historical curiosity and not a symbol laden with import and charged with emotion. For these global citizens, the combination of human terror, scientific utopianism, and aesthetic pleasure that marked the atomic sublime has shifted from the center of modern culture to its edges, and now, perhaps, approaches a cultural oblivion. As the last survivors and victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki die of old age and as the children of Cold War terror approach old age and death, new symbols and images replace those once so central to an era. And perhaps it is because of this diminishment in cultural relevance that we can begin, as historians, to analyze and understand the ways in which the highly charged visual imagery of atomic holocaust came to play a central role in Cold War American culture.

NOTES

I first wrote of this subject in 1989; a revised early draft appeared as Peter Hales, "The Atomic Sublime," *American Studies* (Spring 1991). Some segments of this essay also appeared, in similar form, in Peter Bacon Hales, "The Mass Aesthetic of Holocaust: American Media Construct the Atomic Bomb," in *Yearbook of the Japanese Association for American Studies* (Tokyo: JASA, 1996), 110–30, in 1996. None of the research for this work would have been possible without the assistance of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection at Northwestern University and its curator, Russell Malone. I am also grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities, which, some years ago, funded the early stages of my research in the subject, and to the Institute for the Humanities of the University of Illinois, Chicago, under whose auspices I was able to write early drafts for the larger study of which this is a part.

1. I am extrapolating here from James L. Baughman's report that the pass through—"the highest pass-along factor of any periodical"—reached as high as 17.3 per copy in 1938. Market research reported that, by the mid-1950s, more than 60 percent of all Americans over ten years of age had seen at least one issue. Baughman's analysis is quoted from his presentation at the symposium, "Looking at *Life*: Rethinking America's Favorite Magazine," University of Colorado, Boulder, September 14–17, 1995. See also Chapter 2 in this book by Baughman.

2. Loudon Wainwright, *The Great American Magazine: An Inside History of Life* (New York: Knopf, 1986), 173, and in Wendy Kozol, *Life's America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 39.
3. "The Jap Homeland: Allies Give It a Terrific Beating," *Life*, 13 August 1945, 32–33.
4. "A Jap Burns," *Life*, 13 August 1945, 34.
5. "The War Ends," *Life*, 20 August 1945, 25–31.
6. "Manhattan Project: Scientists Have Harnessed Nature's Basic Force," *ibid.*, 91–111.
7. *Ibid.*, 91.
8. *Ibid.*
9. The history of the sublime begins with Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Notions of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, published in 1757; but Burke was in fact reclaiming a concept that reached back to the first century philosopher Longinus, in his work *On the Sublime* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1985); Burke's position concerning the necessary presence of an edifying terror was countered by Kant's more sensational determination of the state—see the *Critique of Judgment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 99–100. An important general reference on the term and its meaning is Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). On the American sublime, see Mary

Arensberg, ed., *The American Sublime* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986); Elizabeth R. McKinsey, *Niagara Falls: Icon of the American Sublime* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and Earl A. Powell, "Luminism and the American Sublime," in John Wilmerding, ed., *American Light: The Luminist Movement, 1850–1875* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1989).

10. Readers will note that I am proposing the concept of the sublime not simply as a convenient trope for the experience of passive awe at the sight of infinite force; I am proposing that the pictures and written imagery that shaped and gave order to this "new thing" (to use the words of William L. Laurence, describing the Alamogordo test explosion) came from an explicit visual and cultural tradition. I have not argued this case in the text, but I will suggest the shape of such an argument. American conceptions of nature-as-spectacle follow a direct tradition. Writers and critics of landscape in particular referred often to the romantic concepts of the sublime and the beautiful as articulated by Burke and Kant, and the concept of the picturesque as it emerged as a mediating term in British landscape design and theory in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The most influential theorists of American aesthetics, in particular the philosopher-politician Thomas Jefferson and the painter-philosopher Thomas Cole, formed one connection that imported this form of nature-aesthetics from Europe. Scientists, and especially those scientists whose writings on American nature and the American landscape were most popular and widely read (and I am thinking here of the government scientist-explorers Clarence King and Ferdinand Vandever Hayden) also promoted the notion of spectatordom and intuitive learning from nature. Finally, a huge segment of American art, from elite painters like Cole and Albert Bierstadt to the popular photographers, like Eadweard Muybridge, Carleton E. Watkins, and William Henry Jackson, carried this conception into the twentieth century and into popular and mass-culture imagery. By mid-century these proposals for a democratic audience gaining wisdom from an intuitive apprehension of nature had become the staple of mass-culture imagery, including such diverse outlets as Kodak film advertisements and tourist brochures. When *Life* presented the atomic sublime to its viewers, it did so in this broad context: on many of the pages before or after the photographs and illustrations of atomic clouds, readers might find equally spectacular images of natural landscape, whether in highly popular series like those *Life* subsumed under the rubric of "The World around Us" or in the ads for Arizona vacations, railroad excursions, Pontiacs and Plymouths, or Kodak films and cameras.

11. "The War Ends," 25–31.

12. "What Ended the War," *Life*, 17 September 1945, 37–39; "Bombed Nagasaki," *Life*, 15 October 1945, 37. This is the text accompanying this "Picture of the Week": "A Stone head of Christ, dislodged by the atomic bomb blast at Nagasaki, lies before the ruins of a Roman Catholic cathedral . . . like a stony symbol of the moral problem facing a people who profess to follow His teachings: whether even the urgencies of war

should permit such violation of individual life as the atomic bomb had committed. Last week President Truman reminded Congress, 'Civilization demands that we shall reach at the earliest possible date a satisfactory arrangement for the control of this discovery.'"

13. "First Atomic Bomb: Epoch's Opening Is Shown in Color," *Life*, 19 November 1945, 107.
14. "Imaginary 36-Hour War: How Next War Might Be Fought," *Life*, 19 November 1945, 27.
15. "What Ended the War," 37–39.
16. "Toyko Express Arrives in Bomb-Scarred Hiroshima," *Life*, 8 October 1945, 27–30.
17. *Ibid.*
18. "Peace City," *Life*, 1 September 1947, 39–42.
19. It was Gen. Leslie R. Groves, for example, whose alarm at the reports of radiation injury at Hiroshima and Nagasaki resulted in a special press excursion to the Alamogordo test range to view the landscape of atomic destruction, and the release of that first color image of the Alamogordo test. And it was Groves and his adjutants who had recruited one-time *New York Times* reporter William Laurence to serve as chief press representative on the Manhattan Project. I have discussed this at length in my cultural history of the Manhattan Project; see Peter Hales, *Atomic Spaces: Living on the Manhattan Project* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).
20. "Wherever You Look There's Danger in Las Vegas," *Life*, 12 November 1951, 37.
21. "AEC Plays Host to Camera, Newsmen, and TV at Blast on Yucca Flat, Nevada," *Life*, 5 May 1952, 36.
22. "When Atom Bomb Struck—Uncensored," *Life*, 29 September 1952, 19–25.
23. "5-4-3-2-1 and the Hydrogen Age Is Upon Us," *Life*, 12 April 1954, 23–33.
24. "The Awesome Fireball," *Life*, 19 April 1954, cover and 21–25; "Speaking of Pictures" *Life*, 26 April 1954, 14–15; "New Ivy Pictures Show Fire and Ice," *Life*, 3 May 1954, 52–55.
25. The range of combinations ran from the simply inappropriate (hope chests, last-minute Christmas gifts, "fast help for headache" set around a column on the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission, *Life*, 12 December 1959) to the garishly tasteless (color images of Libby's "Leaner Meats" across from the decimated mannequins in "Victims of Yucca Flat," *Life*, 16 May 1955). The very nature of scanning the pages of *Life*—how long one might spend on a given pair of pages, whether one found surcease in the ads—begs further discussion.
26. This reconstruction is based upon a discussion with Richard Stolley, who was *Life's* managing editor later and a bureau chief during the atomic years.
27. In this regard, I am drawing not only from my own personal experience of the atomic age during my American childhood, but also from interviews I have conducted for an upcoming study of the Cold War American cultural landscape.