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A COLD WAR IMAGINATION OF DISASTER AND RENEWAL IN PHILIP K. DICK'S *DR. BLOODMONEY*

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to investigate Philip K. Dick's post-apocalyptic novel *Dr. Bloodmoney* (1965), its portrayal of nuclear disaster and the process of renewal in its aftermath. I will focus on the portrayal of four characters and how they interact, change, engender events, and progress throughout the two interweaving narrative timelines of Dick's novel. I will draw from critical perspectives on the imagination of disaster and nuclear fear during the Cold War era; the period in which *Dr. Bloodmoney* was published. Considering, among other author's ideas, Claire Curtis' (2010, 187) argument that such "stories are often strange fantasies of destruction and domesticity, of massive violence and then the satisfaction of building a new world," I will attempt to connect the novel's narrative and thematic indications of a Cold War anxiety with a nuclear end of the world.
Keywords: Nuclear war; post-apocalyptic fiction; Cold War; *Dr. Bloodmoney*.

The preservation of human interaction in a nightmarish state of global ruin and the power struggles that emanate in the process are reiterated themes in *Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After the Bomb* (1965). The author Philip K. Dick experimented with a view of a future that was a national nightmare in Cold War-era United States. Set in the speculative 1980s, the novel follows various

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characters that either work together to rebuild society or fight each other to assure their own survival over the general well-being of their particular communities. The historical backdrop was one of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union that arose as they came to be the foremost military and imperialistic powers in the global scenario in the second half of the 20th century, producing a geopolitical and ideological conflict that came to be known as the Cold War. Such a contentious term emphasises the supposedly hesitant nature of the two powers in engaging each other, but it also diminishes the relevance of full-fledged conflicts, attacks and proxy wars that took place throughout those post-Second World War decades, such as the Vietnam War, the Korean War, or the nuclear bomb tests carried out in civil areas of Pacific atolls. Even with the ever-growing research on nuclear energy for civil use, the images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki triggered powerful fear in the post-war generations, since popular surveys from that time showed that no civil use of nuclear energy was considered sensible by the population, for "to the general public atomic energy means the atomic bomb" (Weart 1988, 162). This new form of energy was volatile and a potential hazard to populations and the environment. Fear of total annihilation abounded, and the likelihood of a hypothetical Third World War started to loom.

With the risk of nuclear disaster and a new outlook on how war could turn into mass extermination with the dropping of a single bomb, fiction authors experimented with that idea: the built-up nuclear race and the collectively felt tension from it seeped into numerous and diverse dystopias, which, as proposed by Fredric Jameson (1994), tend to tell "the story of an imminent disaster – ecology, overpopulation, plague, drought, the stray comet or nuclear accident – waiting to come to pass in our own near future, which is fast-forwarded in the time of the novel" (*The Seeds of Time* 56). Such stories, while responding to historical crises within a fictional mode that is moulded into various structures and traditions of speculative fiction, engender sets of representational instruments in their narrative resources and arguments, one of the most prominently emphasised being "a specific subject or character" (Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* 56). The character, therefore, operates within the critique found in some dystopian fiction as an extension of the particularly narrative quality of the dystopia, as opposed to the usually nonnarrative quality of the Utopia, which tends to lack a focus on the subject as a manifestation of its projects of a future (Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* 56).

Hence the importance of looking at fictional characters from dystopian texts as instruments of critique on emerging crises of technology, ecology, or geopolitics. In the context of the Cold War US, stories about urban destruction were habitually composed around characters with the extraordinary power to individually oppose and survive from the all-encompassing fires that would consume the social landscapes around them, or to exercise their antagonistic agency as they partake in the decaying process. The individual often resists in the fiction, projecting their sense of survival from their defensive and empirical inclinations (Rosenfeld 2021, 82), standing in contrast to their crumbling social and spatial backdrop. Present as a complication in the composition of such

fictional texts is the possibility that the whole of the social tapestry might not be gone after the apocalypse. Carl Abbot (2006) writes that "fictions about the effects of total war have often been tales of survivors – their ways of coping, their wanderings, their efforts to start anew" (177). As early as the 1950s, several English-language novels offered their renditions of a nuclear catastrophe and its aftermath, such as Richard Matheson's *I am Legend* (1954), Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon* (1959), and Walter Miller Jr.'s *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959); all of which address the potentialities of the individual character, the possibilities of starting over, of returning to civil life and trying to rebuild the world from the ruins of an imagined pre-war splendour. Such is the case of Dick's *Dr. Bloodmoney*, whose narrative structure is woven in a fragmented temporal exposition to demonstrate how nuclear destruction fragments the stream of social interchanges in that fictional scenario.

The novel is set throughout two timelines: one before the "Emergency" – as the author chose to call the nuclear apocalyptic event – and another after it. The narrative brings the two timelines interspersed between one another through the use of flashbacks and flash-forwards, maintaining a temporal link of events and narrative focus on the many characters that display more agency in the story. The extradiegetic narrator details thoughts and daily activities of the participants of the story; crucial segments of storytelling that help to understand the power relations developed from the anxiety of the catastrophic incident. Drawing on such power relations and the general interaction of characters, this article aims to analyse *Dr. Bloodmoney* with an emphasis on its Cold War-oriented illustration of a post-apocalyptic life in a world without a government or institutional direction, focusing on the process of renewal in the aftermath of such a fictional cataclysmic event through the novel's character structure. As suggested by M. Keith Booker (2001), as *Dr. Bloodmoney*'s blurring lines between utopian and dystopian underpinnings surface in its post-apocalyptic plotline, the moral lines that place "victims and the villains" in the story become equally blurred (93). The present analysis is invested in understanding such blurred lines in the novel's character composition and shall collect textual and argumentative substantiation from the portrayals of four major characters from the novel: Stuart McConchie, Hoppy Harrington, Dr. Bruno Bluthgeld, and Walter Dangerfield.

Social rupture, the restoration of ideas of power relations, political hierarchy, and the very closeness that society may develop to the wild are motifs recurringly observed in post-apocalyptic fiction from the Cold War period. Claire Curtis (2010) points out that

> World endings […] by their very character are understood to destroy functional government, food distribution, organized medical care and the infrastructure on which we rely for most of what we do. If such an event creates a state of nature, then how might we think about coming together and creating a new social contract after such an event? (2).

That is an important question to keep in mind. *Dr. Bloodmoney* revolves around a barely self-sufficient group of survivors who have – not for long – gone through the disaster and are still trying to cope with the consequences, choosing not to establish centralised and institutionalised politics of social order. Curtis poses questions that may compel insights on the political tones of such a narrative: "what happens when the end becomes a new beginning? What might this new beginning bring? How new would it really be?" (3). Part of the imagination of nuclear destruction lies in the misleading idea that the cataclysmic event would act as an absolute end for humankind. Authors of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction often demonstrate that such an expectation might not be true, and that society might have to start over with the rubbles of a broken civilisation, not very distant from the local conditions in which Hiroshima and Nagasaki citizens found themselves after the Second World War. The relation between the fear of living in a state of post-war chaos and the hope of coming together once again and structuring a new social contract is a common dilemma represented in these stories. Looking back at such stories to conceptualise the reality behind them in the aftermath of two world wars and the effective use of nuclear devices evokes the "imagining of how things could become desperately worse is surely little solace to those who have already had their worlds shattered through war, disease, famine or natural disaster" (Curtis 188).

To begin with, Dick's very conception of destruction in the novel is an instigating element to consider. The early sections of the story explore the trivial life of citizens in the modest urban area of Berkeley, California. Little indication is given as to what is to unfold, as the narrative focuses on instituting a fictional world that recreates the American way of life in the early Cold War as it is envisioned in an imagined future. It initially follows Stuart McConchie, a TV salesman who lives a middle-class life in relative satisfaction, as "this was 1981 and business was not bad. Another good year, booming from the start, where America got bigger and stronger and everybody took more home" (Dick 1). Consequently, the novel is quick to establish the climate surrounding its characters as a mild stability of the American way of life, but as quick to set up its *peripeteia* and portray the nuclear destruction that comes in full display in order to establish what Fredric Jameson (2007) perceives as a "historical crisis [that is] expressed in terms of the familiar counterculture denunciation of an evil or perverted science" (*Archaeologies of the Future* 349). As the city violently falls to nuclear fire, the narrative account following Dr. Bluthgeld – the character whose German surname translation gives the novel its title Bloodmoney, who is the agent of "perverted science" that becomes one of the sources of complication in the plot – declares that "the buildings to his left had split. Jagged breaks in them, as if the hardest of substances, the cement itself which underlay the city, making up the streets and buildings, the very foundations around him, were coming apart" (Dick 33). The representation of the event is conveyed in detail, thus emphasising what effects it has on the characters themselves, and Dick regards it as the pivotal force that

drives their motivations in the aftermath, not merely an isolated episode that sustains the linearity and construction of suspense in the novel.

On the other hand, destruction brings about another chance at survival and closer human contact and identification. Dr. Bluthgeld's colleague Bonny Keller, after witnessing the dropping of bombs, is surprised by a car that "drew up beside her. The door opened; a man reached out for her. She did not know him; she did not even know if he lived around here or if he was passing through. Anyhow, she hugged him" (Dick 40). Additionally, the astronaut trapped in orbit named Walter Dangerfield tries to keep the population down on Earth entertained by reading excerpts from W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*. Mr. Austurias, one of the survivors to work at the West Marin County post-nuclear community – the main population hub followed by the diegesis of *Dr. Bloodmoney* –, listens to the broadcast: "The problems which seemed vital to us, he thought, back in the old days... the inability to escape from an unhappy human relationship. Now we prize any human relationship. We have learned a great deal" (Dick 31). Such is the contrasting aspect of human contact that permeates the novel: disaster inspires despair and contempt on the one hand, identification and alliance on the other.

One should keep in mind the fact that the material destruction of the novel's imagined area – and the rest of the world, as Walter Dangerfield witnesses it while in space – is aligned with the decay of the socio-economic structure, institutions, and centralised political authority. M. Keith Booker is convinced that "*Dr. Bloodmoney* is [a novel] in which nuclear destruction is extensive enough to destroy corporate capitalism, thus opening up new possibilities for social and economic organization" (91). That departure from corporate capitalism is also an element of the novel that exposes the clash and overlaps between utopian and dystopian tones of its plot. Although the later communities live on simple agricultural and botanical knowledge in rural regions and thrive while doing so, the lack of communal cohesion and the conflicts of interests result in lawlessness, which turns out to be a challenge for a society that has just reformed from the ruins of its previous world, still imperfect in solving such issues while out of the old, more centralised and hierarchical system. In other words, the absence of state-imposed bureaucracy and law structures ironically gives the survivors freedom to search for life out of the cities and build their own utopian civic centres, as it also generates compromises in communal living. In fact, the duality of qualities and meanings is a feature of the novel, since it is "informed throughout by a particularly complex version of the doubleness and ambivalence that are typical of much of the science fiction of the long 1950s" (Booker 91). That "doubleness" is apparent in characters' traits, or the reasoning behind their actions, or still the composition of their own bodies, as is the case of the disabled Hoppy Harrington, or the symbiotic state of the little girl Edie Keller and her homunculus brother Bill, who lives in her belly and talks exclusively to her from within. Also reflecting that doubleness is the ever more human-like aspect of domesticated animals portrayed after the Emergency, whose intelligence and wits have been boosted through the speculative fiction trope of nuclear mutation displayed in the novel.

The thresholds of body and technology thus resurface reiteratively through such subjects of the story, from which the limits of the organic are not self-evident and correspond to an intersection of narratively compositional features that combines the mechanical, organs and organisms as complicating factors that are indissociable from the character system of *Dr. Bloodmoney*'s speculative scenario (Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* 354).

The gathering and upkeep of knowledge that may influence techniques of survival also suffers impact in the aftermath. In fact, during the act of engaging nature and taking on a pastoral life, the characters find that fundamental technical knowledge is their upper hand not only in dealing with the wilderness, but also in relations of power with one another. Modern conventional means of acquiring knowledge – i.e. books, network media, schools – have vanished with the bombed cities, and only community schools improvised by the survivors are still operational, staffed by a few individuals that detain some sort of educational familiarity. George Keller, one of West Marin members, is the principal of the barely functional local school; and Mr. Austurias, its only teacher. Austurias himself further contributes to the community by collecting mushrooms for general consumption and for his own interest in the subject.

> He knew the locations of many stands of chanterelles here and there in West Marin County, on the oak-covered hillsides, in the woods […] he had been almost that many years learning where to expect them, and it was well worth it. Most people feared mushrooms, especially since the Emergency; they feared the new, mutant ones above all, because there the books could not help them. (Dick 26).

Knowing where to find non-toxic mushrooms around was his privilege, and the rest of the people resented the fact that Austurias chose not to share that knowledge; unbeknownst to them, for fear of becoming redundant to the community and eventually being killed (29). Prospecting for mushrooms becomes a dilemma of toxicity and survival, quite as dangerous as exposition to the hazard of fallout radiation coming from the city.

However, not all instances of knowledge and techne are welcome by the survivors. When asked by West Marin prospectors what his politics were, newcomer Hal Barnes – who was seeking a position as a teacher there – states that "'I have no politics. I teach children how to make ink and soap and how to cut the tails from lambs even if the lambs are almost grown. And I've got my own books.'" (Dick 61). The practicality of Barnes' knowledge is substantiated by one of the community leaders: "'we need useful science, not academic hot air.' […] Psychology doesn't dig any septic tanks'" (62). For them, surviving after the end of civilisation must mean filtering knowledge, keeping away cultural and political information that might not seem necessary in the immediacy of their situation.

The Emergency also marks another facet of the approximation between human and non-human animal properties in Dick's absurdist heterocosm. Dogs can now speak, although in mumbling words, rats can play the flute, and cats communicate better and are even more intelligent when escaping and preying on human resources. This anomalous characterisation evinces a science fictional eccentricity that was not present in the narrative before the Emergency and is part of Dick's creative signature of "nightmarish uncertainty, this reality fluctuation" (Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* 350). Paranormal creatures and characters – as is the case of Hoppy Harrington and his telekinetic powers – question the very reality of their situation and allow speculation as to what the effects of a fission bomb were to living beings. Bluthgeld lives with intelligent sheep and a "verbose canine" named Terry (Dick 125). McConchie's homeostatic vermin traps are especially developed to deal with intelligent rats and cats. As they venture into nature after the cataclysm, the characters find that they have to adapt to a new facet of natural living; one that has them at a similar level of intellect as the creatures that inhabit it, and with most of the old-world knowledge about wildlife scorched by their own species' brutality. However, the odds for surviving the catastrophe in the countryside were more palpable, because the very idea of living a pastoral life in the post-apocalypse offers more chances of beginning again far from urban mayhem and desolation.

Such are the nuances of post-apocalyptic imagery in which *Dr. Bloodmoney* embeds its narrative, especially considering the fragmentation of its characters and their realities, from their peaceful lives before the bombs to the contrast of hopes and distrust of the aftermath. The events that take place demonstrate the characters' vulnerabilities, and the textual investigation proposed in this article engages with the particularities and relations of a few characters with such themes, with each other and other minor characters. Particularly relevant to this investigation is the notion that, in the thematic and diegetic scopes of a fictional work[1], a character "is conceived of as a fictive being, a component of a represented world […] it functions as a symbol, an individual who stands for or embodies some general concept, abstract theme or idea" (Margolin 2010, 400). Whether that "general concept" is filled with some complexity or plurality of thematic/historical imagery, it depends on their function and agency in the narrative and how they change as the novel's events are disclosed.

The Modern TV Sales & Service employee Stuart McConchie dreams of prosperity and recognises how pleasant the simplicity of his life is. He is the first character to be portrayed in the novel, and his daily chores are illustrated since the very first narrative sentence, as he "swept the sidewalk before Modem TV Sales & Service, hearing the cars along Shattuck Avenue and the secretaries hurrying on high heels to their offices, all the stirrings and fine smells of a new week, a new time in which a good salesman could accomplish things" (Dick 1). He is filled with optimism and peace, as though inspired by the combination of his simple position in the market world and his strong admiration for the capitalist mode of production and its economic flourishing for the general population, since, as

previously mentioned, Dick is quick to establish that "America got bigger and stronger and everybody took more home" (Dick 1). McConchie appreciates that spirit of enterprise, as well as the cultural value of it, and wonders about most of the things he witnesses while at work, such as a song he sang at work "from a new Buddy Greco album" while thinking "how it might feel to be famous, a world-famous great singer that everyone paid to see at such places as Harrah's in Reno or the fancy expensive clubs in Las Vegas" (Dick 1). Or yet his fascination with Walter and Lydia Dangerfield's launch to Mars, which was broadly televised.

McConchie is described in the novel as a young black man, and the first racial indication is conveyed through Bruno Bluthgeld's perspective as he goes into the psychiatrist's clinic on the same day. The scientist, then acting under the codename Jack Tree so as to conceal himself from the public eye, noted that "there was a Negro sweeping on the other side" who had possibly recognised him (Dick 4). That social position attracts different reactions from different characters throughout the story, and Stuart is later found in misfortune from it. After the Emergency, as he tries to survive in the vermin trap business, he wonders about moving to the countryside, to which his post-Emergency boss and landlord Dean Hardy warns that "'you're apt to run into the old race prejudice against Negroes, out in the country; they've reverted to the old patterns'" (77). Although life in the city was brutal, as he himself notes in the same conversation, he owes his living to the vermin trap business to which he had been dedicated, and the social prospect of living with people that could have "reverted to the old patterns" was grim.

Stuart himself is imbued with a sense of dispute with other marginalised individuals. When knowing about Hoppy Harrington's admission for a position as a repairman, he sarcastically remarks that "'First you hire me, a Negro, and now a phoce. Well, I have to hand it to you, Fergesson; you're trying to do right'" (Dick 7). McConchie's knowledge of the opportunity given to Harrington reminds him of his own disregarded social position and stimulates contempt. Meeting Hoppy turns out to be a somewhat unpleasant situation for him:

> [W]ith a phoce [phocomelus] working here . . . that practically makes me a radiation freak, too, as if being colored was a sort of early form of radiation burn. [...] Once upon a time, he thought, all the people on Earth were white, and then some horse's ass set off a high-altitude bomb back say around ten thousand years ago, and some of us got seared and it was permanent; it affected our genes. So here we are today (Dick 8).

There is a discrediting of individual challenges imposed by social marginalisation both to him and Harrington, in favour of a better situation and integration in a mostly white, middle-class society. The two must work together, but Hoppy's arrival at Modern TV Sales & Service is not felt as a positive sign for Stuart, who somehow seems to further grow bitterness out of Fergesson's esteem for the newcomer. Stuart perceives life – both before and after the bombs – as practicality, and human impairment is merely a nuisance, especially as it influences or hinders social interaction and material prosperity. In Jameson's

character categories for *Dr. Bloodmoney*, Stuart is situated as an organic agent and works as the opposing figure to Hoppy's position as a mechanical – or further, a mechanical/organic – character. His adverse view of Harrington can be a result of him being one of the "privileged narrator[s] or 'point of view'" figures – and although no first-person narration is executed, the omniscient narrator closely follows his path for a considerable portion of the novel (Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* 358). Subsequently, his thoughts are constantly springing up in the diegesis, revealing his perception of other parties, and thus Hoppy falls into a category of competitive interaction.

McConchie's survival conditions during and after the Emergency are not fortunate. As the bombs hit the Berkeley area, he flees to a basement with other people, reinforcing the Cold War anxiety of national security and the mass construction of fallout shelters for civil defence; a project often thought to be aligned with corporate and financial interests (Gouré 1962, 2). Having to stay in the basement for a prolonged period, he finds himself forced to eat rats in order to survive. He turns to profitable trades again and begins living out of the aforementioned vermin trap business, even as he wonders about the worthlessness of capital in a post-nuclear world. He is the only major character who chooses to stay in the city, insisting to maintain his previous status as part of the grinding mechanisms of capitalism.

Such passages and narrative constructions, therefore, indicate that Stuart is a conflictive character. He rejoices in the face of American order and capital progress and resents social and national fragmentation, especially as he witnesses the rise of the marginalised, whom he ironically is part of. Survival conditions imposed to him are not enough to break those principles, and that can be explained by an observation that "he had, like a little kid, merely tagged along. And nowhere was no one present to tag after; now he was alone" (Dick 47-8). It is in the crystallisation of his values and his failure to question the extent to which such values were infused in him that Stuart reproduces the old principles of a society that once marginalised him, which is further explained by his post-nuclear vermin trap association, "a partnership that clearly takes them a step closer to the reestablishment of corporate capitalism, which proves not to be so easy to kill off after all" (Booker 94). Stuart's character composition additionally follows the contextual complications and structures of segregation found in the early 1960s United States, when civil rights movements intensified their actions on the public front in defence of racial equality.

Alternately, the extraordinary mind of Hoppy Harrington is demonstrated to contrast with his physical disability early in the novel. The young man has a talent for repairing television sets and claims to be building his own extension arms. The diegesis consistently reiterates his abilities and his status as an almost meta-human character, both in his technical prowess and his psychic exceptionalism. Some of Hoppy's actions, as well as some of Bluthgeld's, consolidate the novel's intimacy with the supernatural domain. His talents are portrayed within that domain for the first time in the story when he undergoes a trance while at work and claims to

be witnessing the afterlife. Patrons and employees are startled by Hoppy's trance, and he is launched in the plotline as a figure easily capable of attracting attention, and enjoyably so for him. In such trance episode, Hoppy alleges to see the lights of nuclear explosions (Dick 18-9). He functions as a narrative mechanism that foreshadows the apocalyptic episode, and that sort of paranormal agency sets him aside as the only character that prepares for the aftermath, in particular by assembling an upgraded version of his government-funded wheelchair with arm extensors. He also exhibits eagerness in his anticipation of the apocalypse: "'A new life. I have a different body; I can do all kinds of things.' […] I'm like everybody else; in fact, I'm better than anybody else. I can do anything they can do and a lot more. I can go wherever I want, and they can't" (19).

His physical condition, however, cannot escape society's constant gaze and sometimes a superstitious response that regards him as an aberration – as Stuart McConchie sees him. Spencer Weart approaches a contextual issue:

> Most important was the fact that radiation could cause genetic defects. This fact resonated with certain old and widespread ideas about contamination. Traditionally, defective babies were a punishment for pollution in the broadest sense, violations such as eating forbidden food, looking at something that should not be seen, or breaking a sexual taboo […] Demagogues labeled Communists, prostitutes, bureaucrats, or any other despised group as a social "cancer," while people afflicted with real tumors came to feel shamefully invaded and defiled (189-190).

It is important to highlight that Hoppy's phocomelia was not caused by radiation effects, but by his mother's use of thalidomide in her pregnancy, a contextual detail noted by Jameson (*Archaeologies of the Future* 355). However, Weart's argument stands out since it encapsulates the notion that human beings are located *in* nature and that malformations are a violation of that bond with nature. Stuart ponders: "that's one good thing this war has done: wiped out all the freaks. But then, he realized, it's also brewed up a whole new batch of them; there'll be freaks strutting around for the next million years" (Dick 48). Such a violation of nature brings about the "freaks," the undesirables; Hoppy prepares for a future in which people like him are to come in more numbers, and he is eager to enter such an afterlife.

As a progressively antagonistic character, Hoppy illustrates a tendency for self-serving plans that ultimately lead him to dissent in the post-nuclear community of West Marin. He unconditionally believes his vision – although McConchie and others dismiss and mock it –, and his struggling life in the pre-apocalyptic reality is portrayed as merely an instant of transition to a better life in the post-apocalypse; "another incarnation" (Dick 29). In that incarnation, there would be opportunity for him and him alone, and when asked by a minor character if the vision of such a new life is better or worse, he replies that it would be "worse for you. It's what everybody deserves; it's justice" (19). Such a posture demonstrates that, while McConchie's view on and response to his marginalised social position

is conformist and alienated, Harrington's is resentful, which places him more prominently in a position of power abuse and antagonism, even though *Dr. Bloodmoney*'s moral patterns are not obvious, given the shifts in characterisation in an already complex dystopian scenario of utopian nuances and projects, as well as because of contextual connections that can be traced back to historical struggles of marginalised groups in the civil rights movements of 1960s US.

The first portrayal of the events after the Emergency takes place in a flash-forward segment that situates the action in 1988, seven years after the original setting. In place of a historical moment that slightly precedes the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent end of the Cold War, Dick's imagined scenario depicts a rural landscape in a post-nuclear divided world. Small communities try to salvage the richness of the still thriving wilderness, and Hoppy Harrington appears as a successful extraordinaire of this new, post-disaster world. His *phocomobile* is now considerably enhanced, and the new reach and strength of his mechanical powers suppress his once ill-fated humanity and the physical condition of anybody about. He also helps others who suffer from the same impediments: "Now, of course, one saw many phoces, and almost all of them on their 'mobiles, exactly as Hoppy had been, placed dead center each in his own little universe, like an armless, legless god" (Dick 29). There is a depicted sense of appreciation and admiration of West Marin inhabitants towards Hoppy's contributions to the local mechanical needs, especially when concerning the maintenance of the beloved radio device, an important item for the narrative as it receives Dangerfield's broadcasts from Earth's orbit to the rest of the striving world.

With time, Hoppy feels the gratitude that he is given is not enough and develops a new skill in mimicry. In order to amuse the locals in idle hours, he impersonates people that they know, most notably Walter Dangerfield himself. There is an increasing attempt from him to become the centre of the communal interactive spectrum in the story; a hub of knowledge and entertainment from which all possibilities of social renewal can stem. But there is a gradual display of bitterness that turns the plot towards a more sombre perspective on the collective living of West Marin and the community's interaction with Harrington. While he was previously seen as a pitiful and harmless creature, he is now a self-made man whose power is feared by the people with whom he coexists. Disregard and disgust turn into a dreaded sense of awe and respect.

Claire Curtis writes that, in a post-apocalyptic state, "the interests of the group as a self-sustaining entity should reflect that the individuals can be more than they were without the group" (98). Hoppy is shown as a character that purports to be above his group, and the group is expected to depend on his industriousness and intellect, owing their sustenance to him. The saviour figure of the young man turns into an autocratic social figure; and since the central source of conflict in the novel is the nuclear event itself, Hoppy becomes a hook back into the Emergency as tensions tear through West Marin.

In due course, Harrington finds the two nemeses that would fragment his peace of mind in that advantageous moment and trigger his downfall: Stuart and

his visit to West Marin, and Bill Keller. The former, when encountering Hoppy for the first time since the Emergency, brings with him a hostile uneasiness. From Hoppy's point of view, remembering the old world feels like anticipating death itself, for his new life is the only desire in his interest. That indication is further evidenced when Bill Keller starts terrorising him. Like Hoppy, Bill is also a vector of visions in the novel, and could hear the dead talking to him, especially those that died during the bombings. Bill is the relaying mechanism connecting the present promise of prosperity to the grim, nuclear-stricken, deadly past. Bill reinforces the image of death in a way that links Hoppy's described thoughts to the aforementioned grim past. Keller eventually kills Harrington, and the latter's manipulations of Dangerfield's broadcast ceases, bringing a denouement to the West Marin community.

Dr. Bruno Bluthgeld, on the other hand, used to be a renowned physicist whose miscalculations during a delicate experiment with nuclear weapon testing led to a serious accident in 1972. As of 1981, Bluthgeld is hated by the general population, and develops schizophrenic paranoia out of the constant fear of being followed. The beginning of the novel portrays him as a troubled old man, always self-conscious and anxious about his surroundings and the people observing him. He visits Dr. Stockstill, a psychiatrist, for a therapy session. "There are thousands, even millions of people in the world, who hate me and would like to destroy me," Bluthgeld remarks in his meeting with the psychiatrist, which also serves as an introduction of the character to the reader, "so naturally I have to take steps; I have to give you a made-up name [Jack Tree]" (Dick 2). Dick's swift denouncement of a guilty party for a disaster is, according to Spencer Weart, unusual of the science fiction with post-apocalyptic themes/settings produced at the time; when somebody was responsible, readers would assume that "Communists would be to blame, while Communists emphatically asserted the reverse; if anybody was responsible, it was nobody the writer knew" (226). Giving continuity to a tradition of dystopian fiction – i.e. Zamyatin's *We* (1924) and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) – that found source for its nightmarish worlds in regimes like Stalinism with its collective paranoia, political persecution, and incarceration of domestic dissidents (Claeys 2017, 236), Dick formulated a pastoral dystopia that was focused on the individual representing structural issues, and employed the metaphorical antagonists as narrative indicators of issues of detrimental technological use and societal misalignment.

However, assigning Bluthgeld as responsible reinforces the stereotype of the "foreign mad scientist," a category into which he fits as the story goes on. One may find a strangely similar depiction in Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), in which the scientist responsible for a eugenic project to evacuate the U.S. population into fallout shelters during the apocalypse is a former German Nazi. Such a character type is elucidated by Weart, whose point is that the "scientist came to stand for a dangerously powerful and uncaring authority […] their like died horrible, lonely deaths. That seemed appropriate punishment, for they had been prying into forbidden secrets" (62). Bluthgeld's gruesome death to

Hoppy's mechanical powers also converges with that idea. Earlier in the plotline, Bluthgeld had no confirmed involvement in the Emergency in 1981 – even though he believes he does –, but his mistake in the 1972 accident was enough to earn him a nationwide negative reputation. At one point, the astronaut Walter Dangerfield notes in his broadcast that "We're all living in Bruno's accident, now. We're all the spirit of '72" (Dick 30). Having been a leading participant in a vital and dangerous experiment for humanity means that Bluthgeld was given precise powers and liberties by his own government.

As a consequence, his figure follows much of the imagery of the Cold War-era United States, or essentially of national scientific achievements and plans that can be reimagined as triggers for war, colonial power, and nuclear disaster. The paranoia is the first apparent trait to indicate such similitude. The early decades of the Cold War were marked by the massive fission bomb tests, and some "suggested that the bombs might be less important as physical weapons than as mental influences" (Weart 112). There was a rapid increase in public unrest with the nuclear deterrence[2] that ensued in the war, especially with the widespread construction of fallout shelters and the propaganda directed to them[3]. In the novel, Bluthgeld becomes a persecuted authority, and there is fear and restlessness directed towards him by the American population. He goes into hiding, cloaking himself behind pseudonyms and adverse activities – such as isolating himself near West Marin to take care of a sheep herd. Bluthgeld gradually intensifies his image as a reflection of the pre-Emergency United States hysteria as he starts to plot against the West Marin locals. An instance of megalomania stemming from him, like Harrington's, is expressed in the novel: "Law and order, he realized. Because of my efforts it's being reestablished, here and there. They owe me a lot, but of course they don't acknowledge it" (Dick 45). The "efforts" refer to part of the evacuation process during the Emergency, to which he contributed by opening escape routes and helping people flee the city. Bluthgeld does the government's job, and he feels entitled to recognition for it, even though he constantly hides in his Jack Tree alter ego. Jaded and forgotten, he resorts to constant threats of new bombings, thus reinforcing his obsessed role in turning against others and evincing a reference to "the American sense of being surrounding by foreigners who just do not act and think like we do" (Booker 118). To Bluthgeld, the Emergency marks the moment in which everybody becomes a "foreigner" of their own; an external threat to be wary of.

Overall, Bluthgeld expresses the anxiety of nuclear danger and acts as an inconsequent agent of global destruction. He can be seen as a commentary on early Cold War American politics, which resorted to nuclear deterrence in an inconspicuous geopolitical scenario from which collective paranoia ensued. The portrayal of the mad scientist with cryptic powers who, later in the story, detonates more bombs in the sky with his psychic abilities, raises the question: "Was the bomb a golem, then, a mad scientist's monster?" (Dick 104). His constant threat to make use of the bomb indicates as much and can be seen as a manipulation of mechanisms over which he has power to impose his will –

bearing a likeness to Hoppy's own extension mechanisms used to uphold the community's respect and attention. Additionally, the mind of an authoritative figure ravaged by tragic mistakes and a global annihilation episode develops into an illusion that it still has the power to make decisions over people, even after historical time is fragmented and a new beginning sprouts in which national or institutionalised authority can no longer find strength.

But a last fictional rendition of scientific prowess in a Cold War technological *course de vitesse* (Derrida 1984, 20) embodies a fundamental figure in the novel's narrative frame: the famous astronaut Walter Dangerfield. He and his wife Lydia were to be the first humans to ever set foot on Martian soil. The narrative indicates that Dangerfield has relations to the already discussed three characters: he bears the opposite public image and reputation when compared to Dr. Bluthgeld in that he is acclaimed by the American population. He is an object of admiration for Stuart McConchie, and a symbol of success and national importance; he is the voice that the people in the aftermath listen to, and the one whose public role Hoppy Harrington intends to take over. But one can find more pertinent traits about the imagery surrounding Walt's character beyond his relation to other fictional agents of the novel: his solitude and estrangement from Earth's post-nuclear state mark his development throughout the novel.

An important aspect of this character's composition is his supposedly permanent mission into outer space. The Emergency takes place as Dangerfield is found astray, detached from the perceived reality of disaster and the downfall of national institutions. The space race that is responsible for space exploration – and a massive American cultural and political pursuit in the Cold War – finds in that character a final and elegiac adventure, as the empire crumbles down below. For Frank Kermode (2000), "the destruction of the earthly city [works] as a chastisement of human presumption, but also of empire" (112). Similarly, the space and nuclear races of the Cold War are often understood and processed by speculative fiction as driving imperialistic forces behind disaster. During that endeavour on Earth's orbit, Lydia eventually dies, ending the American colonial dream that "Walt and Lydia would found a Nova Terra... there would be lots of sophisticated little Dangerfields strolling about Mars" (Dick 13); an event that coincides with the destruction of the country below and encapsulates the obliteration of the expanded American state that Dick portrayed in his novel. The lonely condition of somebody who is far away from home forces him to resort to his only link back to his planet in order to keep his sanity and sense of usefulness: the radio. His character then evolves into "a kind of celestial DJ" that is relevant in establishing the idea that culture, just like technology and the social contract, is not entirely lost after nuclear devastation (Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* 356). His pre-Emergency status as a hero of the nation turns into his post-Emergency status as a gatherer of past knowledge and controller of global communication. As a result, the castaway astronaut can be perceived as a post-nuclear substitute for mass media, and the radio was people's "one contact with Walt Dangerfield in the satellite, and through him the outside world" (Dick 27).

As a consequence, people's daily expectations turn to Dangerfield looking for positive human communication, while also providing them with culture. As previously stated, he had regular reading broadcasts of Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, a reading appropriate enough to represent his own narrative figure as a pacifier and a host for all peoples on Earth in such a critical moment. The novel diegetically demonstrates that the broadcast had already been part of post-nuclear life: "The people in the room sat listening, obeying out of long habit; the music emanated from the radio and for seven years they had depended on this; they had learned this and it had become a part of their physical bodies, this response" (146). He is the remains of the old world, of the post-Second World War American imagination, and a fictional illustration of the Cold War space and technological race between the United States and the Soviet Union; for that, the survivors see it as a privilege that he was sent up there, so that they could hear news that other people were striving elsewhere. M. Keith Booker states that "the extent to which the population hangs on Dangerfield's every word serves as a telling commentary on the extent to which the American population is held in thrall to media culture, desperate to receive any tidbit at all as long as it is broadcast over the airwaves" (91-2). Mass media information turns out to be a craving without which the previously ever-growing globalised world still could not live, a pattern that is reproduced after corporate media and communications networks have fallen. The technological achievements of humanity survive the apocalypse, but it is through Dangerfield that the network of such achievements is maintained. Hoppy's ultimate attempt to kill him using his psychic powers evidences the young man's efforts to occupy the astronaut's place; a seductive and adventurous position, especially for a character whose peculiarly antagonistic figure as a new world's false messiah would likely find usefulness in global radio broadcasts.

Ultimately, it is important to note that such individuals progress in the narrative due to a "constellation [that] puts all the characters of a fictional world in relation to each other" (Eder et al. 2010, 26). Both Hoppy and Bluthgeld claim to be acting out of God's will; both Dangerfield and Hoppy bear technological extensions to their humanity through prostheses and radios; both Stuart and Hoppy feel entitled to a better world; among other associations. The network created among these four characters elucidates this particular investigation of *Dr. Bloodmoney*, in which one is to find characters displaced and replaced in various distinct settings, and employing their respective instruments of power and self-assertion: Stuart in the cities through his sales pitch; Hoppy in West Marin through his plots and his all-powerful *phocomobile*; Bluthgeld in his own secluded home through his kinetic powers and his intelligent animals; and Dangerfield in space through his broadcasting, for he seems to most survivors on Earth like a beacon of the past and "the guardian of an almost annihilated Earthly culture" (Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* 356). Darko Suvin (1983) argues that such narrative patterns found in Dick's novels favour a socially charged fictional vision

that reflects "political and ontological relationships […] analogous to the United States (or simply to California) in the 1950s and 60s" (74).

However, such fictional and discursive associations lead motifs from post-disaster fiction beyond the Cold War era and into the 21st century. The figure of the destructive scientific figure in a crisis scenario, for instance, appears in Crake from Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2007) and in Dr. Impossible from Austin Grossman's *Soon I will Be Invincible* (2007). Meanwhile, the morally ambiguous, narratively interspersed characters are emphasised in other novels by Dick, as in the case of the intricate Tagomi from *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) and the socially intermediary Jack Bohlen from *Martian Time-Slip* (1964). Dick's represented issues in *Dr. Bloodmoney* extend their conceptual influences towards our own times, with the constant and concomitant crises of geopolitics, the environment, and the various social panoramas of political upheaval and socioeconomic inequality that fuel anxieties about direct action, the role of community, and a restoration of rural life. Peter Paik (2010) describes the predicament in such anxieties as he writes that "The never-ending fascination with the disintegration of human society appears nevertheless entwined with an inability to imagine change on the more modest scale of history" (124). He goes on, asking "Why has the very idea that the existing sociopolitical order might be transient become inconceivable?" (Paik 124). In *Dr. Bloodmoney,* the microcosmic enclave fleetingly unravels a cooperative social and power structure through a utopian retreat to and direct interaction with the wilderness as an indication of a departure from precarious metropolitan and industrialised lives, which stands as a narrative statement of an anti-apocalyptic order. Conversely, that order gradually crumbles in the face of power struggles propelled by the disruptive composition of Bluthgeld as a character. The collective crumbles before the individual, and the destructive grandeur of nuclear power is encapsulated into a single character's agency, whose arbitrary scientific decisions touch on the edges of the narrative absurd and is representative of centralised geopolitical decision-making still predominant in global diplomacies and in corporate personalistic scientific experimentations – as identifiable in the figures of billionaires heading influential companies behind artificial intelligence services and space exploration research.

The search for an autocratic power structure instigated by the narrative agency of Bluthgeld and Harrington – both through the aforementioned centralised use of technology – is portrayed as a risk of defeat to the opportunities of emancipation and a new social project. The community of West Marin, despite its own crisis that complicates the plotline of the novel, operates for the notion that "the growing wealth and advancing technology be used by and for all and not for the benefit of an elite enriched by an economic and political system that worked only for its own reproduction and extension around the globe" (Moylan 2000, 102); a central issue for post-WWII utopian impulses.

Consequently, *Dr. Bloodmoney* constructs a narrative interweaving of characters that illustrates historical anxieties of a Cold War scare as new

technologies had entered the realm of geopolitics. The advent of the hydrogen bomb filled collective imagination with the horror of an impalpable end. As historian Ken Alder (2007) argues, "there were two bombs dropped on Hiroshima in August 1945: the actual bomb and the *idea of the bomb*. And it was the idea of the bomb […] that carried weight in the emerging post-war conflict with the Soviet Union" (126, my emphasis). Some popular post-apocalyptic novels from the Cold War United States – including *Dr. Bloodmoney, A Canticle for Leibowitz,* and *I am Legend* – stay away from a dedicated portrayal of the US-USSR conflict and emphasise an imagined domestic crisis, which opens up for an analysis of some issues that have been discussed in this article, such as technology and national politics, mass culture, modes of production, and communal living in a state of renewal. The latter has been paramount for my investigation, as it has pushed the examination of characters as agents of that portrayed world of anxieties. Claire Curtis states that

> Postapocalyptic fiction exists at a genre crossroads between science fiction, horror and utopia/dystopia. Dystopian postapocalyptic accounts can be dystopian because there is no opportunity for starting over [...] or dystopian because the apocalyptic event is largely insoluble and the life that emerges from it illustrates a critical dystopia that warns us of where we might be heading (7).

The latter would be the case of *Dr. Bloodmoney* and its dystopian facet: order is relatively re-established after the incident, but there is a sense of dissolution that lurks and threatens the locals of West Marin, and that dissolution resides in the imbalance of power amongst its residents, which gives way to final confrontations. The utopia, however, can rise again after the confrontations are settled. And therefore, Dick establishes a fragmented rhythm of conflicts and resolutions, as much regarding the state of survival in an aftermath depicted in the novel as the fictional fear that the skyline will ultimately be lit up by mushroom clouds and that an inescapable doom will engulf lives, as well as power structures.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT: Does not apply.

End notes

1. Out of Jens Eder's four dimensions of a character in fiction - diegetic, thematic, aesthetic, and pragmatic -, this study is intended to work under the scope of the first two.
2. A Cold War policy of mutual assured destruction, which foresaw that the threat of nuclear attack by two powerful nations would ensure that there was no ultimate attack for the cost of lives is too great to risk of nuclear weaponry use.
3. There was a considerable effort by the US Government to boost a sense of security in the general population, as Civil Defense pamphlets and posters about fallout shelters were spread, as well as demonstration videos and bomb testing footage that were massively produced and distributed for public announcement, as showed in the documentary *The Atomic Cafe* (1982) and fictionally explored in films such as *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) and *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* (1959).

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