

# **A Nuclear Refrain**

Emotion, Empire, and the  
Democratic Potential of Protest

Kye Askins  
Phil Johnstone  
Kelvin Mason



## A NUCLEAR REFRAIN



*Fig. 1. Hieronymus Bosch, Ship of Fools  
(1490–1500)*

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## Foreword

*A Nuclear Refrain* is a piece of “spatial fiction” that challenges vital but neglected issues around the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction and the concomitant policy of nuclear deterrence. We issue this challenge via the extension of our geographical imaginations into the past, present, and future.

The UK’s 2016 decision to replace its Vanguard submarine fleet, as a major step towards renewing its Trident nuclear weapons system, ignored a barrage of public protest. Whatever the other political issues in play, the lengthy process of Trident replacement will surely vex British and, indeed, global politics for generations. Political, economic, ethical, and military disagreements will rumble on and on, building to raging arguments

and further waves of public protest at key decision-making moments.

In the story that follows, we consider nuclear deterrence through three less familiar but revealing frames:

- The emotional and embodied;
- The yearning for lost empire and the workings of the British establishment;
- The limits and potential of democracy.

Although it is a rigorous critical analysis of deterrence, we present our consideration as a work of fiction, short-circuiting the usual academic structures and strictures on writing style and content. Our aim is to reach an audience beyond academia as well as within. We also wish to incite different ways of thinking about how we can “stage” scholarly interventions. Inspired by Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, we transport a UK policy-maker in time and space to engage with arguments and emotions around how nuclear deterrence not only perpetuates an existential threat, but also limits our

potential as individuals, relational groups, and democracies. Previewing publication, one reader commented that our story was “an uncomfortable hybrid between academia and fiction.” And that was *exactly* our intention, because we believe that discomfort can be a vital spur to re-thinking persistent and intransigent issues like nuclear deterrence for academics, activists, policy-makers, and disengaged citizens alike. Thus, we wish to provoke debate about how nuclear deterrence restricts the development of trusting and caring societies, both within and beyond national borders. We also hope that what follows is a good read!



## Democracy in Action

The Right Honourable Roger C. Bezeeneos<sup>1</sup> walked back along the corridor towards his office with a smile on his face. This morning's June committee meeting went well, he thought: the vote for Trident renewal next month was assured. As an elected member

---

1 Inspired by *A Christmas Carol*, we adopt Dickens' writing strategy of placing "thematic concerns into the bodies and utterances of his characters," and his playful approach and "joyous energy" (Michel Faber, "Spectral Pleasures," *The Guardian*, December 24, 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/dec/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview22>). Roger C. Bezeeneos is an anagram of Ebenezer Scrooge, as we wanted to "ghost" Dickens' morality tale through this spatial fiction, both in structures of writing and also by having some fun!

of the British House of Commons, serving on the parliamentary Defence Select Committee, Roger favoured a multinational approach to nuclear disarmament, at least in the longer term. Roger was liberal with a small “l” and conservative with a small “c,” valuing personal freedom, political stability, and national security very highly. Indeed, he reflected with some pride, his moderate position and arguments had served to secure the middle ground today in a more heated debate than usual for a Defence Select Committee session. Roger had managed to smooth the concerns of some peers about the cost of replacing the Vanguard fleet of submarines. He’s allayed some of their other worries, too, at least for the moment.

“Yes,” he’d admitted to Derek, a fellow MP always vocal at Committee meetings, “there are tensions between personal freedom, security, and maintaining national and global social orders, but in a democracy one must look to majorities, norms, and so on.

“That’s what my constituents elected me for,” he’d concluded.

So, come July, he would be voting to begin the process of replacing the Trident weapons system. Indeed, he acknowledged to himself, this was very likely to be his position for the duration of his political career. He couldn't foresee anything that would change his mind on this one. As he'd argued earnestly earlier, this was a terribly difficult decision to make, but he was absolutely convinced that the security of Britain depended upon it. And anyway, he comforted himself, the Trident test due on the 20th June, in a few days' time, would be fine. Moreover, the resulting good publicity would alleviate public concern and smooth the lingering doubts that some of his fellow MPs might have.<sup>2</sup> The test was strictly hush-hush of course. Roger was one of the few on the Select Committee to know about

---

2 The test failed, yet was not reported before the vote. See Rowena Mason & Anushka Asthana, "Theresa May Knew about Trident Failure before Renewal Vote," *The Guardian*, January 23, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jan/23/theresa-may-knew-about-trident-failure-before-renewal-vote>.

such things, which appealed immensely to his political ego. His climb up the old career ladder was going rather well.

Roger smiled more broadly still, acknowledging to himself, just as he had to his wife Marjorie last night, that his decision to vote in favour of Trident replacement was eased by knowing that the popular press presented the replacement as a done deal: no one in their “right mind” would argue against it. And, as Roger often wryly observed at home, no one wanted to be on the losing side in politics.

Geopolitically, he worried what would happen if the UK lost its seat at the “top table” of “legitimate” nuclear weapons states. Derek had made a good point about that this morning, and Roger had concurred:

“The UK must maintain its voice in determining a liberal democratic world order.”

The smile momentarily fell from his face and he shivered despite the sunlight flooding the corridor, as he recalled growing up

fearful of Russia's military might in the Cold War era; the truly terrifying prospect of a nuclear attack; the four-minute warning; Protect and Survive...

Security. That was the key. It was critical in his youth and remained so now, even as the identity of the enemy had shifted here, there, everywhere and back again over time. Fingers crossed, and barring a complete political debacle across the pond in particular, one always knew who one's friends were. That was a tricky issue, Derek had raised earlier, though: could we ensure our nuclear state was secure internally?

"Given the military presence and as long as the Scots don't rock the boat with another vote for independence," he had told Derek, "the Faslane Trident base should be sound as a pound."

The last referendum would definitely be the last, at least if Roger and his party has anything to do with it. It had been way too

close for comfort. Even the opposition oiks were wary on the independence score.

“But what about the transport of Trident missiles from the Atomic Weapons Establishment in Berkshire all the way up to Scotland, by lorry?” Derek had pressed.

At which point Roger had dissembled and hedged not inconsiderably, getting away with it by the skin of his teeth, he thought. The risk of transporting missiles and specifically nuclear warheads was something no one wanted to acknowledge, let alone face up to. Fortunately, this aspect of security had largely been kept out of the public eye. Excepting for the odd pensioner-lying-in-road-to-halt-missiles debacle, mainstream media coverage had been garrotted very smartly indeed!<sup>3</sup>

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3 UK nuclear weapons convoys “have had 180 mishaps in 16 years.” See Rob Evans, “UK Nuclear Weapons Convoys ‘Have Had 180 Mishaps in 16 Years,’” *The Guardian*, September 21, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/sep/21/uk-nuclear-weapons-convoys-have-had-180-mishaps-in-16-years>.

Roger frowned as he unlocked his office door. As well as the transport thing, there were financial pressures on Trident replacement: “austerity” and more money needed for the NHS, for education, for the police, etcetera. The argument for using funds for social care and public services could be persuasive, Roger acknowledged: the electorate usually went for that. Yet Trident replacement, alongside nuclear power, was an economic opportunity that would create British jobs, and employment was also a real vote winner.

“Tricky biscuit, but there’s not much use in more doctors, teachers, and Bobbies if there are no hospitals, schools, or streets left to patrol, if a defenceless Britain has disappeared beneath a mushroom cloud!”

That’s what a convinced and, if he did say so himself, jolly convincing Roger had pitched to Derek.

Roger sat down at his desk, moved aside the stack of papers he would need to read that afternoon, and started on the unappetising House of Commons canteen luncheon

he'd picked up after his meeting. As he stoically munched his way through an exceedingly bland Wiltshire ham sandwich, Roger's thoughts turned to what Marjorie might be preparing for his dinner later. Friday nights his wife often made something special: a nice bit of fish, Dover sole perhaps....

Without warning, Roger's office was plunged into instant darkness. Confused, his first thought was that there'd been a power cut and the lights had gone off.

"What the deuce..." he began to protest, then stopped dead mid-sentence. It was June 16th, daytime, and a just moment ago his office had been lit by bright summer sunshine. This was no power cut. Roger looked to the windows to check whether the blinds had somehow broken and closed themselves. He could see nothing. Shaking his head to try to clear his confusion, Roger then rubbed his eyes in case that would help him penetrate the darkness. No. Had he gone blind? He didn't think so. He checked and could just make out the luminous figures on the face

of his old-fashioned wristwatch. Then this darkness simply could not be, Roger decided rationally. There must be a logical explanation. Perhaps he'd woken in the evening, having dropped off to sleep mid-sandwich? No, his watch confirmed it was still early afternoon.

As his eyes began to adjust somewhat to the impossible and near impenetrable dark, Roger detected another presence in the room. The hair on the back of his neck stood on end and a shiver went down his spine. A figure was standing still and silent in the corner: a young girl wearing a dark robe of some kind, a kimono. Roger dropped his sandwich. His pulse raced and his mouth was suddenly as dry as dust. He was, he realised, very afraid.



## Ghosts of Nuclear Past

Roger looked more closely at the girl, and saw how thin and frail she was, almost a ghost.

“Who are you?” he asked, his voice trembling, utterly confused.

“You know who I am,” the girl replied in a quiet voice. Her English was heavily accented, and she sounded as spectral as she looked.

“My name is Sadako Sasaki.”

Roger’s skin prickled. He vaguely recognised the name but it eluded his mental grasp and he just couldn’t place it. Nevertheless, it resonated, stirred something in him. His fear wasn’t helping his memory work either, so he shook his head again, as if that could reconnect the synapses in his brain.

Some part of him was aware of the dissonance between how he normally felt, confident and secure whenever he “held the floor” and spoke with authority — with a swagger! — in Parliament and in social circles, and how he felt now: uncertain and vulnerable, unable to find anything at all to say.

“You do know, and you should know. I’ll help you to remember.” Sadako looked gravely at Roger. “I’m taking you somewhere to show you, to make you realise, much more than my name.”

She walked up to him and took his right hand in hers. His whole body tensed. This close he could almost see right through her. Her decimated frame barely seemed opaque. It shimmered, as fuzzy as all of his own senses were feeling in that moment. Roger found that he couldn’t withdraw his hand, couldn’t even struggle. He rose meekly from his desk and the girl led him towards the door of his office and opened it. He hardly had time to worry what his colleagues would think of him, openly holding hands with a young girl in the Palace of Westminster, before he was

thrown into further shock. The door opened not on to the corridor that he had walked so smugly along a short while ago, but into what appeared to be a small kitchen and living area. Most of the space was taken up by a large, low wooden table, and there were four people in the room.

There was a family atmosphere, background chatter and the sounds of small movements as bodies did a variety of things that seemed, to Roger, simultaneously mundane and utterly strange. An older woman was on her feet, boiling a kettle on a stove and putting cups on the table to make drinks. Yet, the cups, the kettle, the stove all looked out of place and out of time. Sitting at the table, a middle-aged man was intently folding pieces of paper and putting them into a basket. Roger couldn't quite make out what the intricate shapes were. Next to the man sat a young woman who was sewing a kimono. On the other side of the table, a teenage boy was scribbling on a piece of paper with a pencil, a book open on the table beside him. He was quite clearly doing his school

homework and the familiarity of that took Roger right back to his own school days. Of course, the script that the boy wrote was very different to the English alphabet. Strangely, not one of the people in this cosy domestic scene was smiling.

Sadako still held Roger's hand firmly, ensuring he couldn't turn away even if he had been so minded.

"When will mother be home?" the young woman asked the man, very conspicuously not looking up from her sewing.

"Soon. She is trying to find out information about your aunt, uncle, and cousins, after..." The man paused awkwardly, but did not look up from his own task.

"She is at the government office, trying to find out what's happening in Hiroshima at the moment, and where her sister is."

Astounded, Roger found that, although he spoke no Japanese, he understood every word. He looked beseechingly to Sadako, but she only indicated with a nod that he should attend to the scene unfolding before him.

The older woman passed around the tea and sat down on a mat at the low table, opposite the man. When she spoke her voice was quiet and careworn.

“Your mother is worried for Fujiko and her family. You know how close they live to where the Americans dropped their bomb.”

“They say the bomb cloud will harm us all.” This time the young woman did look to the man next to her.

“I do not understand this weapon,” the man said, unconsciously rocking back and fore. “It is incomprehensible, a filthy monstrosity.”

“Do you think we should still have the wedding, father?” The girl asked. “Maybe Daisaku and me shouldn’t get married next month? Maybe we should wait. We don’t know about my aunt, and we don’t know about the other harms that this bomb might do.”

“No, no, we’ll be fine,” her father reassured her, visibly gathering himself. “Nagasaki is too far from Hiroshima for this

atomic fall-out they're talking of to reach us here, we are safe. And we must continue our lives, to show the enemy they haven't won. Your mother will find Fujiko, Shigeo, and their children; we'll bring them here to live with us perhaps. Everything will be okay."

He looked up to meet the girl's eyes and attempted a reassuring smile.

"And anyway, I'm nearly at seven-hundred cranes," he held out one of the paper birds he had folded and smiled. "You can't not get married!"

"America, the Russians, the Allies, they have won, son. They had already won; they didn't need to drop this bomb." The older woman shook her head as she spoke. "There was no need for them to... I don't understand it. Such a frightful thing. So many lives; so much destruction. The world will not be the same again with this atomic bomb."

Roger glanced at Sadako, he needed to speak, to explain something. He felt a physical compulsion to tell himself, as much as her or the family at the table:

“But the bombs saved lives, millions of lives, especially Japanese lives! Everyone said so, all the politicians at the time. And later studies!” He realised that the family weren’t hearing him, were unaware of even his presence, but he rushed on anyway, earnestly directing himself to Sadako.

“Yes, the bombs killed a quarter of a million or so, in the aftermath, and yes, more down the line. But... But Russia and America were about to invade, and that would’ve caused ten million Japanese deaths. Not to mention maybe a million on the Allied sides. Don’t you see?” He felt his authority returning, numbers were solid ground for him. Statistics were so much safer than people’s stories.

Yet, as he looked back into the room, everyone had stopped what they had been doing to reach out in some way to the older woman as she began to cry.

“What is this world, if we can kill each other so readily? If we can kill so many so without thinking of everyone? Without car-

ing for each one?" She hugged her grandson closely, pushing away his homework.

"Well, if this bomb has ended the war, then we can hope now for the future. We have to look forwards and do what we can," the father sounded adamant.

"Yes, yes, that's the spirit!" Roger piped encouragingly.

"Remember," the father continued, holding up one of his origami creations, "our tradition says that anyone who folds a thousand cranes will get their wish? Well, I wish for peace."

"It's also tradition," his daughter reminded him shyly, "that the bride's father gives a thousand paper cranes as a wedding gift to wish the couple a thousand years of happiness and prosperity."

"That is also my wish," the father said fondly, looking to his daughter. "We must be positive...."

"We must be positive and believe the next thousand years will be better, without war, for our children and our children's children."

“I wish that aunty Fujiko, uncle Shigeo, and our cousins are alright,” the boy said tentatively, half as a question to his father.

“It’s only two days since the bomb, everything is...” The man faltered. “Well, it’ll just take some time to find out and.... It’s just appalling what has happened, unimaginable. I’m not going to pretend to you, son, that everything is alright, but we must hope that our family are safe.”

The man continued, his voice hardening:

“This force turned on us by America.... The radio news says really they are showing the Russians their power.”

“Then they should bomb the Russians!” the boy interjected.

“They should not bomb anyone!” His grandmother replied firmly. “Haven’t we had enough bombing, dying, and suffering now?”

“We’re in war, of course bombing happens. War is death and pain and killing,” the man said. “If I had been in the army I would have killed for my country, you know that.” He looked angrily at his mother, then softened.

“I’m sorry, I miss Yuji too, but my brother died for us, for our cause.”

His mother’s shoulders and head sank into her chest, as though she had been folded like a piece of his paper.

“What cause?” she asked in barely a whisper. “We call ourselves civilised, a great civilised nation. So do the British and Americans and Germans.... Is war and killing the way to be civilised? Is making a bomb that kills thousands, wipes out a whole city, civilised? Just because the Americans made it first, don’t think other countries aren’t trying to have this atomic bomb too. What happens then, when we all drop atomic bombs on each other?”

The boy looked petrified, and Roger felt frightened for him. That feeling served to dissipate the fear that he felt for himself in this surreal setting. His trepidation turned to something else, another emotion, or mix of emotions he couldn’t explain. Growing up, he’d viscerally known the Cold War terror just as everyone around him felt it. Yet, he

knew that the threatened nuclear apocalypse hadn't happened. He wanted to reach out and tell the boy it would be alright....

But wait! *Where were they?* Hadn't the father said Nagasaki?

Roger's fear for the boy, though bewildering, became more acutely terrifying than before. He felt a chill through his whole being. Sadako, he observed with a pang, was regarding the people at the table with silent tears streaming down her cheeks.

Picking up her sewing, the young woman seemed to force herself to smile as she looked to her grandmother and spoke:

"Mother will find aunty and our family, and they'll come to the wedding as planned, and my and Daisaku's children will play with our cousins. Sadako is only a baby herself, *oba-chan*."

Roger's jaw dropped: Sadako!

"Yes, *magomusume*," the older woman continued forlornly. "And we will honour those killed in Hiroshima: so many people who have brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers,

and children; and we will be happy that our family survived.”

As she finished speaking the kitchen and its family retreated from Roger: the image zoomed out, became distant, then hazy and finally faded away.

Sadako still gazed at the space where her family had been. When she spoke, her voice was clear and much calmer than Roger expected:

“You know me, you’ve heard my story. I didn’t die in the Hiroshima bombing. I was at home, two years old, when the explosion happened, just over a mile from what you would nowadays call ground-zero. I was blown out of the window, my mother, Fujiko, ran out to find me, so relieved and amazed that I survived, with no apparent injuries. My brothers, sister and father all survived too, a miracle when so many people died such awful deaths. My *oba-chan*, my grandmother, ran back to the house for something, and we never saw her again.”

Dumbfounded, Roger nodded his head. Yes, now he remembered this girl’s story.

And there was something else too, something to do with origami cranes?

“We never saw my aunt, uncle, or cousins again,” Sadako continued, turning to face him. “They died a day after this scene we just witnessed. They weren’t so lucky when the second bomb hit Nagasaki. Aika and Daisaku never got married or had children for me to play with.”

Sadako paused, locked her gaze on Roger, her eyes sorrowful and still wet with tears.

“Your daughter Amanda is engaged, isn’t she?”

Roger felt the pit of his stomach pitch and he felt nauseous. The thought of anything happening to Amanda brought instantaneous, physical pain.

“While we ran from our house,” Sadako continued, “my mother and I were caught in the black rain. Nine years later, swellings appeared on my neck and behind my ears. After that, I got purple spots all over my legs, caused by bleeding under the skin. I was diagnosed with acute malignant lymph gland leukaemia. My mother always called it ‘atom

bomb disease.' When I went into hospital in 1955, the doctors gave me less than a year to live. My white blood cell count was six times higher than the levels of an average child."

Roger wanted to speak, but he had no idea of what to say.

"It was in the hospital," Sadako resumed, "that I first heard about the tradition of the cranes, the Japanese legend that promises that anyone who folds one thousand origami cranes will be granted a wish. Until this moment I had no idea that this was also what my uncle was doing in Nagasaki before the bomb that took them away fell. Myself, I started folding cranes, and wished to live. I wished for peace. I wished no one harm."

"When she was still quite young," Roger recalled wistfully, "just seven or eight years old, Amanda used to fold paper hearts for us, her mother and I."

"I wish Amanda only health and every happiness."

Roger's sigh trembled through his body. His feeling of relief for Amanda was mixed with terrible sadness for Sadako and her

relatives. Buck up, man, he thought, you can't care for the whole world — for suffering across all time and space!

"I died on the morning of October 25th, 1955 when I was twelve years old," Sadako told him.

"That wasn't my fault," Roger stammered. "I wasn't involved."

But he had the shakes. Good grief, he told himself, pull yourself together, man, none of this is happening, it's not real.

"Look," he managed, "I'm sure this is all very...but I have my own life, I have Marjorie and Amanda and...and a job to do. And I don't believe in ghosts! I insist that you take me back to my office right away."

Roger wasn't sure what to expect from this madness, but being assertive was his habit and he felt reassured as his familiar embodied demeanour returned.

Still holding his hand, Sadako turned around and led him back through the door, closing it after them with no sound.

All seemed as it was before the darkness descended. The remains of his ham sand-

wich lay on the floor. Bizarrely, Roger found himself checking the desk to see if anything was missing. He looked out through the windows, observing that the sun was still high in the sky. He blinked. It was as if no time at all had passed. Just a dream. Back to blessed reality. Alone.

A voice emerged then, in a tone that Roger could not place.

“This was all real, Roger. This happened. You’re trying to hide this history, and from this history. Not just you, but your colleagues and many in your country, and in your world. I’m here to unhide the abominable. There is more for you to see, to open your eyes and your mind. I’ll leave you now to think about the past, but there are more spectres to come.”

Open-mouthed, Roger turned to watch the diaphanous Sadako walk back out through the door without opening it.

“Expect another on the stroke of midnight, in the comfort of your own home.”









## Ghosts of Nuclear Present

Sleepless in bed, a lightly snoring Marjorie beside him, Roger stared at the ceiling. Determined that the promised second visit would not happen, he kept his attention focussed, trying to stay alert, not drift into sleep. He did not want to see — to know, to feel — anymore.

“Get a grip, man,” he whispered to himself.

The strange events of earlier worried him deeply. As hard as he tried, he could not rationalise his experience. It couldn't happen, but it had. His mind jangled with confusions and queries about nuclear policy that had wormed unbidden into his brain over a restless and anxious afternoon and evening.

Mentally, he laughed nervously at himself and his newfound doubts. Irrational? Bored with the featureless ceiling, he rolled on to his side and focussed instead on the antique alarm clock on the bedside table: tick, tock, tick...

A loud chime from the grandfather clock in the hall downstairs caused Roger to sit bolt upright. It wasn't just the sudden noise — that clock hadn't worked for years! Not since his father died. Now it chimed again and again. Roger checked on Marjorie. Although she was a notoriously light sleeper, his wife remained sound asleep. On the twelfth chime of the grandfather clock, the bedroom door flung itself open. Intense light flooded in, backlighting a figure framed in the doorway.

“Oh my Lord!” cried Roger.

“Afraid not, old chap. It's just me, your second visitor. Group Captain Lionel Mandrake,<sup>1</sup> at your service.” The figure that

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<sup>1</sup> A hapless character (played by Peter Sellers) in *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying*

approached the bedside was a stocky man wearing a moth-eaten and faded military uniform. His top lip was blighted rather than adorned by a bushy moustache, greying to match the hair that showed beneath his RAF officer's cap.

"I was just like you once," Mandrake confided, almost cheerily, "until life took an unexpected turn. Since then, my days have been spent digging, uncovering, and demanding the democratic right to know the truth about our beloved old nuclear deterrent. We love that old thing, because we're trained to love it. But we aren't locked in, old chap. There is another perspective, another world. Come now, it's time, we must be going."

"Time for what?" Roger pleaded, finding himself out of bed and on his feet as Mandrake took his arm and led him towards the

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*and Love the Bomb*, Stanley Kubrick's 1964 satire. Mandrake makes a valiant but ultimately vain attempt to avert the nuclear apocalypse that is the film's tragi-comic climax.

door from which stark white light continued to stream.

“A fine time for questions,” Mandrake chuckled, “especially when you’ve asked so few about our beloved old deterrent, eh?”

“I demand,” Roger blustered, shielding his eyes from the light with his arm...

“You’ll see,” Mandrake reassured him. “Time to interrogate some knowledge that could shift the nature of your ‘Maingate’ decision going on in Parliament. You’ve not wanted to acknowledge it. These issues and arguments have been crowded out, unheard, made invisible over the years. It’s time to listen to them now, though. For the sake of dear old Blighty! There is a choice, we don’t have to be locked in. Now, please hurry along, it’s definitely time!”

“For what?!” Roger demanded as Mandrake half dragged him through the door. Then, the crescendo of a very familiar signature tune and the hubbub of a large crowd hit him in the chest like a physical blow. A sonorous male voice:

“Ladies and gentleman, it’s time for... *Just Answer Me That!*”

Thunderous applause.

Roger found himself sitting on a swivel chair on the compact stage of a TV studio. An audience of a hundred or so people continued clapping. A sense of relief washed over him, as Roger realised he wasn’t in his pyjamas. He wore his best navy pinstripe suit, old school tie, and his favourite Union Jack socks. He immediately reached for his breast pocket and pulled out his monogrammed RCB handkerchief, dabbing away the cold sweat that had gathered on his brow. His heart beat slowed and his breathing calmed. However odd the entrance, this was Roger’s terrain, his home ground. He was in his element. As the applause began to peter out, he chuckled to himself at the sight of the man who faced him across an oak veneer desk: Jeremy Dimble.

“Welcome to this one-off special of *Just Answer Me That!*” Dimble intoned smoothly. “As the up-and-coming Maingate vote on

Trident replacement looms, we are joined by the Right Honourable Roger C. Bezeeneos, a long-standing member of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security, with special expertise on the UK's nuclear deterrent. We're going to discuss Trident replacement, of course, and perhaps the UK's policy of Mutually Assured Destruction, which generally get less of an airing. We have many questions from the floor, but let me start the ball rolling. Roger, this is a 20th-century military technology. Why on earth does 21st century Britain need nuclear weapons?"

Roger settled comfortably into his chair, laced his fingers together over his chest. He'd dealt with this one oh-so-many times.

"Well, first of all thanks for having me, Jeremy, and good evening to all your viewers at home and, of course, the audience here."

Roger slipped easily into his stride, almost forgetting the bizarre circumstances that had transported him to the studio. He always felt at ease around Jeremy, anyway. He recalled their riotous student days in the restaurants

and bars of Oxford with “the club” when they were up at University.

“Let me be completely clear,” he began, “the United Kingdom is fully committed to the principle of multilateral disarmament. The world would be a better place without nuclear weapons. However — and it’s a big however — we have to face up to the reality of the global situation. We have a number of genuine threats coming from hostile countries around the world, which means that maintaining a credible nuclear deterrent is essential to ensure the safety of our nation in the 21st century. There is great uncertainty and it would not be in our security interests to unilaterally disarm.”

“Right, so it’s still essential for the safety of the UK?”

“Increasingly so, I believe.”

“We have a question from the audience on this point.”

A studio technician wearing a headset and porting a microphone on a boom hurriedly moved to a woman sitting in the midst of the audience. Roger recognised her im-

mediately as that irritating MP from that little party that refused to completely disappear. Her constituency was that ridiculous South-coast bubble.<sup>2</sup> This was the woman whom, very recently, the PM had shot down for a lack of patriotism. Though he remembered it all too well, Roger never deigned to acknowledge the MP by name.

“How is it essential for the UK’s survival,” she demanded now, “when there are over one hundred and eighty countries without nuclear weapons? Does that mean those

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2 Roger’s nemesis is modelled on Caroline Lucas, Green Party MP for Brighton Pavilion, who has consistently opposed Trident renewal. Caroline Lucas lent her support to one aspect of our project, when we staged a Mutually Assured Distraction cabaret in Brighton. She commented: “My daily experience is of Parliament, where I have a totally different reality as my starting point compared with most MPs for whom Trident as a deterrent is a fundamental given. So I really like the way the MAD cabaret turns things on its head and reveals what nonsense nuclear weapons are as a security strategy. It’s a wonderfully creative, entertaining and unique way to talk about weapons of mass destruction — and also desperately needed!”

countries are not safe? By the logic of nuclear weapons ensuring security, should every country obtain nuclear weapons in order to be safe?"

"Oh come on, no." Roger smiled, feeling superior but very conscious of not wanting to come across as patronising. These days that simply wouldn't do. "I mean, we're not starting from a blank slate here, we are where we are. Britain is in a position of global power, and it is up to the global powers to work together to fulfil pledges to the non-proliferation treaty, while being realistic about the serious national security threats that we face. The fine people of the British military are quite certain about that."

"Well," Jeremy Dimble said with a smile on his face, "it's interesting you should mention that, Roger, because we are joined in the front row by Major General Patrick Cordingley, who led British forces in the first Gulf War, and Field Marshal Lord Bramall, former head of the armed forces."

As the technician moved to bring the microphone to them, Roger gave the uni-

formed, stately looking men the once-over. They were very plainly of good stock, he decided, made of the right stuff. He smiled at them, waiting to lap up the authoritative support for Trident and its replacement that they would surely lend.

“So, Trident is necessary for keeping us safe, Field Marshall?” Dimble asked.

“Nuclear weapons have shown themselves to be completely useless as a deterrent to the threats and scale of violence we currently face, or are likely to face, particularly international terrorism.”<sup>3</sup>

Roger gasped. The Field Marshall looked extremely serious and sober, yet he must surely have had one too many single malts in the Victoria Services Club?

“And Major General,” Dimble prompted, “your thoughts?”

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3 This is a direct quote from a letter to the *Times* written by Field Marshall Lord Bramall. See Helen Pidd, “Trident Nuclear Missiles Are £20bn Waste of Money, Say Generals,” *The Guardian*, January 16, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2009/jan/16/trident-is-20bn-waste-say-generals>.

“Strategic nuclear weapons have no military use. It would seem the government wishes to replace Trident simply to remain a nuclear power alongside the other four permanent members of the UN Security Council.”<sup>4</sup>

Roger was stunned. This wasn't how this debate was supposed to go. These two looked like thoroughly decent, reliable chaps, former top brass, pillars indeed of the establishment. How was it that he hadn't heard their views before?

“So,” Dimble directed his hawk-like attention back to Roger, “the security risks of the 21st century are not necessarily solved by nuclear weapons, which have done nothing to protect us from the various attacks occurring on British soil in recent years?”

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4 Major General Patrick Cordingley, quoted in Kate Hudson, “Trident's an Outdated Waste: Even the Military Say So,” *New Statesman*, June 24, 2015, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/06/tridents-outdated-waste-even-military-say-so>.

“No, well, it is vital that Britain has a say at the top table regarding global security issues, but...”

For an instant that felt like an age, Roger peered into the audience in search of inspiration. Seated in the back row, he caught a grey glimpse of Mandrake. An enigmatic smile seemed to be twitching beneath his RAF moustache. And next to the Captain, Roger was almost sure, sat Sadako! Instantly, his thoughts returned to that family home in Japan. Compelled to continue his answer, Roger nevertheless felt his certitude turning to ash on his tongue.

“The problem is,” he resumed, “that people have no awareness of the jobs and economic benefits created by Trident. They speak as if that isn’t a concern.”

Roger had learned a great deal in politics, not least from Foreign Secretary Horris Gladson, another former member of “the club” in Oxford, about how to deal with awkward questions. Simply answer a different question!

“Opponents would like to see all that economic benefit, all of those highly skilled jobs gone,” he continued with recovering confidence. “But I care, and this government cares passionately about British jobs and skills.”

Roger’s staunch efforts were rewarded by a muted ripple of applause from a section of the audience.

“Right, so it’s about jobs?” Dimble inquired.

“Well, yes, that’s part of it because...”

“Another apposite point,” Dimble interrupted, raising a hand to forestall any further response from Roger, “because in our audience we have Economist Michael Burke, author of a recent report on employment and Trident. So Michael, Trident creates thousands of jobs and this is important for the UK?”

As the microphone technician located Michael Burke, Dimble gave out the phone number for viewers to phone their follow-up programme and awkwardly recited the Twitter address and hashtag: @JAMTomorrow #TridentMAD. Roger sighed to himself and

looked up to see Mandrake, his odd smile still flickering. He remembered what the Group Captain had said: These issues and arguments have been crowded out, unheard, made invisible over the years. Dragging his attention back to the debate, Roger tuned in to Michael Burke's words.

“The extent of this job creation is tiny relative to the sums involved. In effect, they are among the most costly jobs in history. The money used could be spent on creating many more, better jobs. Two hundred and five billion pounds can be used far more effectively to create well-paid jobs than wasting it on replacing Trident.”<sup>5</sup>

Roger reacted on autopilot, blurting out the Party-line:

“We don't recognise those costs!”

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5 A quote from Michael Burke, an economist who authored the CND report *Trident and Jobs: The Implications of Cancelling Trident Replacement* (London: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 2016), <https://cnduk.org/resources/trident-and-jobs/>.

“Well then, Roger, could you tell us what the costs actually are?” Dimble demanded.

“The cost of Trident is between twenty-one and forty-nine billion pounds.”

“Yes, but those are the upfront costs, are they not?”

Roger was painfully reminded of Jeremy’s dogged debating society style back in their university days.

“Look, the cost of Trident replacement is between twenty-one and forty-nine billion pounds.”

“That’s already quite a range,” Dimble observed, “but what are the lifetime costs? Michael’s report puts the total cost at nearer two hundred billion pounds. Among the most expensive ventures in history, Roger?”

“The cost of Trident replacement is between twenty-one and forty-nine billion pounds.”

Another trick Roger had learned from Horris: repeat the same thing over and over until the nuisance goes away.

“But what are the lifetime costs?”

Damn, Dimble knew the same strategy! Roger again caught a glimpse of Mandrake, whose expression had taken a quizzical turn. Sadako, meanwhile, fixed her attention squarely on him, piercing him with her sad eyes. He felt his honed political reflexes withering. She could see that personal part of him, the father worried for his daughter.... Momentarily, he wondered what Amanda thought about Trident replacement. Why had they never discussed it? It was her future, after all.

“The MoD does not recognise those figures,” Roger recited wanly.

“Yes, you in the audience?” Dimble pointed towards a raised hand, directing the technician to the would-be speaker.

“I’d like to say, as a trade union member and a former member of the Barrow Alternative Employment Committee<sup>6</sup> back in the

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6 BAEC was founded in 1983 by local trade unionists concerned about how dependent on nuclear weapons infrastructures the Barrow Shipyards had become. Assisted by the CND and the Bradford Peace Institute, they explored civil alternatives to

day, that there could be more useful, highly skilled jobs created by unlocking the money for Trident. What Trident did in Barrow was not create a booming economy, but an isolated one. Half the children in Barrow grow up in poverty, it's one of the poorest wards in the country. There have always been alternative proposals for research and development science funding, for socially useful production, but they get ignored. Sustainable energy and the potential for renewables; developing an NHS that can deliver more of

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military work. In 1987 they published *Oceans of Work*, a report exploring diversification strategies for Barrow, towards new jobs oriented around civil engineering and marine-based renewable energy (wave power, offshore wind power, and tidal barriers). These alternatives were not taken seriously by management. Plans were revised in a report by the British American Security Information Council (BASIC) in a report that also details the activities of BAEC. See Steven Schofield, *Ocean of Work: Arms Conversion Revisited* (London: British American Security Information Council, 2007), [https://www.basicint.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/oceans\\_o.pdf](https://www.basicint.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/oceans_o.pdf).

what people need; addressing the housing crisis.”

Another hand shot up and the microphone boom shifted to a woman who prefaced her contribution by declaring that she was a member of Scientists for Global Responsibility:

“AWE dominates the research and development landscape...”

“That’s the defence company contracted to the Ministry of Defence,” Dimble clarified, “formerly known as the Atomic Weapons Establishment.”

“British,” Roger interjected proudly, “based right in the heart of Berkshire, world leader in the field. They assemble the Trident warheads.”

“Spending on nuclear weapons far outstrips spending on renewable energies or other technologies in the UK,” the SGR member continued. “We have the best wind, wave, and tidal resources in Europe, so why is the UK lagging behind? Why isn’t UK manufacturing investing in the opportunity of renewables? Because AWE is heavily involved

in universities and dominates the direction of UK scientific research, that's why not."

Another audience member pitched in as the microphone technician struggled to keep up, reaching the speaker mid-sentence.

"What about funding thousands of new nurses? And hundreds of new hospitals?"

"Or three million new homes: housing the homeless?" Another voice raised, this time from the midst of the audience.

As the clamour grew, the sweating technician all but gave up trying to reach each new speaker with his microphone.

"Insulate all the old houses in Britain?"

"A hundred-percent renewable energy?"

Oh no, Roger groaned to himself, the tree-huggers, peaceniks, and lefties are out in numbers tonight. There ought to be a law.

The momentum of the dissent was building, as other visions of an alternative future Britain came raining in from the audience. As in the Nagasaki kitchen, inwardly Roger wavered in his certainty around nuclear deterrence. All these issues, concerns and alternatives had always been there. They were

just not parlance in debate among Westminster's powerful. MPs from across the political spectrum had, Roger reluctantly conceded now, created a bubble of their own. They were insulated from democratic deliberation or any suggestion that the overall worldview that they shared, give or take a public service or two, was not best for everyone.

"So...." Insistently, Dimble broke into the torrent of views being vociferously expressed by his audience, quieting them. "So, it would seem that Trident is not useful for defence and many more jobs could be supported through alternative spending on public goods. What exactly is your case now then, Roger?"

"Look, let me be clear one again," even as his heart was less in his words than it had ever been, Roger became animated. "It's about Britain! It's about us as a nation; a nation that, as Lady Thatcher said, 'is not just any other country.'<sup>7</sup> It's about our place in

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7 The full quote by former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher runs: "Britain is not just another country."

the world! It's about Britain having achieved a feat of engineering that only a very few countries have. I love Britain, a Britain we have built on industry, on hard work.... On the foundations of empire! We need nuclear deterrence to remain a key, independent power in the world!"

"It's funny you should say that," Dimble purred, "about independence."

As Dimble turned to another scripted contribution from the audience, Roger recognised the speaker and knew what was coming.

"Britain's ability to continue with nuclear weapons without us support becomes very

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It has never been just another country. We would not have grown into an empire if we were just another European country [...]. It was Britain that stood when everyone else surrendered and if Britain pulls out of that [nuclear] commitment, it is as if one of the pillars of the temple has collapsed." Quoted in Ian Jack, "Trident: The British Question," *The Guardian*, February 11, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/feb/11/trident-the-british-question>.

slim to the point of invisibility,”<sup>8</sup> pronounced Julian Lewis MP, a fellow Conservative, but one opposed to the government line.

“All these blasted facts and figures are rubbish!” an angry male voice abruptly shouted over Lewis’ words. “It’s just nonsense to distract us from the main event. Britain has this weapon so that, if our country is attacked, we can retaliate!”

This was the kind of guy Roger had always been grateful for in an audience, the Great British Patriot. And he was in full, voluminous red, white, and blue flow, his cheeks aflame:

“Would you be like those terrorist sympathisers who say they won’t push the button? That is just weakness! We are a great nation,

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8 Dr Julian Lewis, a Conservative defence specialist made this statement in 2005 at a conference in Whitehall, as reported in *The Independent*. See Dan Plesch, “Let’s Clear Away the Trident Delusion,” *The Independent*, September 19, 2010, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/dan-plesch-lets-clear-away-the-trident-delusion-2083256.html>.

a proud nation. We once led the world, and we will always punch above our weight!”<sup>9</sup>

Some cheering from the audience was countered by a chorus of boos. Roger looked to Sadako, who had tears streaming down her cheeks, just as she had in that kitchen in Nagasaki in 1945. That kitchen that didn't exist. What was Roger thinking? Meanwhile, Group Lionel Captain Mandrake was worrying his moustache and scowling at the latest speaker who had interrupted to express his conviction of the threat posed to Britain by Iran. Mandrake? Not only a ghost but a ghost of a fictional character! Roger felt distinctly giddy, discomfited on every front.

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9 When he was British prime minister, Harold Macmillan admitted: “It is partly a question of keeping up with the Joneses. Countries which have played a great role in history must retain their dignity. The UK does not want to be just a clown, or a satellite.” See BBC, “A Very British Deterrent,” 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/4hDvjPQfbDXh52JGKtmYHMr/five-surprising-ways-that-serious-men-talked-about-nuclear-weapons-in-the-1950s-and-60s>.

“The real threat to our security,” the original bombastic patriot resumed, “is people who want to throw all that away! We need strong British politicians willing to defend our interests: politicians who are strong enough to push the button!”<sup>10</sup>

“Yeah, we need a leader with that sort of courage!”

“People who would do what it takes for Britain!”

A cluster of angry men were yelling at the stage, at the rest of audience, even at the harassed technician.

“Get that out of my face!”

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10 In July 2016, Theresa May confirmed that she would authorise a nuclear strike causing mass loss of life, something previous UK prime ministers have resisted making a public commitment to: “Asked in Trident debate if she would approve attack that could kill 100,000 people, PM answers with a decisive ‘yes.’” See Rowena Mason, Anushka Asthana, and Rajeev Syal, “Theresa May Would Authorise Nuclear Strike Causing Mass Loss of Life,” *The Guardian*, July 18, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jul/18/theresa-may-takes-aim-at-jeremy-corbyn-over-trident-renewal>.

Roger felt as if the room was closing in. He'd never hesitated on these questions before, but he couldn't shake the spectre of the family in Japan, their lives touched by unimaginable horror and anguish. Befuddled, Roger pondered what he heard from Trident's opponents in this debate. Was the deterrent really the extent of the ambition of Britain in the 21st century: holding on to a relic, trying to rekindle past glories, the nostalgia for empire. Must his nation's future depend on retaining the power to incinerate millions at the flick of a switch?

"So," Dimble said, turning to Roger, "would *you* push the button?"

Roger froze, like a rabbit caught in a car's headlights. Scrolling in his mind's eye was a covert nuclear history: Clement Attlee, the Mutual Defence Agreement, the secret memorandum of 1979, the cover-ups, the crashes, the radioactive leaks, the near misses, the half-truths, and the downright lies. He recognised no democracy in this litany. Did it really boil down to Britain's place in the world being defined by the potential for

instantaneous mass murder? Now that this had crystallised for him as the key question, he sat transfixed as he heard Dimble repeat the question, his voice seeming to come from a long way off.

“Would you push the button?”

Roger’s vision blurred, the studio lights of *Just Answer Me That!* dimmed, and the audience melted away. Through a thickening fog, he heard the question once again:

“*Would you push the button, Roger?*”

“Let me be clear...” Roger mumbled into the darkness. Feeling sweat roll down his temple, he reached for the monogrammed handkerchief in his breast pocket but all he plucked was duvet! He was back in bed, in his pyjamas with Marjorie sleeping soundly next to him!

“Bad dream?” Group Lionel Captain Mandrake enquired archly, standing at the foot of the bed. “Look, there is a choice, old chap. We’re not locked in. A different Britain, another future, is possible.”

And as Mandrake receded, merging into the darkness of the room, Roger just caught his parting words:

“You’ll see.... Little Boy will show you before this night is over.”

“Little Boy? Little Boy Blue...,” Roger mused even as he fell headlong into an exhausted sleep.

“Who?”



INDEPENDENT



NUKES ARE HAZAROUS



AWE  
Deliveries

NO TRIDE



RENE



## Ghosts of Nuclear Not To Come

“Where am I?” asked Roger C. Bezeeneos.

“Who am I?”

“One question at a time.” From nowhere came a gently amused voice.

Roger squinted, still in darkness, yet his senses told him he was no longer in his own bed. He could just make out a seated figure. Marjorie?

“Where am I?” he chose.

“You’re in a future,” the figure told him, rising to move closer so that he could make out their androgynous features. Not Marjorie.

“The future?” he queried, shaking his head.

“A future,” the figure corrected. “*The* future is impossible to be. Anything can hap-

pen. Once, who could have imagined votes for women? The Berlin Wall being built then torn down? Hiroshima and Nagasaki?"

"Who are you?" Roger demanded.

"They call me Little Boy. It's a joke," Little Boy said with a pantomime grimace.

Roger looked askance.

"I'm not little and I'm a not a boy," Little Boy had to explain.

Roger still didn't get it.

"I'll show you around," Little Boy said.

"Alright," Roger found himself saying.

Rising unsteadily to his feet, he realised they were in a small caravan. Shafts of light squeezed their way between the drawn curtains.

"Daytime?"

"The dawning of a new era." Little Boy smiled. "Come."

Roger followed her out of the caravan, into a verdant clearing in a beech wood. The early morning light filtered through the canopy to dapple the ground. The air felt invigoratingly cool.

Unnerved by his third spectral encounter in less than twenty-four hours, Roger asked: “Do you exist when I’m not here?”

“Well, you don’t believe in ghosts, do you?”

“Humbug,” Roger pronounced, though his voice quavered.

“I borrowed a bicycle for you,” Little Boy said. “Adjust the seat if it’s too high.”

“It’s fine,” Roger decided. He hadn’t ridden a bicycle for years, not since university, in fact. Sensibly, he tucked his pin-striped trousers into his Union Jack socks.

“Off we go then,” Little Boy said, mounting her own bicycle and setting off along a path through the trees.

Roger followed. Though he wobbled a bit at first, his body soon remembered what to do. Just like riding a bike, he thought. His guide’s clothes, he noted, were patched and work-worn but still colourful. For a moment, he felt oddly cheered.

When they emerged from the woods onto a narrow tarmac road, Roger pedalled hard to catch up with Little Boy.

“So, where are we?” he demanded, struggling for breath.

“We’re in the area which in your own time was, I believe, known as the Atomic Weapons Establishment,” Little Boy told him.

“AWE Burghfield?” Roger wheezed. “I never visited.”

“We call it Another Way of Earth. Another of our little jokes. No one here can resist a pun. Mostly we just say awe, as in awesome.”

“How awful,” Roger winced. “But where is security?”

“Actually,” Little Boy answered, clearly somewhat abashed, “security is my working group. We call it Group Secks. Well, we would, wouldn’t we?!”

“I’m curious,” Roger said sternly, “how you keep the peaceniks and anarchists out?”

“Er, Roj...,” Little Boy stuttered.

“Roger,” Roger insisted haughtily, “the Right Honourable Roger C. Bezeeneos, actually.”

“Not Jolly Roger, then,” Little Boy teased. “I’ll call you Ranking Roger. Thing is, Ranking, *we* are the peaceniks and anarchists.”

Roger almost fell off his bike.

“The lunatics,” he said when he could speak again, “have taken over the asylum.”

“Does it look like Bedlam to you?” Little Boy asked, indicating the landscape.

Everywhere Roger looked was cultivated, mostly small irregular plots growing a variety of crops. In the distance he saw two large poly-tunnels. Elsewhere, a herd of goats; an apple orchard sparkled with a ripening red crop. Here and there in copses of deciduous trees, Roger made out dwellings: decorated caravans, yurts, and one straw-bale construction that people were still building. Also dotting the vista were granaries, stacks of firewood, a lorry with no wheels up on blocks....

“It looks like hell on Earth,” the urban and orderly Roger pronounced.

They cycled on without speaking for a minute that was defined by its prickling vibe rather than its ticking seconds.

“No cars,” Roger observed eventually.

“Car-free zone apart from the odd delivery truck or one of our electric vehicles taking produce into the free market in Reading. Not your sort of free market,” Little Boy added.

There was debris piled at each side of the road: lengths of tree trunk, the burnt-out shell of a car, boulders and sections of heavy-duty fishing net.

“Barricades,” Little Boy supplied, responding to Roger’s quizzical look, “in case the police try to evict us again. These don’t stop them completely, of course, but it gives us time to get people onto the tripods.”

She indicated a tall structure with three steel legs that were connected where they crossed. Above the crossover was mounted a wooden platform, and on that a rudimentary shelter.

“And, vitally, it gives us time to mobilise the folk in our support networks.”

“People support you?” Roger was aghast.

“Last time the police came,” Little Boy told him, “more than forty thousand people blocked the road. They came from all over

the country, but mostly locals. The police might be prepared to hurt us — just peaceniks and anarchists, like you say — but they daren't risk harming what you would call 'ordinary hard-working people.'

"Not hard-working enough," Roger snorted, "not if they have time for that sort of caper!"

"We have groups from across Europe and Scandinavia who come to support us too," Little Boy said, "and some of them stay on."

"What business is our nuclear deterrent of theirs?" Roger snapped.

Little Boy simply favoured him with a disbelieving look.

"We also ensure that we film and live-stream everything the police do," she said. "How long have you been here?"

"The occupation's almost twenty years old. They haven't attempted to evict us for a good few years — and they have been good! Last time they tried was when I came as a supporter, and stayed on. They never really give up, though. Our presence offends the state; it's a territory thing. They're not much

concerned with the facility anymore, the nuclear moment has passed for Britain. Although, the technologies still raise their ghoulish heads every now and again.”

“You stopped....” Roger was flabbergasted.

“Our occupation can’t take all the credit,” Little Boy confessed. “Mostly it was economics, or, anyway, finance. It’s always all about money for them, bottom-line. Nuclear became too expensive. Strategic alliances shifted too, as the world moved to more emancipatory geopolitics.”

“Britain defenceless!” Roger gasped.

“Britain is secure through affirmative alliances, rather than threats and ‘deterrence’. The occupation here surely played a part in changing the political climate, resisting what used to be the dominant order. At first, small groups, ‘the nuclei,’ broke in, locked on,<sup>1</sup> and

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1 Locking on is a tactic often used by people taking non-violent direct action. Attaching themselves securely to something or to one another, activists construct lock-on devices to make it as difficult as possible for police to remove them.

blocked the roads. We followed up quickly with a critical mass, ‘the mushroom cloud.’ After a few weeks, the authorities just gave up. Each person they arrested was replaced by two more.”

They were approaching some industrial buildings that ran along both sides of the road. In the distance, many more such buildings were visible, block upon block of them.

“Is that...,” Roger began.

“The architecture formerly known as AWE Burghfield,” Little Boy confirmed. “We use most of the buildings: communal living spaces, a bunkhouse for volunteers. We have a health-centre, two schools, a theatre, a bakery and a brewery; everything you’d expect in a community, I guess. But a few buildings are still dangerously radioactive and some contain nuclear material.”

The colour drained from Roger’s face.

“Don’t worry,” Little Boy said, “we have a deal to let the old authorities in to do essential maintenance, it’s their mess after all. Otherwise, it’s part of the responsibility we’ve accepted: to keep the deadly stuff here so that

it can't be sold on and used to make weapons by some other state, faction, or corporation."

"Where are we going?" Roger demanded.

"Breakfast," Little Boy supplied cheerfully, dismounting her bike as they arrived at the industrial buildings. She leaned it against the wall of a grey building that was adorned with murals, banners and vibrant graffiti.

"DEEDS NOT WORDS!" one slogan read, embracing its internal irony with an accompanying smiley face symbol rendered in black and green.

Disgruntled, Roger also dismounted and parked his bike.

"No lock?"

"No need."

Roger followed Little Boy between two facing ranks of buildings. There were stalls with loaves of bread, eggs, and tomatoes. Unattended, most had a pot containing coins that were unfamiliar to Roger. Inside the buildings he saw people working, hammering, and sawing. A large group of children raced past them, laughing and yelling,

wholly absorbed in a game of some sort. One of the tail-enders in the stream, a fair-haired girl of seven or eight years old, halted long enough to study Roger's socks. She looked up, met his eye, and favoured him with a delighted grin. The socks had been a Christmas present from Amanda, who'd handed the parcel to him with a completely straight face. Roger felt himself welling up. To hide his discomposure, he stopped for a moment to untuck his trousers from the socks.

Little Boy reached a sliding door, above which hung a sign reading "La CanTina", alternate letters painted black and red. Heaving open the door, she ushered Roger inside.

Thirty or so people were scattered around, sitting in groups of threes and fours at an assortment of wooden tables. The floor was bare concrete, swept clean.

Enticing smells reached Roger's nostrils. His stomach rumbled and he realised he was famished. Little Boy handed him a battered tin tray on which there was a plate, cup and cutlery. Equipping herself similarly, she led the way to a counter where a young man

greeted them. To Roger's consternation, he had long hair in a ponytail and a silver stud through his lower lip. He took Little Boy's plate and filled it as she indicated with tofu, kale, mushrooms and fried tomatillos. Little Boy helped herself to a chunk of rustic bread from a basket. The young man took Roger's plate and beamed at him enquiringly.

"The — er — same," Roger said, taking some bread for himself.

"No meat?" he asked Little Boy is a whisper, somehow embarrassed.

"Most people are vegan," she explained patiently. "Some eat our own eggs, goat's butter, and cheese: environment; ethics; animal consciousness... loads of reasons."

At the end of the counter was a paint tin labelled "Tina's Can" into which Little Boy deposited some coins.

"How much?" Roger asked.

"Donations," Little Boy told him. "What's the meal worth to you?"

Roger's mouth watered.

He pulled a handful of coins from his pocket, eyed the inviting plateful of food,

and tipped the lot into the tin. When he thought about it, he had no idea how to value food and work that didn't quantify itself as labour, especially not here.

Little Boy arched an eyebrow.

"They'll have fun with those coins, Ranking. Antiques. I forgot."

Roger followed Little Boy to a table. She chose to share with two people already intent on their own meals. One was a grizzled man with olive skin, wearing bib-and-brace overalls. The other was a darker-skinned young woman, wearing a rainbow turban. Oddly enough, something about her reminded Roger of Marjorie, perhaps the way she smiled so warmly to welcome them to the table. Marjorie exuded warmth like that, he'd almost forgotten. Would his wife have missed him yet, raised the alarm? Little Boy poured them both cups of coffee from a vacuum jug.

"*Bon appétit*, Ranking."

They ate in an increasingly companionable silence. Roger's unease at the intimidating weirdness of his environs eased as the food warmed him. It was really rather good.

La CanTina filled up and became noisy with chatter as groups of people arrived: some manual workers, judging by their clothing, parents with young children, a number of older people.... On the wall behind Little Boy's head was a rather weird graphic of a man wearing a balaclava and smoking a pipe. Roger read the accompanying quote:

In our dreams we have seen another world, an honest world, a world decidedly more fair than the one in which we now live. We saw that in this world there was no need for armies; peace and justice and liberty were so common that no one talked of them as far off concepts but as things such as bread, birds, air, water, like books and voice...

When she noticed him reading, Little Boy recited without looking:

“This world was not a dream from the past, it was not something that came to us from our ancestors. It came from ahead,

from the next step we were going to take:  
Subcomandante Marcos.”

“I’ve never heard of him,” Roger said.

“You should get out more, Ranking.”

Continuing to eat his meal, Roger overheard fragments of the conversation between their table companions. The young woman did most of the talking, carefully outlining something called “degrowth,” while her companion mainly nodded in agreement:

“Our local economy... downscaling production and consumption....”

“Living within our ecological means... enhancing well-being, equity, and the environment....”

“Creating forms of democratic institutions — our working groups, our hubs....”

“Focussing on sufficiency, conviviality, diversity... cooperation, mutual aid.”

Some of what he heard reminded Roger of the irritating South Coast MP. At one point, he caught the eye of the grizzled man who patted his stomach and raised his coffee cup in an appreciative salute.

When they'd finished breakfast and Little Boy had topped up their coffees, Roger got straight to what was eating him.

"This cannot happen."

It was Little Boy's turn to blanch.

"Deterrence," Roger stated, though feeling less sure of himself, "keeps Britain safe. The threat of using nuclear weapons in retaliation for a nuclear attack from an enemy means that enemy can never risk a first strike. And, in case you don't believe that we are the good guys, we can't risk a first strike either."

"Mutually Assured Destruction," Little Boy recited deliberately. "But deterrence means stranding us in a present defined by fear, with no hope of transcendence towards trust."

"You're a philosopher?" Roger enquired warily. Philosophers were slippery devils.

"I'm what you might call an academic," Little Boy said, "although I don't work at a university. I believe the academy is everyone, everywhere; I research and write; I facilitate learning and I'm always learning myself. My main interest is ethics: how we choose to

behave and why; the values we hold and the virtues we might then enact. In this post-modern and post-nuclear world, I'm particularly interested in existentialist ethics."

"You're a unilateralist," Roger decided.

"Actually, I'm not so interested in moral arguments around nuclear weapons as abomination, arguments that centre on the terrible effects of using them against civilians. In that regard, deterrence remains a quandary. If it's morally wrong to kill millions of innocent civilians, is it similarly morally wrong to intend to do so?"

"Deterrence demands that each protagonist believes their enemy would use nuclear weapons," Roger said. "We must *mean* our threat."

"Hmm," Little Boy intoned dubiously, "I'm more interested in what living in deterrence culture meant for our individual and collective capacity to transcend what we are cast as, and what we cast ourselves as. I'm interested in how, acting together, we counter those oppressions and seek to become

something else, something that we cannot even imagine.”

“You’re a hippy!”

“There’s nothing mystical about transcendence the way that I understand it,” Little Boy said. “Facticity denotes the givens of our situation such as, in your world, how geopolitical relationships are defined by deterrence, and the domestic culture of security which that dictates. People can’t break free of fear because they’re stuck in the present by the baggage of the past. In a sense, the present is made into the past, constructed to endlessly repeat.”

“Security is paramount,” Roger insisted. “People must be safe.”

At this point, the woman in the turban rose to leave, giving Little Boy’s shoulder a squeeze, though the two had not spoken together. The man left too, favouring Roger with a beaming smile that was like a burst of sunshine.

“What’s safe about living with the threat of mass annihilation?” Little Boy resumed their exchange. “Transcendence extends

beyond the givens of existence. It means that we can face up to facticity and reclaim some hope, the possibility of change, our freedom and humanity. And responsibility. Just as we've done here with this occupation: living democracy in action."

"But democracy is voting.... *It is parliament!*" Roger exclaimed vehemently. Despite his vocal conviction, his hand shook when he picked up his cup as a bodily uncertainty suffused him.

"Before you came here and saw the place, experienced it, felt it, and we talked about it," Little Boy pressed, "you could not even imagine here, could you?"

"Not like this," Roger admitted.

"So imagine what I can imagine from here, from somewhere with, for you, unimaginable freedoms and responsibilities."

"What are you asking of me?"

"Imagine the unimaginable," Little Boy said, "not a future limited by your knowledge of the past and experience of the present, but an unknowable future beyond... a dream from ahead, as Marcos said."

The writing on the wall, Roger thought.

“A future beyond reason,” Little Boy continued, in full flow now, “because reason has limited you. And also beyond the stifling emotions of fear, distrust, and hatred. Such a future is always becoming: spaces being revealed differently, shifting, stretched or intensified moments of time, offering insights into each other, empathies...”

“You put an awful lot of faith in human nature,” Roger interjected.

“Each glimpse and hint,” Little Boy continued, unfazed, “each half-heard whisper casts us further beyond the known past, fettered present, and so predetermined elements of our future. And it renders society something else: a new form of democracy where we can share ideas without censure; construct new relationships, spaces and moments. Together, we can fashion the unimaginable into the everyday, the extraordinary into the norm: dynamic reasoning and fresh feelings, transcending justice as the rule of law, and overcoming fear of the other.”

“Wow... whoa!” Roger gasped, reeling from the panorama that Little Boy was presenting him with. It was literally breathtaking.

“I know,” Little Boy sighed. “I am glad to have shared a possibility with you.”

“You could be wrong,” Roger said.

“By taking that risk, deciding on freedom, we also take the responsibility to make it right.”

For a long while they sat without speaking.

Then, the young man who'd served their breakfast stood on a chair and called out:

“We need washers-up!”

Roger stood, rolling up the sleeves of his shirt, and said: “I'll go.”

“Such a small thing,” Little Boy muttered to herself as he went to help out.

Such a big thing.







## **Creative Resistance, Discomfiting Pedagogy**

In June 2016, Trident Ploughshares organised a month of action against the UK's nuclear deterrent system, outside the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield, UK.<sup>1</sup> As part of that protest, we three authors were involved in an Academic Seminar Blockade (ASB), a day of academic intervention and direct action that took the form of a seminar in front of the main gates. The call for partici-

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1 Trident Ploughshares, "June 2016 — A Month of Daily Direct Action against Trident Renewal — Please Join Us!" January 10, 2016, <http://tridentploughshares.org/june-2016-a-month-of-daily-direct-action-against-trident-renewal-please-join-us/>.

pation emphasised concerns with developing positive alternatives beyond “resistance against.” It posed the questions:

If we oppose nuclear weapons, what do we advocate? What could be the benefits of investing money spent on Trident replacement elsewhere? In alignment with such activism, academics are exploring radical alternatives to conflict, including humanity’s “assault” on our environment. To borrow from the meme of the climate justice movement, if we are nature defending itself, how should we construct that defence? How might we imagine and build a world living in peace with nature, at peace with ourselves?

The central aim of the ASB was to re-make the space at AWE as an action in solidarity with activists on issues of anti-nuclear deterrence. The practice of ASBs is intended to normalise an academic repertoire in which direct action is an engaged and engaging form of research and pedagogy: a creative

and politicised way of doing “university work.” As both seminar and blockade, ASBs are intended to transform everyday practices of the academy into a creative act of struggle with social movements.<sup>2</sup> ASBs are a form of constructive resistance constructed to defend academic inquiry and critical reflection by practising scholarship, while simultaneously and positively reclaiming the intellectual commons of democratic debate and accountability.

One aspect of ASB practice at AWE was to find a way to bring forth those voices of survivors of nuclear attack, cognisant of the long-standing peace campaigning of Hibakusha (被爆者, survivors of the 1945 bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki). As the seminar outside the gates developed with diverse contributions, including the spoken presentation

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2 See Stellan Vinthagen, Justin Kenrick, and Kelvin. Mason, eds. *Tackling Trident: Academics in Action through “Academic Conference Blockades”* (Sweden: Irene Publishing, 2012).

of papers, poetry, and song, participants all began to *feel* these and other voices, absent presences of the past, present, and future, viscerally and emotionally. This was reflected in our discussions at the time, in which “ghosts” were debated as *the absent, the concealed, and the unseen*: those *not* engaging on that day in that space (for whatever reasons); those operating in secret to deny open democracy (much of nuclear technologies being “behind closed doors”); and those past and potential future victims of nuclear attack or accident. These victims are largely omitted from debate on nuclear weapons and power, often “othered” en masse, denied by and excluded from democracy.

Both during and after the ASB, the three of us struggled to make (academic) sense of the materials presented on the day and our experiences at AWE, where we were also involved with events on other days, organised

by different affinity groups.<sup>3</sup> In particular, we struggled with the emotional and affective force of what we were experiencing. *How might we critically learn from the ASB?* Key themes emerged and we discussed how we could write these up as standard scholarly work. But that seemed, *felt*, far too insufficient, narrow, and disembodied. And writing an academic paper didn't fit with one of the central issues debated at the ASB, i.e., that democracy and an ethic of care are interwoven, that we cannot only decide on nuclear weapons from a rational perspective, based only on reasoning over the (highly disputed) "facts." We were certain — knew in our guts — that something beyond academic representation was required: something that

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3 "An affinity group is a small group of people who come together to prepare for and take direct action. Affinity groups are organised in a non-hierarchical and autonomous way, there are no leaders and everyone has an equal voice and responsibility." Thanks to Seeds for Change for this definition. See Seeds for Change, "Affinity groups," n.d, <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/affinitygroups>.

attempted to evoke the emotionalities, the sensing, the complex interweavings of people, place, environments, ideas, and issues emerging at and after AWE. Aware of growing intellectual concerns with writing emotions and affect centrally into scholarly accounts, we wanted to pay attention to how emotions are mutually co-constituted in/with/through space and society.<sup>4</sup>

We also wanted to link with feminist work on activism, in which such more-than-rational ways of writing are pushing forward debates on a range of issues, explicitly as a political *acting in the world*. We were inspired by Motta and Seppälä's thoughts on "feminized resistance," which "renders visible how new political languages, logics, and literacies" can emerge to challenge patriarchal capitalist coloniality, specifically through creative praxis "powerfully crafted in the worlds and words of feminized resist-

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4 See Mick Smith et al., *Emotion, Place and Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

ances [to] embolden (y)our loving weaving of feminized politics otherwise.”<sup>5</sup>

We were indeed emboldened by notions of creative resistance that take seriously the role of narratives and storytelling. As Houston argues, “storytelling takes on a productive role in transforming localized and individual emotions and experiences of environmental injustice into public knowledge that is performed in the world.”<sup>6</sup> After the ASB, through email discussions, our ASB ghosts loomed closer and larger. At some point, one of us was reminded of Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, the morality tale first published in 1843. In contemporary disciplinary terms, we read this as drawing on a *geographical imagination* to highlight interdependence,

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- 5 Sara C. Motta and Tiina Seppälä, “Editorial: Feminized Resistance,” *Journal of Resistance Studies* 2, no. 2 (2016): 5–32, at 5–6.
- 6 Donna Houston, “Environmental Justice Storytelling: Angels and Isotopes at Yucca Mountain, Nevada,” *Antipode* 45, no. 2 (2012): 417–35, at 417.

relationality and an ethic of care, and the wider emotional and material effects of money-centred endeavour (*A Christmas Carol* as an early critique of capitalism, we could say). The spectres resonated, the idea grew and we began to explore the possibilities of “spatial fiction” and started to write.

In presenting our critique of nuclear violence and Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) in this “spatial fiction” form, we hope to communicate in a way that *engages readers differently* from the usual dry, academic, or narrowly “fact”-based narratives. We seek to stimulate new ways of *thinking and feeling*, and, ultimately, taking action on the issues raised. In attempting an imaginative way of writing-acting, our aim is to revitalise debate on vexed questions and provoke other such acts. Our desire is that this chosen form will make our critique accessible and meaningful to a wider, more diverse audience, beyond either/or academics and activists. We are perhaps working in much the same way as historical novels that offer an alterna-

tive perspective and challenge the “received version,”<sup>7</sup> in this case the dominant discourses around nuclear deterrence/violence. Even though we know that the UK Parliament voted to maintain nuclear deterrence, we set this fiction beforehand, given that the ASB was beforehand, and there remains a long way to go in resisting the replacement of the wider Trident system (see the Addendum). We aspire to hope as a theme.<sup>8</sup>

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7 Hilary Mantel, “The Dead Have Something to Tell Us,” *The Guardian*, June 3, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jun/03/hilary-mantel-why-i-became-a-historical-novelist>.

8 The Nobel Peace Prize for 2017 was awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) for their role in achieving the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty was adopted on 7 July 2017 with the backing of 122 nations. Those nations that did not adopt the treaty included the USA and the UK. ICAN records that the “United Kingdom, which possesses approximately 215 nuclear weapons, did not participate in the negotiation of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It has said that it intends never to join the treaty. It voted against the UN General Assembly resolution

Such storytelling embraces uncertainty, as a post/de/anti-colonial challenge to Western Enlightenment constructs of rationality and (academic) rigour.<sup>9</sup> Employing a hybrid form, via the inclusion of these academic after-words, a context-setting Addendum (below) and a Bibliography, contributes to our purpose rather than detracting from it. We want to be explicit that our conceptual approach draws on Said's concept of "imaginative geography"<sup>10</sup> and builds on Desbiens' contention that "the dramatization and reification of the distance between self and other, between home and abroad, is an

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in 2016 that established the mandate for nations to negotiate the treaty. It has failed to fulfil its legally binding disarmament obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty." See ICAN, "Positions on the Treaty," <http://www.icanw.org/why-a-ban/positions/>.

- 9 See Nick Barter and Helen Tregidga, "Storytelling: Beyond the Academic Article: Using Fiction, Art and Literary Techniques to Communicate," *Journal of Corporate Citizenship* 54 (2014): 5–10.
- 10 See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

integral part of imaginative geographies.”<sup>11</sup> We want to highlight the normative imaginative geography of nuclear deterrence in the UK, as a MAD geography in which people and places are represented in particular ways by hegemonic “authors,” specifically authors whose visions are thoroughly inculcated with the creed of the military–industrial–security complex.<sup>12</sup>

Motta reveals “how the technologies and rationalities put to work as part of the reproduction of the modern state, wound the body politic in ways that disarticulate conditions of possibility of [...] political subjectivity.”<sup>13</sup> Resistance towards emancipatory politics

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11 Caroline Desbiens, “Imaginative Geographies,” in *The International Encyclopaedia of Geography: People, the Earth, Environment and Technology*, eds. Douglas Richardson et al. (Hoboken: Wiley, 2017), 2.

12 See, for example, Mike Lofgren, *The Deep State: The Fall of the Constitution and the Rise of a Shadow Government* (New York: Penguin, 2016).

13 Sara C. Motta, “Decolonizing Australia’s Body Politics: Contesting the Coloniality of Violence of

requires radical disruption of state technologies and rationalities. Thus, in order to resist the oppressive dominant narrative of nuclear deterrence/violence, we imagine a counter geography of nuclear disarmament in which we portray scenes that foreground the ghosts:

- of the emotional and embodied dimensions of nuclear detonation and threat;
- of the UK as a (self-proclaiming) global power founded on and continued through Empire/building; and
- of the democratic potential of protest that is always a ghost future,<sup>14</sup> almost intangible yet indelibly radical.<sup>15</sup>

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Child Removal,” *Journal of Resistance Studies* 2, no. 2 (2016): 100–133.

14 See Kelvin Mason, “Ghosts of the Future: A Normative Existentialist Critique of Nuclear Weapons, Mutually Assured Destruction and Deterrence,” *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 16, no. 1 (2017): 149–55.

15 See David Graeber, *The Democracy Project: A History, a Crisis, a Movement* (London: Allen Lane, 2013); Collectif Mauvaise Troupe, *Defending the*

Dickens' novella encapsulates a philosophical tension that resonates with the debates during the ASB in 2016: a tension between blinkered certitude and contrary experiences. And Dickens explicitly writes beyond the predictable and rational:

(H)e argues not only that we as individuals have a duty to care for our neighbours, but also that governments and institutions must be exposed and shamed whenever they fail to show adequate compassion.<sup>16</sup>

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ZAD (Paris: L'Eclat, 2016), <https://constellations.boum.org/IMG/pdf/zad-en-a5.pdf>; Elisa Pascucci, "From 'Refugee Population' to Political Community: The Mustapha Mahmoud Refugee Protest Camp," in *Protest Camps in International Context: Spaces, Infrastructures, and Media of Resistance*, eds. Gavin Brown et al. (Bristol: Policy Press, 2017), 289–308; and Bertie Russell, Raphael Schlembach, and Ben Lear, "Carry on Camping?' The British Camp for Climate Action as a Political Refrain," in *Protest Camps in the International Context*, 147–62.

- <sup>16</sup> Michael Faber, "Spectral Pleasures," *The Guardian*, December 24, 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/dec/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview22>.

While we can critique many aspects of *A Christmas Carol* from feminist and postcolonial perspectives, the novella's power and enduring reach lies not in solemn preaching or moralising but in its un-real joyous energy and being playful with characters, plot and readers. Since joy mingled with outrage at the AWE protests and creativity, positive energy, and playfulness were central to the affinity group actions (choral singing, dramatic tableaux, film-making, street theatre...), we felt that writing *this* spatial fiction was in keeping with the spirit of the Trident Ploughshares action, in solidarity and peace.









## **Trident Replacement and Deterrence**

“Trident” is frequently used as shorthand for the UK’s at-sea nuclear weapons system, which includes four Vanguard submarines (one of which should always be at sea, according to the military strategy), Trident II ballistic missiles, and nuclear warheads. It also involves an extensive infrastructure: HM Naval Base Clyde at Faslane, Scotland (where the submarines are based); the Royal Naval Armaments Depot at Coulport, Scotland; HM Naval Base Devonport in Plymouth, England; and AWE in Berkshire, England (where the assembly and maintenance of nuclear warheads occurs).

Each Vanguard is armed with up to sixteen missiles, carrying forty nuclear warheads. Each warhead has an explosive power eight times that of “Little Boy,” the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Thus, each Trident warhead could kill over a million people in an urban area, and the warheads carried by one Vanguard submarine have the potential to kill over forty-three million people.

The House of Commons vote on 18th July 2016 was not about replacing the Trident weapons system or any of the supporting infrastructure. Prime Minister Theresa May moved a motion to *maintain* the UK’s continuous at-sea “nuclear deterrent” and to begin that process by replacing the Vanguard Class submarines. In the future, the missiles, warheads, and infrastructure *will also require replacing*, demanding further parliamentary votes and additional funds. Thus, the political struggle will continue for a lengthy period.

The government stressed the economic benefits of replacing Vanguard for the defence industry and “thousands of highly skilled engineering jobs” and the motion was largely supported by trade unions. The cost of replacement, though, was fiercely contested. What is certain is that estimates from all sides have increased year on year. In 2015, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) claimed that replacement would cost between £17.5 and £23.4bn, up from their initial figure of £15bn. By 2016, the official figure before the House of Commons was £31bn (plus another £10bn put aside as contingency for an anticipated overspend).

Some external observers, as well as Trident replacement’s critics, estimate the cost significantly higher. A 2015 analysis by the international news agency Reuters put it at £167bn. Meanwhile, in 2016, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) calculated the cost as high as £205bn. CND claim that this sum could “improve the NHS by building 120 state of the art hospitals and employing

150,000 new nurses, build 3 million affordable homes, install solar panels in every home in the UK or pay the tuition fees for 8 million students.”<sup>1</sup> The discrepancies between estimates stems from whether or not *the lifetime costs of replacement* are taken into account. In 2016, the Defence Secretary maintained only that the running costs for the Trident system would remain at 6% of the MoD’s budget. At time of writing, *the UK has the world’s fourth largest military budget*, spending £35.1bn on defence in 2016, around 2.5% of GDP, and committed to increasing that by 0.5% above inflation every year until 2021.

The UK’s nuclear deterrent is heavily dependent on the United States. The Mutual Defence Agreement signed in 1958 is a bilateral treaty where both countries share information to develop their respective weapons

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1 Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, *People Not Trident: The Economic Case against Trident Replacement*, 2016, [http://bhescoc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/People\\_not\\_Trident\\_report16.pdf](http://bhescoc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/People_not_Trident_report16.pdf).

systems. Missiles for Trident are leased by the US and UK submarines have to return to a naval base in the USA for replacement and maintenance of these missiles. The Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) where British warheads are manufactured is part owned by the American company Lockheed Martin and missile tests took place under US supervision off the coast of Florida. Additionally, the missile guidance system is made by US corporation Charles Stark Draper Laboratories, and the bodyshell containing the warhead is purchased from the US. A long-running discussion also relates to whether Trident is “operationally independent,” with some arguing that it would be politically inconceivable for a UK Prime Minister to refuse a request by a US President to participate in a nuclear attack using Trident. At the very least, the officially acknowledged technical and financial dependence on the US for maintaining the UK’s nuclear deterrent throws into doubt the idea that the UK’s

nuclear weapons system is “independent” as is often claimed.

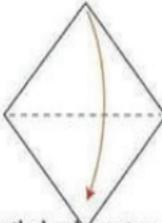
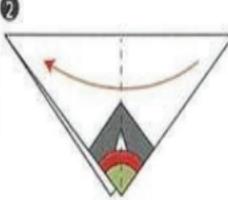
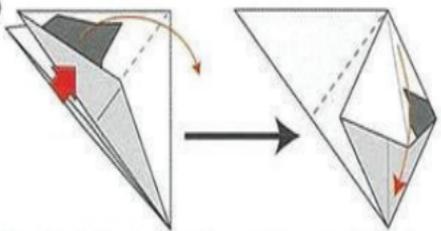
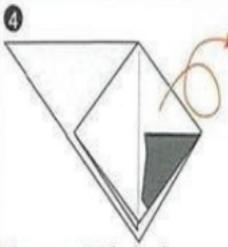
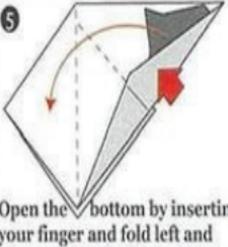
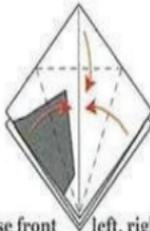
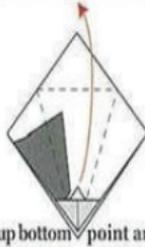
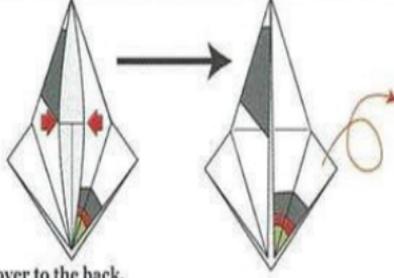
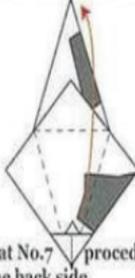
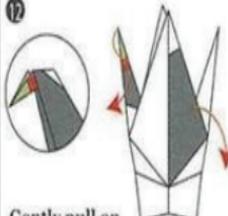
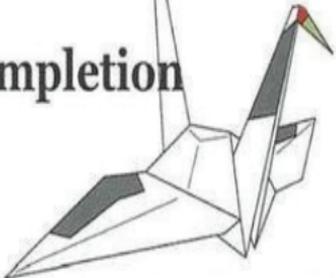
## How To Fold a Paper Crane

Following the Academic Seminar Blockade that we held at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Burghfield, England, in 2016, we pursued a multi-stranded project of academic engagement and cultural activism. In addition to film-making, singing actions, and curating a cabaret evening, we folded more than 2,000 peace cranes. The majority of these cranes were woven into the fence of Faslane (Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde) as part of the Nae Nukes rally organised by the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament on Saturday, 22nd September 2018. Surplus peace cranes were delivered to the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre for their

Origami Cranes Project.<sup>1</sup> Instructions for folding origami peace cranes are freely available to download from a number of sources. Here, we've included the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre's one-page "How to fold a paper crane" in case you're inspired to have a go.<sup>2</sup> Take it from us, it's meditative, satisfying, and can open up an emotional space for more fully comprehending the aftermath of the use of nuclear weapons, and so the implications of living with threat of their use.<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 "Origami Cranes Project," *Peace and Justice*, <http://peaceandjustice.org.uk/projects/origami-cranes-project/>.
  - 2 "How to Fold a Paper Crane," *Peace and Justice*, <http://peaceandjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/How-to-fold-an-origami-crane.pdf>.
  - 3 Kelvin Mason, "How to Fold a Paper Crane," *YouTube*, May 18, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2THbn9o-Tmw>.

# How to fold a Paper Crane

<p><b>1</b></p>  <p>Place the head part upward and turn over the paper, and valley fold in half crosswise.</p>	<p><b>2</b></p>  <p>Valley fold in half lengthwise.</p>	<p><b>3</b></p>  <p>Open the bottom by inserting your finger and fold left and right points together spreading the front and back crease.</p>	
<p><b>4</b></p>  <p>Turn over to the back.</p>	<p><b>5</b></p>  <p>Open the bottom by inserting your finger and fold left and right points together spreading the front and back crease.</p>	<p><b>6</b></p>  <p>Crease front left, right and upper edges to the center, and back out.</p>	<p><b>7</b></p>  <p>Pull up bottom point and fold along crease to produce the shape shown in No. 8.</p>
<p><b>8</b></p>  <p>Turn over to the back.</p>	<p><b>9</b></p>  <p>Repeat No.7 procedure for the back side.</p>	<p><b>10</b></p>  <p>Fold left and right edges along dotted line into center for both front and back sides.</p>	
<p><b>11</b></p>  <p>Pulling up head and tail, intermediate fold and insert them between the wing parts.</p>	<p><b>12</b></p>  <p>Gently pull on head and tail, and fold down wings to expand the body.</p>	<p><b>13</b></p>  <p><b>Completion</b></p>	



## Bibliography

Academic writing (journal articles and books) requires the inclusion of reference to other people's work that is drawn upon within any text, and we have done so in the Postscript. We have not done the same in our "spatial fiction," however, as we felt that would be out of keeping with the form. It would have read awkwardly and been anti-thetical to the spirit of the writing! Where we felt it was essential for one reason or another, we did use footnotes. All that said, the reader can find the literature underpinning and inspiring all of our arguments and a number of texts that they may wish to read in this bibliography.

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