

## **“The Fastest Dying State:” Postwar Florida and Philip Wylie’s Shift from the Nuclear to the Ecological Apocalyptic, 1954-1970**

John Robert Whitehurst

Although not a native to Florida himself, Philip Wylie was a household name in the early Cold War who not only promoted his adopted state, but as evidenced in his works, was greatly influenced by his perceptions of the seemingly paradisiacal environment he found there. As an incredibly prolific writer throughout the mid-20th century, literary critics have struggled to assimilate the works of Philip Wylie into a unified theme. Those who have tried have noted his role as a producer of apocalyptics and jeremiads. Wylie’s biographers have rightfully noted his many accomplishments as well as his waning popularity by the end of his life. While his antagonist critiques of American culture won over many readers, he was also very complex and often polarizing for both those on the right and left. He was dismissive of the counter-cultural youth of the 1960s and his millenarian focus was eventually forgotten whereas his earlier writings focused on “momism” and seemingly misogynistic principles would be his dominant legacy (Keefer 1977, Barshay 1979, Bendau, 1981).



**Figure 1-** Philip Wylie meeting with Florida’s Governor Leroy Collins who is holding Wylie’s *Best of Des and Crunch*.

Regardless of how Wylie has been remembered, a greater integration of all his writings indicate the complexity of his worldview, while also revealing his prescient views about environmental dangers facing the planet, dangers that seemingly transformed from earlier nuclear ones. Wylie’s early Cold War writings focused on civil defense and nuclear destruction and gradually transformed into environmental and ecological tales over the next 20 years. Throughout this time, he also wrote about fishing, a topic that seemed to be

an outlier when compared to his more controversial and dramatic works. Nevertheless, a closer investigation on the impact of his fishing stories reveals not only the role of Florida, but also the role of environmental degradation on Wylie’s thinking about the life and death of nature and humanity. This brief survey of some of Philip Wylie’s writings between the early 1950s until his death in 1971 illuminates the impact that the idea of Florida as an imagined paradise had on Wylie and his visions of nuclear and ecological destruction.

### **Florida as Imagined Paradise and Cold War Hot Spot**

Florida’s place in the American imagination has reflected the desires and hopes of its visitors and residents for centuries. This was as true for the 16th-Century Ponce de Leon as it was for the 20th-Century Walt Disney (J.E. Davis and Arsenault 2005, Derr 1998, Fjellman 1992). The potency of Florida as an imagined paradise was even resilient enough to survive the anxieties of the Cold War. In his famous nuclear apocalyptic novel *Alas, Babylon*, author Pat Frank chose to set his story in the fictional “Fort Repose, a river town in central Florida” (Frank 1959/1999). For Frank, Florida’s luscious natural environment and tough, rural people provided a fitting backdrop for his survival tale. In the story, the protagonist Randy Bragg and his small plantation-like community are able not only to survive a full-scale nuclear exchange, but do so in relative comfort. This element of the story was by no means lost on the critics. One critic even described the story as a “post-Bomb Swiss Family Robinson-type adventure” (Gale 1959, 150). Regardless of the criticisms that Frank received for the novel’s survivalist tone, the setting reveals much about Florida’s geopolitical place during the Cold war and the impact of the state’s natural beauties on its residents. In this way, Florida offers historians an excellent backdrop for understanding the nexus of Cold War fears and environmental stirrings that would soon encompass the nation. These same geopolitical and environmental conceptions of Florida greatly impacted popular author Philip Wylie.

### **Philip Wylie the Antagonist**

Philip Wylie is a name known today for his fateful assertions about mothers and his coining of the term “momism” (Wylie 1943/1996).<sup>i</sup> In spite of this contemporary association, Wylie was one of the most respected and bestselling authors of the early Cold War period.<sup>ii</sup> Known for his iconoclastic and sometimes provocative writings, Wylie challenged many of the tenets of early

Cold War culture. In a 1957 Mike Wallace interview, Wylie was introduced as a man who had “declared open war on America’s sacred institutions” including “American moral values, Christianity, Doctors, Teachers, and Statesmen, to name just a few.” Wylie’s opinions could often be hard to pin down. Wallace critiqued Wylie for once claiming that he was, “not a Protestant, or a Catholic, or a Jew,” had never belonged to “any church or union,” or ever “been a communist, fascist, leftist, liberal, tory, or rightest.” After a fairly tense interview Wallace challenged, “You hold yourself away from the crowd, but you criticize” (Wallace 1957). In spite of this somewhat cold assertion by Wallace, Philip Wylie did hold on to certain ideas and practices. Regardless of his status as a gadfly in a seemingly conservative era, Wylie was quite supportive of many of the national and military policies of his day (Zeman 2006, Kuznick and Gilbert 2013, Whitfield 1996, Petigny 2011). This was particularly played out in his support of and participation in American civil defense programs and his ideas concerning nuclear death.

### **Wylie and Nuclear Death**

Wylie wrote extensively on civil defense and a broad range of other topics. In a way, Wylie was a generalist in an era of specialists. For this reason, biographers of him have sometimes found it difficult to synthesize his writings. In particular, Wylie wrote much about Cold War politics and civil defense while simultaneously covering outdoor recreation, nature, and environmental topics. While these two topics have often been treated as isolated and distinct from one another, a more inclusive synthesis of the literature reveals an important and influential link between the two. Further, by treating Wylie’s writings in a more holistic way, his shifting opinions on civil defense become clearer as well. The role that Florida fish and wildlife played in Wylie’s life was one of the main sources for his transition from advocate to opponent of the civil defense program. Additionally, the impact of Florida as an imagined paradise for Wylie led to his shift from military and political concerns to ecological ones. A review of Wylie’s literature allows for a greater understanding of not only his ideological realignment, but also of a broader national transition occurring during the late 1950s as environmental concerns began to emerge.

Mostly a fictional writer, Wylie was known for his ability to publish on a variety of topics in a range of publications. Although he dropped out of

Princeton, he remained a credible writer on scientific and technological topics throughout his life. As one of his biographers so aptly described, Wylie had a knack for, “Taking difficult concepts and translating them into the language of everyman...” (Bendau 1981, 25). He consistently capitalized on this ability through his fictional writings and clearly used the medium to influence everyday readers. After serving as a consultant to the Federal Civil Defense Administration in Miami, he inscribed his support for the program in his novel *Tomorrow!* (Wylie 1954/2007).



**Figure 2-** Philip Wylie doing yardwork with his first wife Frederika Ballard at their Miami home in 1950. This picture was taken while Wylie was employed with Miami’s civil defense administration.

Published in 1954, *Tomorrow!* was written and dedicated to, “the gallant men and women of the Federal Civil Defense Administration and to those other true patriots, the volunteers, who are doing their best to save the sum of things.” The novel is set in the twin cities of Green Prairie and River City. The former has a strong civil defense program while the latter lacks any form of preparation. In a fairly predictable manner, Green Prairie is able to survive nuclear war in much better condition than River City (Wylie 1954/2007).<sup>iii</sup> Using gruesome

and violent descriptions, Wylie showed no sympathy to the unprepared in the face of his fictionalized, albeit terrifying, nuclear war. Most importantly, he depicted the post-bomb world as ripe for revitalization. By making one of the protagonists an architect, Wylie imagined a world ready to be managed and sculpted into a new Eden. In writing about actual early Cold War architects, historian Tom Vanderbilt claims that, “In the planners’ utopian schemes ran an undercurrent of violence, of ‘creative destruction.’ Non-military defense was a vehicle by which all other sorts of enormous schemes might be carried out, central among them the key missions of postwar planning, highway building, and ‘urban redevelopment’” (Vanderbilt 2002, 78). These were all prominent themes within *Tomorrow!*. Tellingly, Wylie chose to place the “Negro district” in the center of the fictitious twin cities and at ground zero.<sup>iv</sup> Wylie,

like many others during the period, clearly viewed “urban renewal” sometimes called “slum removal” as a benefit of “creative destruction.” Taken as a whole, Wylie seems to have looked forward to a post-nuclear future in *Tomorrow!*. Over the period of the next few years, however, Wylie’s optimism faded and turned toward a more realistic and cynical depiction of nuclear warfare. This transition is embodied in Wylie’s 1963 novel satirically titled *Triumph* (Wylie 1963/2007).

Nine years after the publication of his pro-civil defense novel *Tomorrow!*, Philip Wylie published another nuclear apocalyptic. Unlike its predecessor, *Triumph* addressed both environmental and physical realities of nuclear radiation. Unlike the “conventionalization” of nuclear weapons in *Tomorrow!* where survivors only needed to evacuate the blast area, Wylie only allowed fourteen North Americans to survive in *Triumph* (Garrison 2006).<sup>v</sup> These fourteen are only able to do so by living in a \$200 million shelter built by a business magnate. Further, this expensive “deep shelter” only offers two short years of sustainability before a rescue team from Australia has to make a quick attempt (due to the residual radiation and fallout) to extract the group. The novel ends with the Australians explaining to the survivors that they will never again be able to return to their desolated and biologically extinct landscape they once called home.<sup>vi</sup> Clearly, Wylie had begun to see nuclear death in very different terms than he did a few years earlier.

In retrospect, it is clear that several major technological and cultural shifts took place between *Tomorrow!* and *Triumph*. As Paul Boyer (1985) and others have so clearly delineated, the results of the US military’s Operation Castle in 1954 spurred a “fallout scare” that heavily influenced the American and worldwide public’s view of nuclear energy. Further, the technological developments of hydrogen based fusion weapons (used in Operation Castle) and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) occurred during this time. Nevertheless, these factors do not completely satisfy the reasons for the shift in the Wylie’s tone. Due to his prolific writing, he offered readers several textual checkpoints for understanding this transition. One of the most clearly written explanations was given by Wylie in the 1960 issue of *The Rotarian*, the literary organ of the Rotary Club, which he was a member of.

In the *Rotarian* article, Wylie noted that he had shifted his opinions on civil

defense based on the technological innovations mentioned above. Further, he provided four examples of what he considered “overlooked facts” by his former employer (civil defense) and unknown to the average American. First, a nuclear opponent would likely stagger their attacks in order to wait out those who somehow have found shelter. Second, World War II style “firestorms” would burn or asphyxiate those within shelters.<sup>vii</sup> Third, anyone within sight of an H-bomb’s fireball would be instantly blinded. Finally, and most importantly, Wylie noted that, “The last effect – the ecological result of H-war – means that a heavily H-bombed nation would remain a death chamber for man for decades!” (Wylie 1960, 24-25). Indeed it was at this point that Wylie gave a detailed description of these ecological impacts. Using the notions of biomagnification he explained to the readers,

*“the ultimate, and worst, fact of fallout is still another – and, again, an unresolved, unresolvable – horror. Rains would bring increased loads of hot material onto the land, and rains would wash it down watersheds. Radioactive elements would thus concentrate on farms, in pastures, in rivers, and in reservoirs. Moreover, as time passed – as years passed – various microorganisms, some algae, certain plants, and, through them, soon insects and animals would build up increased, internal stores of radioactive substances. Certain of the minute living things that are the base of the whole, great “chain of life” that ends in man, and on which man depends to survive, concentrate radioactive material 100,000 times as heavily as it is concentrated in the water or land around them. That order of concentration would be passed upward to man. In sum, while the radioactivity in a fallout area might soon decrease to a harmless amount, the chain of life in that same area would be concentrating that residue, so that the animals and vegetables we eat would grow “hotter” – or fail to mature – while fish and birds would vanish in an annual series of ever-more-sterile hatches.”* (Wylie 1960, 24).

Quite ahead of his time, Wylie was describing the “dead zones” that would exist in a post-nuclear environment. Two years later a group of physicians would publish a more detailed description of these in a non-fictional book titled *Fallen Sky*. Their research and the activism of several dedicated scientists’ and womens’ groups would also greatly influence the US congress to ratify the Limited Test Ban Treaty in 1963 (Lewer 1992, Whitehurst 2021). Several components within Wylie’s analysis point to a knowledge of ecological ideas and concepts during the period. In particular, his notions of biomagnifications and the “chain of life” were taken from a renewed interest in ecological thinking during the early Cold War period (Worster 1994, Lutts 1985, Egan 2009).<sup>viii</sup>

### **Wylie the Florida Conservationist**

As noted by several of his biographers, Wylie was a renowned conservationist (Bendau 1981, 38). Like many environmentalists, he located his interest of nature in his childhood years. In one of the last articles written by him, he was introduced to readers as “an amateur naturalist as a boy and... one of the earliest writers on our polluted-environment” (Wylie 1970, 21). This interest in nature was present throughout his works. Further, an overview of Wylie’s naturalist and conservationist inspired writings reveal an important trajectory of his environmental ideas. Although often unassimilated with his nuclear informed writings, Wylie’s more leisure based fictional publications on fishing help explain the author’s shift in focus from nuclear toward ecological concerns. Finally, Florida offered a space for Wylie’s fictionalized nature writings and a place for his ecological and environmental concerns to ferment. A brief overview of Wylie’s writings on fishing and conservation in Florida also illuminates his simultaneous shift from supporting to opposing civil defense, from being a promoter of environmental use to one of sustainability, and his vision from a nuclear annihilation toward an ecological one.

Since his arrival to Florida in 1937, Wylie increasingly showed interest in conservation biology and ecology, an interest that only deepened throughout his life. In 1941, Wylie published a piece titled “Detour Florida” for *Harpers Magazine*. His passion for the state emanated from the pages as he explained to the readers that “eons before white men set foot on the golden sands Florida was a landscape, a geology, a flora and a fauna unique in all the earth” (Wylie 1941, 101). Written six years prior to Marjorie Stoneman Douglas’s work on the Everglades, Wylie was already presenting the area in a special light. He wrote to potential tourists, “The Everglades, in spite of what everyone expects are not great gloomy swamps, but wet prairies dotted with tree-clusters and ‘hammocks.’” He then warned tourists, “Those who whiz through them on the straight flat roads, will not see the standing cranes and herons, the morning and evening flights of egrets and ibises and other wading birds” (Wylie 1941, 103).<sup>ix</sup> Wylie concluded the article with a warning to visitors combined with praise for his adopted state, “The literate tourist had best be something of a natural historian.... The Florida that nature made is weird and gaudy, rich, green, multitudinously alive, dangerous and seductive. As for man’s handiwork there – hard by the crested egrets stand the jook joints” (Wylie 1941, 104). Wylie’s descriptions of Florida



illustrate his sense of appreciation and romanticism for the region, yet they still strike the reader with a promotional tone at the same time.

Certainly by the late 1950s, it was becoming quite clear to Wylie that Florida's natural beauties could no longer be taken for granted. In 1959 *The Rotarian*, dedicated an entire issue on the State of Florida and its natural attractions. In a telling example of Wylie as an ambassador for the state, he wrote an article in the issue. Included among the issues' contributors were well known author Marjorie Stoneman Douglas and Vivian Laramore-Radar, the poet laureate of Florida at the time. Wylie was intentionally assigned the least controversial topic of fishing. The editor for *The Rotarian* wrote, "Best known of the many authors who make this issue what it is, and certainly the best known of living Florida authors, is Philip Wylie. While his 35 books and many magazine articles have variously pleased and provoked millions of readers, we present him in a (we think) non-controversial area: how to fish in Florida" (Kreuger 1959, 6). The editor's presentation of Wylie speaks to just how well known the author was during the 50s as well as his notoriety for writing on contentious issues.

Wylie's article, titled "100 Ways to Fish in Florida – for 100 Kinds of Fish," was indicative of his own and others' beliefs about the abundance of aquatic life in the waters of Florida. In the article, he lamented the fact that "most fishermen who visit Florida for the first time leave their tackle at home" (Wylie 1959, 31). He then posits that this was the case because non-Floridian fishers were afraid of having their "light tackle" laughed at by the large tackle packing Floridians. He then mollified the readers by stating that this is not the case for two reasons. First, light tackle was becoming the norm in the region, including on charter boats. Second, Floridians were known for their hospitality and would go to great lengths to express their kindness, especially in the context of fishing.<sup>x</sup> In describing this second characteristic, Wylie wrote that, "Most Floridians fish ardently. And because the fish are so abundant, they will gladly tell any stranger how to go about getting them, and where. There's no need to keep secret some special cove or pond where the 'big ones climb over each other's backs to hit your fly'" (Wylie 1959, 33). After telling several anecdotes to reinforce the hospitality of fishermen and the abundance of fish, Wylie concluded that, "If space permitted, I could go on with data of that sort [on hospitality and abundance] indefinitely. Much better however, would be for



you to bring your own tackle and add your personal tales to the millions of true stories about Florida fishing... by doing some of it yourself!" (Wylie 1959, 33).

It was only later that environmental historians would point out the ecological reasons that "light tackle" was being increasingly adopted in the state. Wylie and other writer's stories drew thousands of tourists from around the country to Florida in pursuit of recreational fishing. Ironically, recreational fishing had been one of the most destructive elements in the aquatic ecosystems in and around the Floridian peninsula. Historical ecologist Loren McClenachan's description of Florida anglers aptly characterize Wylie's writings when she argues, "the image of the Florida Keys as a fisherman's paradise – and the oceans as resilient to human impact – blinded marine anglers to underwater declines that occurred throughout the twentieth century" (McClenachan 2013, 78). Indeed, Wylie had produced dozens of fictional fishing tales about two men, "Crunch and Des" that revolved around the Florida Keys. Most if not all of the "Crunch and Des" stories were set in and around the Florida Keys with titles such as "Key Jinx," "Danger at Coral Key," and "Treasure at Tandem Key" (Wylie 1948c, Wylie 1953a, Wylie 1956). Further, Wylie focused on the experience of fishing, not the use-value of the catch (Wylie 1948b, Wylie 1939, Wylie 1953b).<sup>xi</sup> This concept, according to McClenachan, has been central to the continuing decline in both numbers and size (measured as biomass) of aquatic life throughout the region. McClenachan posits that "Recreational Fishers were not subject to the same economic constraints as commercial fishers, and so they could afford to be less reactive to changes in the environment affecting their catch, and their individual and collective assessments of change in fish populations could afford to be more qualitative" (McClenachan 2013, 82).

Like many founders of the conservation movement, fish and wildlife was one of Wylie's major hobbies (Reiger 2001).<sup>xii</sup> In spite of the ironic outcome of recreational fishing, Wylie passed away well before the advent of fish finders and angler's "right to fish" assertions that helped to demolish much of the aquatic life throughout Florida, even if his stories did reinforce the ideological underpinnings and fantasies associated with recreational fishing. This is quite unfortunate given Wylie's dedication to the preservation of the Everglades and other Floridian treasures. He did, nonetheless, foresee that the ecological

consequences might be far more deceiving than the more dramatic nuclear fears he had penned so much about years prior.

### **Wylie and Ecological Death**

Two days before Christmas in 1961, Wylie wrote an article for the *Saturday Evening Post*’s regular column titled “Speaking Out.” In this article, Wylie outlined the history of preservation attempts in Florida, including the important establishment of the Everglades National Park in 1947. In the aftermath of battles over the establishment of the park Wylie noted that “people relaxed” because, “they believed a splendid sample of the Everglades – unique both in its dazzling flora and abundant wildlife – was secure for the enjoyment and education of future Americans. Not so however.” Areas surrounding the park were continually drained, leading to an increase in forest fires and a threat to the fresh water throughout the region. According to Wylie, “for the benefit of a relatively few muckland farmers, cattlemen and irresponsible developers, South and Central Florida may soon go thirsty; and our irreplaceable National Park may become a boneyard” (Wylie 1961, 10).

In a salient example of his awareness and concern over Florida environmental issues, Wylie also warned readers over the project that became known as the Cross-Florida Barge Canal. In speaking of the burgeoning project in 1961, the writer warned, “True, it would shorten the sea route from the Atlantic to the Gulf. It might also, according to some embattled geologists, ‘salt up’ the entire underground water table to the south. If so, the feat would be much like burning down one’s house to toast marshmallows” (F.R. Davis 2012, Irby 2005).<sup>xiii</sup> Wylie also railed “land improvement” efforts as “Perhaps the most horrendous and unnecessary sabotage in Florida...” (Wylie 1961, 10). After lamenting that these trends were national in scale, he conceded, “Florida is the fastest-growing state. It appears also to be the fastest-dying state” and that ignoring environmental issues faced by the state were “directions – neat and absolute – for suicide” (Wylie 1961, 10). Wylie, like others during the time, might not have understood the ramifications of recreational fishing but he clearly worried about the despoliation of Florida’s natural and ecological environment. Like others, his concerns were only strengthened over time. Eventually, Wylie would become quite pessimistic about the situation to the point of near obsession.

One of Wylie's last fictional publications brings us full circle and ties many of his Cold War concerns and tenets to ecological ones he held later on. In shocking similarity to his pro-civil defense novel *Tomorrow!*, Wylie dedicated much of this article to lamenting society's unwillingness to properly prepare and train a medical community for an apocalyptic disaster. Only this time, it was not nuclear destruction from above, but environmental destruction from below that lead to the near extinction of the human race. Wylie's article, titled, "Who Killed Mankind?," was a fictional chronology of the 50 years following the article's actual publication date in 1970. In his account of the year 2020, Wylie revived his classic corpse-filled, devastated, and dreary post-apocalyptic depictions so central to his prior works. Nevertheless, instead of being the result of nuclear fallout, Wylie explained to his readers, "Much of what happened in those appalling years was owing to the universal failure to take the essential and, admittedly, very costly, measures for pollution control and environmental rescue. There was a flood of talk and a deluge of laws. And then, a skimping of funds" (Wylie 1970, 22). Causes of pollution and environmental degradation included chemical additives in food, biological warfare experiments, radiation, rapid population growth, insufficient sewage treatment, and pesticide resistance of vectors, like mosquitos.<sup>xiv</sup> In summary, the fictional chronicler informed the readers, "The foregoing is, of course, merely a sampling of the ills, epidemics, and other purely ecologically caused disasters of the period. To note more would serve no purpose. For our purpose here is simply to show that man's presumed 'conquest of nature' began turning into his own conquest by nature..." (Wylie 1970, 25). Although the story maintained the post-apocalyptic literary staples found in *Tomorrow!* and *Triumph*, the shift now appropriately moved further away from nuclear warfare toward seemingly sneakier environmental issues. Regardless of the alarmist and doomsday exaggerations, Wylie's shift from nuclear to ecological concerns were clearly manifest during the last years of his life.



**Figure 3-** Philip Wylie boarding up the windows of his home in Miami in 1950.

## **Conclusion**

In retrospect, the trajectory of Philip Wylie's shift from a fish and wildlife conservationist to broader ecological concerns are somewhat typical. As Jack Davis has argued, this was a transition taken by Marjorie Stoneman Douglas and is representative of a larger population as well (J. Davis 2005, 299). Much like the cases of Marjorie Stoneman Douglas and conservation biologist Archie Carr, Florida's natural treasures played a major role in Wylie's journey. In addition to reinforcing the importance of Florida as an "imagined paradise" for its denizens, Wylie's stories represent an important nexus between Cold War policies and growing environmental concerns in the 1950s and 60s as well. Although sometimes characterized as such, Wylie's jettison of civil defense advocacy cannot fully be explained by rapid technological innovations of military weaponry. For a more encompassing understanding of his shift, we must also consider his environmentalist impulses. Although these were present throughout his writings, these themes became considerably more prominent throughout the last years of Wylie's life. Wylie's transition from conservationist to preservationist was part of a larger national trend, and was positively influential on his simultaneous abandonment of civil defense. This shift was also influenced by his experiences in Florida. Like many of his contemporaries, by the 1950s Wylie began to envision the destruction of Florida's ecology all around him. As someone who focused on death and destruction in most, if not all, of his writings, Wylie became increasingly concerned with population growth and pesticide overuse. The lessons of Wylie's abandonment offer a template for understanding national trends as well. The role of technological innovations, while vitally important, should not eclipse environmental concerns expressed during the period. As technological innovations in missile and weapons technology increased, they did so by collapsing the temporal and spatial parameters of warfare. Simultaneously, environmental concerns arose in response to these threats, both as imagined in nuclear fiction novels and as a reality. It is only through a more inclusive account that we can fully understand the relationship between the burgeoning environmentalist movement, the national erosion of military and civil defense policies, and the eclipse of conservationist paradigms by ecological and preservationist ones. In retrospect, this was a detour taken by Philip Wylie, but soon adopted by many throughout North America.

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## Notes

- <sup>i</sup> The concept of “momism” was coined by Wylie and was the concept that mothers during the postwar period were overwhelming their children which resulted in latent maturity and independence in development. The concept was most prominently articulated through Wylie’s work *Generation of Vipers* (Wylie 1943/1996).
- <sup>ii</sup> An excellent resource for locating Philip Wylie’s prolific publication history has been compiled by S. Joseph Levine: <http://www.learnerassociates.net/wylie/>.
- <sup>iii</sup> For further discussion on the narrative shifts and implications of *Tomorrow!* and *Triumph* see the author’s MA thesis (Whitehurst 2012).
- <sup>iv</sup> In retrospect, it seems quite clear that a nuclear catastrophe need not occur to achieve the racist and classist removal of low-income housing from inner cities. When Wylie was writing *Tomorrow!* the beginnings of white flight had already started and only increased over the course of the next several decades. The building of the federal interstate system wiped out entire neighborhoods in wide swaths and these highways were intentionally planned through low-income and minority neighborhoods (Kruse 2005) These displacements are currently being mapped out for future generations and can be viewed through the University of Richmond’s “Renewing Inequality” developed by the Digital Scholarship Lab. <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/renewal/#view=0/0/1&viz=cartogram>.
- <sup>v</sup> Conventionalization is a process described by historians of civil defense whereas the U.S. government sought to downplay the unconventional effects of nuclear testing and weaponry such as radiation in hopes of alleviating popular fears of nuclear testing and the arms race (Garrison 2006).

- <sup>vi</sup> Australia was often portrayed as a place for the survival of humanity during nuclear annihilation as evidenced in the earlier novel *On the Beach* by Neville Shute. First published in 1957, the novel was adapted into a film two years later and gained significant attention by civil defense administrators and even President Dwight D. Eisenhower (Shute 1957).
- <sup>vii</sup> This issue was well documented due in part to the experiences of World War II firebombing survivors. One of the most graphic accounts of this can be found in Kurt Vonnegut’s classic *Slaughterhouse-Five* (Vonnegut 1969).
- <sup>viii</sup> Donald Worster notes that the “chain of being” is a part of the Linnaean tradition. Wylie’s use of the term, however, seems to relate more to the idea of “food chains” as articulated by Charles Elton in his “New Ecology.” The “New Ecology,” according to Worster, was conceived in the 1920s and well conveyed by the 1950s (Worster 1994). Although the notion of biomagnification was just emerging at this time, it was popularized just a few years later through Rachel Carson’s use of the concept throughout *Silent Spring* to describe the biomagnification of DDT. According to Ralph Lutts, it was also strontium 90 that informed Carson’s interest in DDT and was one of the many aspects that led to her very important work (Lutts 1985). Fundamental to the discovery, research on, and publicization of these efforts was a group founded by scientists Barry Commoner called the St. Louis Committee for Nuclear Information formed in 1958. This committee worked with other groups like the Women Strike for Peace to put pressure on the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations to curtail atmospheric nuclear testing (Egan 2009).
- <sup>ix</sup> Wylie’s lamenting of the effects of automobile tourism on environments and the perceptions of nature were shared with many within the wilderness movement as well (Sutter 2002).
- <sup>x</sup> For an excellent historical overview of both recreational and commercial fishing in Florida, see Jack Davis’s Pulitzer Prize winning *The Gulf* (J.E. Davis, 2017).
- <sup>xi</sup> By the 1960s, Wylie’s “Crunch and Des” stories were being serialized in the *Saturday Evening Post*. The Crunch and Des stories were also compiled in book forms (Wylie 1948a/b). The topic of his publication titled “Widow Voyage,” was the first in a series of “Crunch and Des” stories that would occupy Wylie’s pen for years to come. In the story, Desmond “Des” Smith and “Crunch” Adams work for a charter fishing company. In a moment of courage and optimism, they decide to strike out on their own and purchase a burnt

out and previously capsized vessel named the Evangeline IV. After a series of fortunate events, the two are able to repair and restore the vessel and take it out on its “widow voyage.” Wylie very consciously chose the setting in Miami, the place that he had grown to love in the past several years. In describing Crunch and Des’s first major catch on their newly re-christened Poseidon, Wylie wrote, “So he [Crunch and Des’s first patron] wound, and looked out on the water, and saw what some men have spent months to witness – the awesome leap of a sailfish, sword flailing, jaws wide, indigo dorsal spread full, the wide-forked tail churning itself free of the water. The fish hung in the air for a second; huge scintillant, miraculous. Then it was gone” (Wylie 1939, 101). The Crunch and Des series communicated the central role that fishing played in the author’s affection for Florida’s aquatic life and also gives insights into his later concern over environmental changes. If Wylie’s fictional series isn’t convincing enough, the author’s affection was also conveyed through his nonfictional, yet Arcadian book *Denizens of the Deep: True Tales of Deep-Sea Fishing* (Wylie 1953b). This work reads so much like the Crunch and Des stories that is difficult not to recognize that the author’s inspiration emanated from his personal, real-life experiences with Florida’s oceanic treasures.

<sup>xii</sup> Historian John Rieger has quite effectively demonstrated the ideological, cultural, and material contributions of sportsmen in organizing early conservation efforts in the United States (Rieger 2001).

<sup>xiii</sup> Although Wylie only addressed the issue briefly, the battle between environmentalists and the Army Corps of Engineers would continue over the next several decades. Led by Marjorie Carr and the Alachua Audubon Society (established a year prior to Wylie’s article), the environmentalists were able to see the project halted through a court decision and executive order in 1971 (F.R. Davis 2012, Irby 2005).

<sup>xiv</sup> Wylie’s concerns about overpopulation were likely influenced by the publication of Paul Ehrlich’s *Population Bomb* in 1968. Wylie’s concerns also reflect the burgeoning environmentalist movement of the late 1960s and the focus on pesticides and resistance (Ehrlich 1968).



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## Photos

**Figure 1:** Philip Wylie meeting with Florida's Governor Leroy Collins who is holding Wylie's Best of Des and Crunch. Governor Collins and Philip Wylie. 1955-10. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/410>>, accessed 27 December 2021.

**Figure 2:** Philip Wylie doing yardwork with his first wife Frederika Ballard at their Miami home in 1950. This picture was taken while Wylie was employed with Miami's civil defense administration. Steinmetz, Joseph Janney, 1905-1985. Philip Wylie working in the yard with his wife in Miami, Florida. 1950. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/245934>>, accessed 27 December 2021.

**Figure 3:** Philip Wylie boarding up the windows of his home in Miami in 1950. Steinmetz, Joseph Janney, 1905-1985. Windows at the home of Philip Wylie being boarded up for a hurricane in Miami, Florida. 1950. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/245937>>, accessed 27 December 2021.