

Atomic childhood around 1980

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Abstract

In *On Hashish*, Walter Benjamin writes that he would “like to write something that comes from things the way wine comes from grapes.” Here I try a similar project by squeezing things from my past that have been fermented over time with memory to show the intoxication of an atomic childhood. I take as the starting point objects and spaces from my experiences in and around the atomic city of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, which may or may not be shared by others who encountered atomic Appalachia. Stretching beyond my own experience, I seek to add to the growing body of thinking about the connections between materiality and memory by adding the atomic as a dynamic example of matter’s vibrancy.

Keywords

materiality, memory, nuclear, Oak Ridge, Piet Mondrian, Walter Benjamin

Introduction

My grandfather was an atomic courier. He drove secret materials for the first uranium-powered atomic bomb from the Manhattan Project city of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, to various locations across the country. He liked it well enough to keep driving through the Cold War for the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). My grandmother was a bowling enthusiast and donut-making Cemesto home-maker. My mother and my uncle went to high school in a red brick building adorned with a giant atomic symbol with an acorn as its nucleus. The atom-acorn assemblage is the totemic emblem of the town. It is the ubiquitous symbol of atomic Appalachia.

I lived the first few months of my life directly under this symbol in Oak Ridge, until my father got a job in a less interesting town in the northeast corner of the state, on the finger-shaped part of Tennessee that pokes at Virginia and North Carolina. The place we went had no secret atomic past and no national laboratory, no atoms with their jaunty capped acorns dotted the landscape; instead its claim to fame was a large chicken processing factory in the center of town. During the first week after the move, my mother was driving my brother, who was 5 years old at the time, around our new town. Zooming down the road cater-corner to the chicken factory on a sweltering July day, my mother pulled behind a truck filled with birds headed to their beheading. She had the windows rolled down because the car did not have air conditioning. Feathers were flying everywhere. My

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brother exclaimed: “it’s snowing!” My mother cried for her loss, for her disappearance from atomic cosmopolitanism, and for her relocation to the regular, less-atomic American landscape.

When I was young, I too felt disappointed, robbed of growing up in the science city for smart people, where the nuclear bourgeoisie rubbed shoulders with the future physicists of America, and where the Manhattan Project and the nuclear industries that followed created a new sensorium of everyday experiences (Boscagli, 2014: 47). It took awhile for me to realize what Hiroshima meant as a place and as an event. It has taken me even longer to try to untangle the mysteries of Oak Ridge, a city engineered by the United States government for the sole purpose of creating an atomic bomb, a secret city tucked into the ridges of East Tennessee where 75,000 people lived and labored for the war effort, and where only a minor fraction of workers knew what they were producing. On 6 August 1945, most learned the true nature of their work from the radio, just like everyone else listening over the airwaves in other parts of the nation and across the world.

Oak Ridge has been a major nuclear science and security site since its beginning: first, as an important node in the Manhattan Project; then, as a key production location for the nation’s Cold War arsenal; and now as a place not only for the production and maintenance of parts of nuclear weapons, but also as a center for medical research, nuclear storage, and national security. The Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Y-12 National Security Complex are still the major institutions of the city. These places are important, but the atomic sensorium is not contained in sites: it radiates throughout the city, it goes underground, it swims and dives through rivers and tributaries, and it ignores boundaries and barriers of every stripe. I carry it in my own body. It is both outside and inside, material and immaterial, pulsing and still.

My atomic immersion began when I visited my grandparents as a child and encountered the vibrant matter of Oak Ridge (Bennett, 2010). As an adult, I wrote a book about the place—feeling a magnetic pull and mnemonic push to do so. For me, Oak Ridge is not just a city, but also an organizing system of thought, a place full of mnemonically charged objects, and a magic geography that I cannot shake (Freeman, 2015; Speier, 1941). In *Empire of Signs*, Roland Barthes (1982) questions our ability to “contest our society” without challenging the limits of language in understanding our situatedness in the world, calling this practice “trying to destroy the wolf by lodging comfortably in its gullet” (p. 8).

Here I defy Barthes. I write as an atomic exile about a place that was once familiar. I put on my favorite red hoodie and climb deeper into the lupine maw, only to discover the wolf is my grandmother and even though she is not what she once was, I do not wish to destroy her. I want to understand this place that shaped her life, my mother’s, and mine. So, I write carefully about atomic materiality and sensuality as it sticks in and irradiates my memory. I write what I came to sense and to feel about the place before I was trying to interpret it as a sociologist by tracing memories of the everyday, the ordinary, and the atomic fantastic. This experiment should lead to some understanding of an atomic Appalachian habitus born of nuclear spaces, southern living, Reagan-era politics, and the Cold War. Beyond my own experience, this experiment attempts to add texture to the thinking about the relationship between materiality and memory by bringing in the atomic, as one example, of the instability and vibrancy of matter in general, and to do so through vignettes that pile.

Warning

Cormac McCarthy (2006) writes in *The Road*: “Each memory recalled must do some violence to its origins. As in a party game. Say the word and pass it on. So be sparing. What you alter in the remembering has yet a reality, known or not” (p. 131). McCarthy and I went to the same high school, 20 miles away from the Atomic City; I trust him and have attempted to heed his advice.

Atomic Combray

A soft poetics of atomic summer rises from the bomb-shaped city. Oak Ridge was my Combray. I visited my grandparents in all seasons, but my atomic childhood features summer. This was when I could go and stay for a week because school was out. It was in summer that I could swim in the gigantic swimming pool built by the Army Corps of Engineers for the atomic workers and their families, at first just for the White ones and then for everyone. For a while, it was the largest pool in the South. Every hot day and early evening it swallowed me, along with scores of other children I did not know, and the occasional lap-swimming adult who sometimes knew my mother. It was in summer that I would run around the track while my grandmother walked, marking each lap with a stone, a remembrance for each ellipse. It was in summer that I would careen down the street on the bright red skate-wheeled wagon that my grandfather made for me. These activities adding up to a giddy triathlon that I was unaware I was training for.

Cemesto-B

For a long time, I went to bed early in a rickety bed in a bedroom of my grandparents' Cemesto-B house. The little house set on a street next to other little houses of similar design. They were part of a master plan, housing for the Manhattan Project. The houses were laid out at slightly different angles, as if you were a relatively neat person, but you happened to be playing Monopoly on a bumpy rug or shag carpeting. In this case, the uneven flooring was the contours of the East Tennessee landscape, the ridges, and the rolling hills. The point of this Monopoly game was not a quest for riches and real estate, but rather an atomic bomb.

The B denotes the house's place in the alphabetized scheme. The letters correspond to the size of the house and the number of bedrooms: A being the smallest and E the largest. The house was built from a material portmanteau—Cemesto—a composite building material made from cement and asbestos with a core of sugar cane fiber insulation, a filling the texture of cotton candy. Cemesto panels were placed horizontally into wooden frames of the house in order to create the walls. Introduced in 1937 by the Celotex Company, a prototype appeared at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City. During World War II, the architectural firm, Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, used Cemesto design to make my grandparents' home and nearly 3000 others just like it. After the war and in the spirit of modernism, Cemesto became a darling material for architects interested in low-cost building materials. Frank Lloyd Wright and Charles Eames were among its newly won fans.

Mondrian

The image of my atomic childhood is of a Mondrian painting. On the ordered streets and in the uniform houses of the former secret city, my grandfather's blue pickup truck fills a square, his blue jeans color in another, my grandmother's favorite outfits in red or yellow are folded neatly into others. Their yellow house has its own square too.

Reagan on TV

Inside those squares could be found yet another square—the square Magnavox. Sometimes my grandfather and I would watch TV together while eating Planters dry roasted peanuts out of their tall jar. He called them goobers. We would consume great big handfuls of them, causing our fingers to become greasy and salty. I thought they were a fancy snack because of Mr. Peanut's attire and monocle, a snack-sized yellow legume cartoon version of Proust's Charles Swann. Our TV

watching was much less aristocratic; *Hee-Haw* was among our favorite shows. Sometimes, before our country variety program, we would watch the news. This was a good time, unless Ronald Reagan punctured the small faux-wood-paneled square. If the president showed up, I knew our fun would be interrupted. My grandfather, a yellow dog democrat, would become disgusted and say: "Hell, I can't even relax for one evening without seeing that idiot get on or off a plane waving like a monkey in a zoo." At these moments, I felt relieved to have been born under Carter, the peanut farmer president.

Overdose

Once while visiting my grandparents, I became sick with a cold. What a betrayal of the body in summertime. In winter, this seems a logical physical condition; in summer, it feels like a twisted knot in the organization of the universe throwing off the right order of things. Just as Marcel's grandmother gave him beer, champagne, or brandy for his asthma in *A Search for Lost Time*, so my own grandmother in an attempt to adjust the equilibrium of my small body gave me children's Tylenol and put me to bed (Proust 2002). Marcel and I both longed to play; for him it was in the Champs-Élysées and for me it was the Elysian Fields of my grandparent's honeysuckle-lined backyard. Homer thought Elysium rested on the western edge of the earth by the stream of Okeanos; I knew it was in atomic Appalachia, not too far from the Tennessee River.

When my grandmother left the room, she absentmindedly left the bottle of orange-flavored chewable Tylenol on the nightstand. When I woke I felt much better, leading me to the obvious equation: a little bit of medicine makes you feel a little better, whereas the entire bottle would surely cure you immediately, basically lacing up your Nikes for you and sending you out to play. This is not what happened.

Mooning the Russians

When I was well, which was almost always, my brother and I would play a Cold War game called "Mooning the Russians." It had nothing to do with the space race or the arms race and everything to do with showing the Reds our asses. The Ruskies, most certainly spies, would drive by my grandparents' house trying to seem nonchalant. Wearing T-shirts and driving American-made cars, just who did they think they were fooling? We would show them we knew what was up by dropping our Jams in their direction. Often, I was more in the direct service of the nation than my older brother. He would order me and I would drop my shorts. Once, a carload of teenage Ruskies really seemed to enjoy the mooning. They orbited the yellow house in their cherry-red hotrod like a planet orbits a sun, in predictable circles, anticipated trajectories. It took until the third or fourth time for me to realize they were the same spies, only on loop, so crafty they were in their espionage.

Atomic scouts

I joined the Brownies, the precursor to the Girl Scouts, because of a photograph I saw one summer in the Oak Ridge Children's Museum that irradiated my desire to be a part of a gang of girls—a troop. The black and white snap, taken in 1951 by Oak Ridge's official Manhattan Project photographer, Ed Westcott, showed young atomic citizens decked out in smart uniforms: berets, kerchiefs, buttons, patches, and belts—proud emblems and accessories of the bold, new American generation. Many wore the black and white oxfords that my mother called Mickey Mouse shoes.

In 1963, the Boy Scouts of America issued their Atomic Energy merit badge; a patch with a red and blue atom stitched into a background the color of yellowcake.¹ An equivalent badge was never

issued for the Girl Scouts. No matter. The scouts of Oak Ridge hardly needed this patch. Their uniforms were already sewn with their town's very own atom and its accompanying acorn. And what's more, they lived and breathed atomic energy. They marched past the atomic factories just like they would march past the local drugstore or ball field. For them, it was regular, everyday.

Since my scouting affiliation was based in another town, I was never able to march with my compatriots past factories born for the Manhattan Project. Instead, I was taught how to cross-stitch and how to make a potholder that looked like an enormous grape. When I learned the new scout leader was to be the mother of a girl I did not like much—the two wore matching sweater sets in the pale, shimmery colors found inside oysters—I dropped out. Instead, I prowled around alone, a cross between Nancy Drew and Davy Crockett, sporting a faux raccoon cap that my grandfather gave me and a small red backpack where I kept mystery novels written by Carolyn Keene and treasures from my pioneering expeditions: acorns, quartz rocks, pinecones, bottle caps, and irradiated souvenir dimes from the American Museum of Science and Energy. Never able to live up to the image that inspired me, I grew despondent with scouting and more intrigued with nuclear spaces and spies.

Dresser drawers

Other treasures I found among my grandparents' things, especially in their dresser drawers. Inside the brass-knobbed compartments rested a tangle of bright yellow Juicy Fruit chewing-gum wrappers with their spiked, silver astronaut underlayers reduced to crumples; old buttons that could be repurposed as wheels on a miniature of Thor's chariot like those Walter Benjamin (2006a) found in his mother's sewing box (p. 109); costume jewelry in garish colors utilized in one of my favorite games called jewel thief; and stray documents of the atomic past that I sometimes borrowed, using them as bookmarks, wedging them into the Nancy Drew mysteries I hoped would make me a better atomic detective. It was in those drawers that I found snapshots of my grandfather leaning nonchalantly against the white unmarked American-made truck he would drive in the service of the AEC, wadded up pale blue pay stubs destined for deposit at the Y-12 Credit Union, and other official-looking government missives. These important documents were not neatly organized, but scattered throughout the drawer's rectangular space, nudging the buttons and wrappers, kissing the old photographs bent at the edges and creased at odd angles, like scars that have healed but remain all the more obvious for having done so.

"Memory, as I have tried to prove, is not the faculty for classifying recollections in a drawer, or writing them down in a register. Neither register nor drawer exists ...," writes Henri Bergson (Quoted in Bachelard, 1994: 75). The compartments of my grandparents' dressers opened up a world for me, and I would never talk about drawers "disdainfully" as Bergson does, but I know he is right in that drawers or their magical contents are not memory and are not a metaphor for how memory works, rather they are sites of possibility for the irradiation of memories.²

Atomique pneumatique

At the Y-12 Federal Credit Union, named after the Y-12 National Security Complex, (the site of the former secret Manhattan Project factory where uranium was enriched for the bomb that was used on Hiroshima), secret messages pass through pneumatic tubes. I ride there with my grandmother in her enormous gold Chevy Nova on secret missions. We pull up to the designated spot. Magical communiqués made up of complicated formulas calculating hours worked, values assessed, pay measured by the clock, by the market, by the Geiger counter are sucked up, zipped over, mulled over, and responded to. Returning messages are equally mysterious—green rectangles baring the

faces of presidents, pyramids, and numbers. On a good day, a lollipop tags along to sweeten the deal. The tubes of the Y-12 Federal Credit Union mirror the old *petit bleus pneumatique* system in Paris; now defunct, the little blue messages piling up forever in the corner of the dead letter office.

Decantation

In Samuel Beckett's (1978) essay on Proust, he writes,

the individual is the seat of a constant process of decantation, decantation from the vessel containing the fluid of future time, sluggish, pale and monochrome, to the vessel containing the fluid of past time, agitated and multicolored by the phenomena of its hours. (pp. 3–4)

Beckett notes something others deny. The past when viewed through the glass of nostalgia is not always washed in dulled, drab tones; it is often chromatically rich.

Glowing rowers

On Melton Hill Lake, a couple of miles from my grandparents' house, rowers kitted out in fitted spandex suits of every color glide past Canadian geese that have never heard of radiation. Melton Hill Lake not only plays host to visiting crews, but also houses its own—the Atomic Rowing team. Their symbol is the circle with the fan-shape inside, the symbol that warns of radiation. I loved seeing the Atomic Rowers train, bodies and muscles working in unison as they sat in their long, sleek ruby-colored boat, dipping their lemon-yellow oars in the lake. I stood on the shore rapt, watching as they slid the radioactive symbol in the water, drawing it out, dipping it in, drawing it out, dipping it in, drawing it out.

Recurring dream

One summer, when I was staying with my grandparents, I had a recurring dream every night for a solid week. It was a nightmare where radioactive monsters were out to destroy the world. The monsters had been regular people, but they had undergone a nuclear metamorphosis. They were changed into hideous, shuffling zombie-like creatures after eating radioactive fish pulled from Melton Hill Lake. In the dream, everyone in town was gradually killed or transformed. Inevitably in this oneiric sequence, my brother and I would be the only ones left, our parents the penultimate pair. The monsters would back us up to the black oak tree at the foot of the yard and I would wake up with a start, my heart pounding out of my chest like a cartoon. The only thing that would change in the dream was the color of the Volkswagen Beetle parked across the street from the final scene, most often it was an antique white like Herbie the Love Bug, other times it was the color of lemon yogurt, and once the car had the hue of a blueberry, like the VW my dad had when he was young and wooing my mother.

The ghost of homecoming

Although my parents were long divorced, my grandmother found it unseemly to display pictures of my mother—even when she was young, years before she met my father—with other men. So when I would visit, I would see photographs of her on the tops of mantles framed in golden rectangles locking arms with dates obscured by Wite-Out. Anyone who visited my grandparents' home might have thought that my mother had a thing for phantoms. Sometimes, no one could remember who the date was under the glob of white. While on one level I found this hilarious, on another it disturbed me, this erasing of my mother's past with correction fluid.

There was something about the whiteness itself that I hated. I came to understand why Mondrian's white squares took more effort than his colored ones, more brush strokes were applied—he was not laying a background or creating a blank space for future possibilities, the white marked the end for those squares, they would be white and nothing else. My grandmother's efforts with the tiny Wite-Out brush did something similar: my mother would only have my father and no one else. Yet, there is something in this insistence that the past is past (or maybe it never happened at all) that causes me consternation, much more than if it was simply left alone, as a record. If my mother's dates remained in living color, if they appeared casually above the fireplace dressed in sixties fashions, they would not trouble me so much as their exaggerated absence does.

The ghost of wheat

After much begging and pleading, my grandfather drove me to a place where some folks had seen Oak Ridge's most famous phantom. He is known as the Ghost of Wheat, named after one of the farming communities that was confiscated, evacuated, and eviscerated to make room for the Manhattan Project. He is thought to be the ghost of a farmer whose land was forcefully taken by the government, but nobody really knows for sure.

The road we took to get there was maintained by the Department of Energy and only authorized vehicles were allowed; my grandfather had clearly pulled some strings. He eased along the shoulder and parked the truck close to the little white George Jones Memorial Baptist Church. The church was the only original Wheat building still standing. I had the feeling we had not only driven across town, but into another time, the pre-atomic past.

We listened to George Jones as we waited, "I Was Country When Country Wasn't Cool" filling the sonic space of the cab. It took me years to realize my grandfather was having fun with me when he chose that particular cassette. I remember how he rifled around for it, how the sounds of the tape cases crunching against each other had made me nervous. It sounded like stepping on crickets. Later, I learned that the church had been named for an entirely different George Jones, a preacher who had donated money and land to the Wheat community, and not the country music singer George Jones, known for his womanizing and hard drinking. Those two Joneses were simply what the Dutch call *naamgenoot*, people who share the same name.

In those days, my patience was short, so it was not too long before I saw something. I looked nervously over at my grandfather, and in his square glasses, I saw an oblong white shape: THE GHOST! Then I turned to look forward where I hoped to see the Ghost of Wheat, not simply as a reflection in my grandfather's glasses, but in all his glory. What I saw instead was the headlight of a motorcycle. The ghost of Wheat is part of my nervous system, and the nervous system of Oak Ridge, unruly, a bit paranoid, sometimes matter, sometimes spirit (Tausig, 1991).

Lighting bugs

As twilight hit on warm August evenings, I set to work collecting lightning bugs in a jar. The labs in Oak Ridge would pay you for a Mason full of them, scientific research they said. As my grandparents lounged, I flitted around their yard, chasing the red and black flying beetles with their magical glowing ends. This was my duty as an atomic citizen.

Laika

Sometimes, I would bring my dog, Pepper, occasionally known as Dr. Pepper, to Oak Ridge. Pepper was a black and white mutt. My grandparents loved him and he seemed to enjoy his atomic vacations, lolling in the shade of the carport and chasing the iridescent yellow tennis ball through

the tiny tongues of fresh-cut grass, too-big red collar flapping against his chin. My grandfather built him a dog house with real shingles and trim, it looked like a typical American home, but not like an Oak Ridge home, it had no place in the alphabetized arrangement; it was not a Cemesto.

On one visit, my grandfather told me a troubling story: the Soviets sent a dog to space and she died. They called her Laika, in Russian the name meant “barker.” Laika perished aboard Sputnik-2 and is considered a national hero and a martyr to communism. She went from Moscow stray to celebrated cosmomutt in such a short time. There is a memorial to her in Star City, outside of Moscow, postage stamps, and even a brand of cigarettes carries her image. Pepper resembled her.³

Underground grandparents

There is the Oak Ridge above the surface and there is its secret twin below. When I was 12, I wrote a short story about it, a disaster-tinged utopia. I learned much later that the French sociologist, Gabriel Tarde (1905), wrote his own utopian story nearly a century earlier, a text of subterranean speculative fiction called *Underground Man*. His took place after the sun was mysteriously choked, ushering in a new Ice Age. Mine, fitting with the fears of the day, was set in the aftermath of a nuclear attack. In my story, “Oak Ridge under Oak Ridge,” everything on the surface of the city seeped downwards in what Tarde might call the *diffusion of innovations*: the laboratories, the Cemestos, the Olympic-sized swimming pool, and even my grandmother’s hammock were relocated below the earth, only without the Japanese maples that held it in suspension, left above they were vaporized. I imagined my grandparents living down there as slightly paler versions of themselves—Underground Frank and Underground Nan.

Adam Bomb

I was a miniature Eduard Fuchs. I had an electric-blue Trapper Keeper filled with Garbage Pail Kids.⁴ The grotesque cards depicted children with rhyming or approximate rhyming names: There was Boney Tony, unzipping his face to reveal a cracked skull underneath; Snowy Joey, being suffocated inside a menacing snow globe; Deaf Geoff, a cool kid in an inky black motorcycle jacket with a boom box to his ear, the power of the music exploding half of his face, his eyes, mouth, and pink brain flying out with musical notes; and dozens of others like these. Set side-by-side, the cards could function as the school photographs of an elementary school in hell.

The Garbage Pail Kids illustrated all the terrible things that could happen to a person, all of our unconscious fears laid out in bright colors.⁵ They smelled sweetly stale because of the brittle piece of pink bubble gum that came, like a stowaway, in their packaging. They were malleable macabre objects—they could be kept as a card, or peeled off as a sticker and stuck almost anywhere. Like Kudzu, they covered the landscape of my youth. Some teachers and parents felt the situation had gotten out of hand. Garbage Pail Kids were banned from school. After the ban, I had to work clandestinely, sneaking them out secretly during recess.

When my mother would pick me up from school and my brother was already sitting in the front seat, I could slide in the back and work out in the open. There, I would reorganize my collection, making sure not to bend the cardboard edges as they slid into their plastic envelopes (I never used them as stickers). I kept my Garbage Pail Kids organized in alphabetical order. The first card, my favorite and the one that scared me most, was Adam Bomb. He was a little kid, but wearing a dark blue suit with a yellow and red striped tie; he looked like the guy from AC/DC. He had his finger on a red button, pressing it, the top of his head exploding into a mushroom cloud, his blue eyes glassy, a lazy smile on his face.

My blue eyes would fall on his to find that he was always already pressing the button: the pressing created an explosion, but also a pause. It exploded the continuum of history. The pressing was a warning of what could happen and a reminder of what already had. Riding in the backseat of the twentieth century, I was acutely aware of the destructive power of nuclear technologies.

Autumn envoi

I have told you “now of summer evenings” in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, “in the time I [visited] there so successfully disguised to myself a child.”⁶

Notes

1. Yellowcake, also called urania, is a type of uranium concentrate powder that has very low radioactivity. This is uranium in an intermediate stage in processing. Yellowcake is valuable because it can be converted into U-235, a more fissionable type of uranium, to be used in nuclear weapons or as fuel for nuclear reactors.
2. Gaston Bachelard (1994) points out Bergson’s “derogatory” use of the word “drawer” in *The Poetics of Space* (p. 74). See also, Henri Bergson (1991).
3. For more about Laika and other four-legged cosmonauts, see Olesya Turkina’s (2014) delightful history, *Soviet Space Dogs*.
4. Eduard Fuchs was a German writer, collector, and historian (1870–1940). My thinking of the grotesque here is influenced by Benjamin’s analysis of Fuchs’ work *Tang-Plastik*. Benjamin (2002) pulls a quote from Fuchs that can be applied to the Garbage Pail Kids:

The grotesque is the intense heightening of what is sensually imaginable. In this sense, grotesque figures are an expression of the robust health of an age ... Yet one cannot dispute the fact that the motivating forces of the grotesque have a crass counterpoint. Decadent times and sick brains also incline toward grotesque representations. In such cases the grotesque is a shocking reflection of the fact that for the times and individuals in question, the problems of the world and of existence appear insoluble. One can see at a glance which of these two tendencies is the creative force behind a grotesque fantasy. (p. 271)

The Garbage Pail Kids are either an expression of health or the evidence that the problems of the world and living are unsolvable.

5. During the time Art Spiegelman (1986) was turning out Garbage Pail Kids, he was also at work on his Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel. *Maus A Survivor’s Tale: My Father Bleeds History*. With these projects, we can imagine some of the darkest moments of the twentieth century spread out on his drawing table alongside afflicted, tortured, and mutilated children made cartoonish.
6. This line was largely borrowed from James Agee’s (1973) first line to “Knoxville: Summer 1915”: “I am writing now of summer evenings in Knoxville, Tennessee, in the time I lived there so successfully disguised to myself a child.” (p. 12).

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