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LITERARY IMPLICATIONS OF RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON THE NUCLEAR IN U.S. FICTION: FRANK BERGON'S "THE TEMPTATIONS OF ST. ED & BROTHER S"

Проаналізовано літературне осмислення конфлікту «релігія – наука» в аспекті дослідження духовної природи феномена «ядерна енергія» в романі Френка Бергона «Спокуси святого Еда і брата С» («The Temptations of St. Ed and Brother S») (1993). Досліджено літературні імплікації Ф. Бергона про природу феномена «ядерна енергія» через ілюстрацію трансформації осмислення «ядерної енергії» героями шляхом поєднання глобального (етичні аспекти використання ядерної енергії в конфлікті науки . і релігії) і локального (роль ядерної енергетики в історії американського Заходу) рівнів рецепції «нуклеарного» як компонента нової міфології американського суспільства. Стаття являє собою спробу аналізу літературних рефлексій ядерної енергії як соціокультурного феномену в контексті гуманітарних підходів до вивчення енергетичних ресурсів з метою дослідження художнього окреслення конфлікту ядерної енергії і духовної енергії, що випливає з конфлікту між вірою в цінності технологічного суспільства і вірою духовної спільноти, як це подано в романі Ф. Бергона. Цей спектр дослідження подано в статті на тлі висвітлення дискусії релігійних організацій про підтримку політики ядерного роззброєння і визнання ними мирного використання ядерної енергії в контексті порядку денного про збереження клімату, що і відображає внесок церковних організацій в громадське обговорення ядерної енергії. У статті зроблено спробу простежити художнє осмислення автором того, як поєднання мудрості індіанського фольклору і християнських традицій протистоїть ініціативі уряду США у спробі захистити монастир і пустелю в контексті нуклеарної історії Невади. У статті резюмується точка зору Бергона на протистояння різних видів енергій шляхом зображення спроб головних героїв роману знайти можливості, які можуть допомогти уникнути цього конфлікту шляхом переосмислення візій на саму природу ядерної енергії, вивчення духовної природи атома і відходу від полярності у рецепції нового світового порядку. У статті роман Бергона розглядається як відображення міждисциплінарних дискусій про переваги і недоліки мирного використання ядерної енергії. Подано художнє осмислення трансформацій візій героїв роману Бергона щодо природи ядерної енергії не тільки як соціально-культурного явища енергозалежного суспільства, але і як пускового механізму дискусій про концепцію «науки як нової релігії» в рамках нюклеарного Антропоцену.

Ключові слова: ядерна фантастика, ядерний наратив, нуклеаризм, енергетичні гуманітарні науки, духовність, Бергон.

В статье предпринят анализ литературного осмысления конфликта «религия — наука» в аспекте исследования духовной природы феномена «ядерная энергия» в романе Фрэнка Бергона «Искушения святого Эда и брата С» («The Temptations of St. Ed and Brother S») (1993). Исследованы литературные импликации Ф. Бергона о природе феномена «ядерная энергия» через иллюстрацию трансформации осмысления «ядерной энергии» героями путем соединения глобального (этические аспекты использования ядерной энергии в конфликте науки и религии) и локального (роль ядерной энергетики в истории американского Запада) уровней рецепции «нуклеарного» как компонента новой мифологии американского общества. Статья представляет собой попытку анализа литературных рефлексий ядерной энергии как социокультурного феномена в контексте гуманитарных подходов к изучению энергетических ресурсов с целью исследования художественного осмысления кон-

фликта ядерной энергии и духовной энергии, истекающего из конфликта между верой в ценности технологического общества и верой духовного сообщества, как это представлено в романе Ф. Бергона. Данный спектр исследования представлен в статье на фоне освещения дискуссии религиозных организаций о поддержке политики ядерного разоружения и признании ими мирного использования ядерной энергии в контексте повестки дня о сохранении климата, что и отражает вклад церковных организаций в общественные дискуссии о ядерной энергии. В статье предпринята попытка проследить художественное осмысление автором того, как соединение мудрости индейского фольклора и христианских традиций противостоит инициативе правительства США в попытке защитить монастырь и пустыню в контексте ядерной истории региона Невада. В статье резюмируется точка зрения Бергона на противостояние различных видов энергии путем изображения попыток главных героев романа найти возможности, которые могут помочь избежать конфликта путем переосмысления взглядов на саму природу ядерной энергии, изучения духовной природы атома и ухода от полярности в рецепции нового мирового порядка. В статье роман Бергона рассматривается как отражение междисциплинарных дискуссий о преимуществах и недостатках мирного использования ядерной энергии. Представлено художественное осмысление трансформаций видения героев романа Бергона относительно природы ядерной энергии не только как социально-культурного явления энергозависимого общества, но и как пускового механизма дискуссий о концепции «науки как новой религии» в рамках нуклеарного Антропоцена.

Ключевые слова: ядерная фантастика, ядерный нарратив, нуклеаризм, энергетические гуманитарные науки, духовность, Бергон.

the contemporary debates about the advantages and disadvantages of using nuclear energy in the context of developing 'green generation' of energetic resources encourage the process of reconsidering nuclear energy as a factor of contributing to the energetic history and social value and distinguishing the range of nuclear energy related issues in the energy dependent society [38, p. xi].

The researches on religious dimensions of energy tend to be conducted within the historical perspective on developing 'science-religion' counteraction (see Bauman [5], Matthews [29], Nesteruk [30]) in a wider context of studying 'the Divine' from the ancient Greeks to modern ecotheology [22] which encourages the developments on social cultural aspects of energy studies to be engaged in a common search for shared understanding synthesis of theology and science. Such studies have a tendency to go beyond the field of relationship of religion and science in their dualistic perspective, and but within the posthuman perspective on researching science and 'the study of God' [31] in the mutuality model for theology and science.

Several studies suggest researching the religious perspective on energy as a social and cultural phenomenon (see Rasmussen [34], Tanev [40]). Thus, N.M. Laurendeau in his work *An Energy Primer: From Thermodynamics to Theology* (2011) [28] highlights the religious background of energy consumption against the issues of climate change and oil depletion. One of the focal researches on the religious parameters of energy is represented in *Energy in Orthodox Theology and Physics: From Controversy to Encounter* [39] by S. Tanev, where the visions on essence and energy within science-religion debates are emerged from a synthesis of the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition with phenomenological thought.

These research achievements as well as the current debates on the spirituality of energy within energy humanities [17; 18] are the methodological background of my paper as a contribution to the current expertise on frames of energy literary studies [21].

The paper aims to study the literary dimensions of 'religion-science' interaction with the focus on the religious perspective on the spiritual power of nuclear energy on the example of *The Temptations of St. Ed and Brother S* (1993) by Frank Bergon [7]. The paper is a research attempt to study the literary implications of transformations of 'nuclear energy' concept in Bergon's fictional writing, where its protagonists face the transformations of their perception of 'the nuclear' from duality of 'science-religion' counteraction to 'the nuclear' as a component of a new mythology of American West. This paper tries to clarify the literary consideration of aspects of studying nuclear energy as a social cultural phenomenon within energy humanities agenda.

Without bringing back the history of science-religion interaction and introducing the singularity of scienticism, scientology and religion/science accommodationism, providing the room for religious faith within a scientifically informed understanding of the world [12], which

goes beyond the frame of our research attempt, we would just highlight the long-term and hot debates on bridging faith and facts. These debates swing from the awoval, that 'there can be no dialogue between science and faith because science has nothing to learn from believers' [32, p. 144] and because nobody can '...allow scientific fact to be polluted by religious faith, it follows that faith and fact cannot avoid war with one another' [32, p.144] by stressing that science-religion interface is just 'a monologue,...in which science does all the talking and religion the listening [...] religion has nothing to tell scientists to improve their trade' [13, p. 257], and summarizing that 'science is not a thing you can believe in. It's not a particular set of beliefs which is true or not. Quite the opposite, it's the questioning of beliefs' [3], because 'science, unlike religion, promotes self-criticism' [13, p. xii].

On the other hand the idea of 'science as a new religion' concept [41] is based on Calvin's statement that 'science is God's gift' [45, p. 28], supported by Einstein's 'science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind' [16, p. 49], and encouraged by Pope Francis's elocution saying that 'science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both' [33, p. 45]. Varying from 'scientism as a secular religion and [...] a hope for a better tomorrow' [37, p. 61] to 'religion is based on what cannot be seen, on faith; science, by contrast, is based on empirically based observations of the natural world' [15, p. 2], such hot debates can explain the opinion range of reconsiderations of 'the nuclear' in the perspective of 'science as the new religion' [24] and illustrate the long-term interfacing of 'the scientific' and 'the spiritual' in situating nuclear energy as a social value, which encourages the necessity to reconsider the nuclear in the contemporary society.

By regarding nuclear narrative as a storytelling, recorded orally or in the written form, which covers a set of fictional/factual messages on the actions and events, related to nuclear energy-related issues, we face the necessity to research the narrative tools which guide our behavior, cultural history, formation of a communal identity etc. Despite nuclear narratives refuse ultimate endings [36, p. 8], the importance to study the components, mechanisms, tools, scenarios, interpretations of nuclear narrative is inevitable with the course of energetic history of the humanity – '...The importance of narrative and how the stories we tell about our nuclear past and possible nuclear futures reveal how we as a society deal with the use of nuclear weapons' [44, p. 162] as well as the use of nuclear energy with the aim of predicting the future energetic scenarios.

While separating 'nuclear energy' – and 'nuclear weapons'-related messages as parts of nuclear narrative, the religious perspectives on the nuclear as a war making factor are evident in the policy of nuclear disarmament. Michael Frost, a U.S blogger, highlights church leaders' intentions to eliminate all nuclear weapons throughout the globe [20]:

Archbishop Joseph Takami of Nagasaki: "The existence of nuclear weapons in the world is a grave threat to peace and we need to abolish them".

Pope Benedict: "One of the most serious [challenges] is increased military spending and the cost of maintaining and developing nuclear arsenals...I firmly hope that... concrete decisions will be made towards progressive disarmament, with a view to freeing our planet from nuclear arms".

Protestant thinkers Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr: "The reality of sin and evil proves that nuclear weapons were necessary. Nuclear deterrence was acceptable, at least in the current global conditions" [20].

The history of religious debates about nuclear energy dates back to the 1950-s, when the religious leaders recognized the peaceful use of nuclear energy – 'the churches welcome peaceful atom' [1, p. 220] and the religious perspective on nuclear energy was declared as 'a blessing from God' [35] by supporting the nuclear energy initiatives until 1979 – the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island – when the World Council of Church developed the concept of the "just, participatory and sustainable society" (JPSS) to struggle the 'plutonium economy' [35, p. i].

By emphasizing the positive, acknowledging the negative, and advocating the key role of a nuclear source of electricity in the fight against anthropogenic climate change [43] and stating that 'nuclear energy and radioactivity are a normal part of God's creation in our universe' [14, p. 3], the church organizations tend to reflect as well as contribute to the social debates about nuclear energy.

In 2012 Address to the participants of the 56th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Vienna (September 2012) Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See, declared that 'The Vatican tends to view nuclear energy as being acceptable as part of a civil programme that enables the authentic development of peoples, providing energy resources whilst also respecting the environment,... but recognises the challenges connected with developing safe nuclear energy;....the highest Church authorities do not oppose civil nuclear power in principle, provided the facilities are well-designed and operated safely' [2], which not only reflects the official position of one of the world's leading religious organizations on the nuclear, but also contributes to framing the contemporary nuclear narrative as storytelling about nuclear energy-related issues against the processes of social values' shaping and decision making.

One of those, who managed to join the global (ethical dimensions of nuclear energy in the science-religion interface) and local (the nuclear within the local history of the American West), is Frank Bergon (b. 1943) [10], a novelist, a literary critic, a Professor Emeritus of English at Vassar College (New York). Born in 1943 in a Basque-rooted family, in Ely, Nevada Frank Bergon moved to the San Joaquin Valley, California, at a young age. He received his BA in English at Boston College, attended Stanford University as a Wallace Stegner Fellow, and completed his PhD in English and American literature at Harvard University. While being a professor in the English department at Vassar College, New York, he was teaching senior composition and environmental studies. During his tenure there he was Director of American Studies. He was a visiting associate professor at the University of Washington in Seattle from 1980-81. In 1985-86 he was a National Endowment for the Humanities fellow [6]. Now Bergon is Professor Emeritus of English at Vassar College (New York). He has published eleven books – four novels, a critical study, a book of essays, and five edited collections and anthologies. A major concern of his work is with the lives of Basque Americans in the West. His writings about Native Americans range from the Shoshone of Nevada to the Maya of Chiapas, Mexico, and focus primarily on the history and environment of the American West [6] and convey a reflection of Bergon's Basque-American and Western American identity and his environmental engagement [10]. In his literary critic's activity by editing and collecting the editions [11], Bergon intended to continue his critical consideration of the West with the focus on the environmental history of the American West in the literary reception. In 1993 the Western Writers of America made Bergon a finalist for the best novel of the West in recognition of his work, The Temptations of St. Ed and Brother S. [10]. He was inducted into the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame in 1998 [9].

The Temptations of St. Ed and Brother S (1993) is regarded by literary critics [8] as an American Western novel – 'a wise and humorous tale of destruction and compassion, a piece of the never-ending story of the American West as it occurs in these last years of the century' [23] about a conflict between nuclear and spiritual energy; about the nature of nuclear energy in the monks' perception; about the conflict between the faith, underlying a technological society, and the faith, supporting a spiritual community.

In 'The Temptations of St. Ed & Brother S' Bergon manages to make a Western American storytelling a part of U.S. history by reconsidering the local 'nuclear' events of the American West in the context of literary reception of U.S. energetic narrative — '[The] Temptations [of St. Ed and Brother S] is written in the muscular, unadulterated, and intelligent prose that makes Frank Bergon one of the best writers not just of the American West but of the American moment' [42].

The plot of *The Temptations of St. Ed & Brother S*. is based on a true story by reflecting the tension provoked in Nevada since the 1980s by the federal government's proposal for a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain [11].

According to the novel's plot, the story covers the mid-1990s, the southern Nevada desert, where the U.S. government plans to build the nation's first nuclear waste dump in the remote Yucca mountains. The conflict between spiritual energy and nuclear energy is represented in the vision of two monks who are trying to protect their tiny monastery against the enormous forces of the U.S. Department of Energy, promoting their initiative on building a nuclear waste repository.

The storyline represents the real case of U.S. DOE's initiative about constructing a nuclear waste reservoir in this area, but the local authorities and Nevada communal organizations

stand against using Yucca Mountain for housing the world largest newly built nuclear waste storage for several reasons: geology (a seismically and volcanically active, porous land zone and an agricultural region), location (only 90 miles from our largest metropolitan area, Las Vegas), limited space (being not big enough to store all of the nation's nuclear waste, Yucca would be filled to full capacity in 2036), transportation (waste transporting routes travel through 703 counties in 44 states putting the nearby inhabitants' health at risk), national security (making a waste repository as attractive and vulnerable targets for terrorists) [19]. Despite the Nevada local opposition and anti-nuclear campaign, in 2002 Yucca Mountain was recommended by the U.S Senate as a spot for nuclear waste storage.

Used by the author as a factual component, these plans of U.S. Department of Energy to build a nuclear waste repository in the Nevada desert, are represented through the reception of the protagonists of the novel – St. Ed (Father Edward St. John Arrizabalaga, 49 years old, an American of Basque heritage, an abbot of a remote desert monastery 'The Hermitage of Solitude in the Desert', who has a dream of a new monastic order for the modern world, and who plans to write a book, called 'The Death of Time', about events in Hiroshima, but doubts about the stories to include) and Brother S (brother Simeon, a young, little idealistic lumberjack in his past from the Oregon coast, who intends to keep the desert hermitage and enjoys the mystics of the desert, and commits a suicide after facing the temptations of Las Vegas, with the aim to enforce the energy of the desert with his spiritual energy).

Both monks are trappists – "But that's why you are a Cistercian Trappist", Brother S said on the morning when the abbot was leaving for the talk show in Las Vegas' [7, p. 1] - members of the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (O.C.S.O.), a reformed branch of Roman Catholic Cistercians, founded in France in 1662, and following the Rule of St. Benedict [27, p. 48] which structures everyday religious life of Catholic monastics [27, p. 51]. They are named after La Trappe Abbey, the monastery from which the movement and religious order originated. The movement first began with the reforms that Abbot Armand Jean le Bouthillier de Rancé introduced in 1664, later leading to the creation of Trappist congregations, and eventually the formal constitution as a separate religious order in 1892 [27, p. 48]. According to Larsen, trappists' spiritual landscape is asceticism, which is closely related to contemplation, and both concepts are inextricably linked to the monastic life [27, p. 50]. While researching U.S. trappists and their monasteries, Larsen highlights that for American trappists 'spiritual landscapes, the contemplative idyll is challenged by the relationship between openness and cloister – the balance between solitude, or rejection of the world, and the necessity for involvement with people and places outside the cloister of the monastery' [27, p. 57]. We can find the confirmation of this statement in Bergon's novel, where the monks' mission was described by Bergon as 'work, prayer and study [...], - keep them in balance and each will become the other' [7, p. 7].

The monks – St. Ed and Brother S – are described here as those embodiments of some functions – a barrier of spiritual knowledge about the monastic life; an interpreter of nuclear scientific knowledge to the public; a link between mystery, spiritual and science in interpreting the nuclear; a tool/victim of the national nuclear policy, making the monastery at risk; a connecting link between indigenous knowledge, spiritual practices and modern technological achievements.

Within the storyline, covering the monks' attempts to protect their monastery from ruining within the U.S. government's initiative to construct a nuclear waste dumb in the vicinity, the protagonists meet a range of those linked to the Nevada desert: Hot Creek Mountains rangers; Shoshone Indian ranchers, Amy Chavez, a Mexican-American Bureau of Land Management ranger; Nathan Spock, a Las Vegas TV talk-show host; a war veteran, an Basque desert prospector; nuclear test site workers; the Bishop supporting the government's nuclear initiative; a small desert mouse; the government bureaucrats; eccentric desert inhabitants – characters, 'exiles and outcasts, who see the desert as a possibility to refuge themselves from the encroaching mainstream America' [7, p. 52].

All are located in the very same location, but the difference is implemented in the battle between the nuclear and the spiritual energy, where the federal government represents the evil force, encountering the spiritual (Native Americans' folklore, Christianity) life that the inhabitants of the desert claim for. The encounter of these energies was supposed 'to bring spiritual reform to the slack soul of the nuclear age' [7, p. 300], but that one, who was expected to be the leader of mission by encouraging 'his spiritual energy against nuclear energy' [7, p. 300].

While the nuclear energy is implemented in the imaginaries of Shoshone Mountain Nuclear Waste Dump and those who support its building, that is the desert monastery 'The Hermitage of Solitude in the Desert', founded as a hermitage, 'dedicated to the principles of primitive monasticism [7, p. 6], where 'back to basic was a cornerstone of his new hermitage' [7, p. 14], that is one of the central plot-framing imaginaries as well as location, depicted in the novel. The protagonists' activities and reckonings are linked to their monastery, which is the embodiment of spiritual impressions, materialized in the hermitage and inserted in the historical settings (the context of the nuclear history of Nevada region, in this case). Without framing the literary imaginary of the monastery's implication in this novel and its role in setting the plot, which goes beyond the aim of this paper, but referring to Jonveaux's statement that 'while many monasteries have been able to reinvent themselves, others struggle in the midst of alobalization and secularization' [26, p. 47], we highlight the author's intention to depict the necessary for this desert monastery 'The Hermitage of Solitude in the Desert' to go through changes in its encounter with the world of modern transformations – the author joints the spiritual power of the monastic life and the spiritual power of the place (the Nevada desert) to create the spiritual counterbalance to the 'the Cloud of the Unknown' [7, p. 5], implementing 'the transcendental experience of mystics' [7, p. 5].

The conflict of the novel is represented by the encounter of some spiritual powers, which St. Ed goes though in his understanding the transformations of a new world - the spiritual power of the religious faith, implemented in the monastic life in the remote hermitage, the spiritual power of the place, implemented in the Nevada desert (combining the energy of community on the desert and the energy of Indian folklore against the background of 'the contemporary monastic presence [...] being reduced to a folkloric state' [25, p. 25]), which collaboratively are trying to counterbalance the spiritual power of nuclear energy. In the attempts to lead the readers to understanding the spiritual power of nuclear energy, the writer joins the tragedy of the devastated land (the protagonists' perspective on Nevada desert hosting a nuclear waste dump) and the tragedy of Brother S's suicide (as an accelerator of these spiritual powers' encounter). The author illustrates how the traditional Indian wisdom and Christian practices, even jointed together, result in the lack of power after 'the confrontation with the powers of darkness' [7, p. 25] by facing the temptations of the contemporary world, implemented by Las Vegas - "Disneyland of lost souls" [7, p. 33] and making monks to follow the rules of 'the world of business' [7, p. 23] in order to make their hermitage survive as a counterbalance to the U.S. federal plans to build a nuclear waste repository.

Being involved in this conflict of spiritual powers and realizing his failure — 'he pitted his spiritual energy against nuclear energy and lost' [7, p. 300], the novel's protagonists intend to search for possibilities which that can help avoid the conflict and consolidate the spiritual powers' balance by understanding the nature of nuclear energy — by changing the perspective on nuclear energy as 'the short-term phenomenon energy of selfishness and greed' and by learning the spirituality of the atom — 'O Radiant Energy! O Radian Love!' [7, p. 295], 'Jesus's atoms', 'an atom was a miracle' [7, p. 293] and summarizing that 'all life on the earth miraculously had come from nuclear explosions' [7, p. 292]. In these attempts of learning the nature of nuclear energy and realizing the spirituality of radiant energy, light and science, the novel's protagonists, and mainly St. Ed, come to the inevitability of regarding the nuclear as a component of new mythology of the American New West.

By depicting St. Ed's spiritual internal conflict of realizing the values of the contemporary society, the author illustrates St. Ed's understanding of the current transformations, based on the statement that partial visions become distortions of the reality, and on the necessity to reconsider the new world order by avoiding its polarity – 'there is only one world. Not a profound world over here, and not a sacred world over there. One world. A world of many levels and depths' [7, p. 305]. But even declaring that 'we had lost' [7, p. 300] and 'it is over – we have nothing to go on with' [7, p. 303], the protagonist tends to compare the spiritual powers of 'the faith in the mushroom cloud' [7, p. 305] (the spirit of nuclear energy) and 'the faith in the Could of Unknowing' [7, p. 305] (the continued prevalence of religious beliefs). And after meeting fresh postulants (seven potential monks, who arrived in the hermitage after his participation in the TV show in Las Vegas) he makes sure not only in the revival of the hermitage – 'The war is not over'

[7, p. 228] but also in the spiritual power of the new generation monks who can be a trigger for reconsidering the spirituality of nuclear power – 'A new hermitage could bear testament to the meaning of his [Brother S] death. They can become radiation monks, signs and symbols of an alternative to radioactive death' [7, p. 304] by imposing interconnections of all those, dwelling in the desert and contributing to the singularity of American West.

Thus, by representing the protagonists' searches about the nature of nuclear energy which is expected to influence the Nevada desert's dwellers, Bergon's novel underlines those debates about the advantages and disadvantages of peaceful using nuclear energy. With the aim of protecting their hermitage from a nuclear waste dump, regarded them as a monument for radiation death, the novel protagonists appeared to be involved in debating the spirituality of atom and the counteraction of faith and science, which results in understanding that such competition leads to mutual destruction and needs the transformations of spirituality's perception under the influence of the contemporary world's changes. The literary considerations of the religious perspective on the nature of 'the nuclear' in Bergon's «The Temptations of St. Ed & Brother S» not only reflect the debates on nuclear energy, swinging between 'the good' and 'the bad' and balancing as 'the debatable' [4] but also trigger reckoning 'the nuclear' in the perspective of discussing the nature of spirituality against 'science as a new religion' concept within the Nuclear Anthropocene.

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LITERARY IMPLICATIONS OF RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON THE NUCLEAR IN U.S. FICTION: FRANK BERGON'S "THE TEMPTATIONS OF ST. ED & BROTHER S"

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The paper studies the literary implications of 'religion-science' interaction in U.S. nuclear fiction with the focus on reconsideration the spiritual nature of nuclear energy on the example of «The Temptations of St. Ed and Brother S» (1993) by Frank Bergon. The paper analyses the Bergon's literary reflections of understanding 'nuclear energy' concept in fictional writing by illustration its protagonists' transformations of realizing 'the nuclear' as a component of a new mythology of American West by joining the global (ethical dimensions of nuclear energy in the science-religion interface) and local (the nuclear within the local history of the American West). This paper tries to clarify the literary considerations of studying nuclear energy as a social cultural phenomenon within energy humanities as a methodological basis for researching the novel's conflict between nuclear energy and spiritual energy, stemmed from the conflict between the faith, underlying a technological society, and the faith, supporting a spiritual community. By separating 'nuclear energy'- related issues and 'nuclear weapons'-related messages as parts of nuclear narrative, the paper brings back the religious organizations' debates about their support of the policy of nuclear disarmament and their recognition of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, by supporting the nuclear energy initiatives and advocating the key role of a nuclear source of electricity in the fight against anthropogenic climate change, which reflects church organizations' contribution into the social debates about nuclear energy. As the novel's plot is based on the true case of U.S. DOE's initiative about constructing a nuclear waste reservoir in the Nevada desert, the paper illustrates the fictional/factual balance in covering the conflict between spiritual energy and nuclear energy, represented in the perspective of two protagonists, trying to protect their monastery from U.S. Department of Energy's initiative on building a nuclear waste repository in their vicinity. The paper highlights the conflict as an encounter of some spiritual powers, which the protagonists go through – the spiritual power of the religious faith, implemented in the monastic life in the remote hermitage, the spiritual power of the place, implemented in the Nevada desert (combining the energy of community on the desert and the energy of Indian folklore, which collaboratively are trying to counterbalance the spiritual power of nuclear energy. The paper tries to follow the author's way of illustrating how the traditional Indian wisdom and Christian practices, jointed together, result in making their hermitage survive as a counterbalance to the U.S. federal plans to build a nuclear waste repository. The paper underlines the literary representation of a hermitage as one of the central plotframing imaginaries which is the embodiment of spiritual impressions, materialized in the monastery and inserted in the historical settings (in the context of the nuclear history of Nevada region). The paper summarizes Bergon's perspective on this conflict of spiritual powers' counteraction by depicting how the novel's protagonists try to search for possibilities which that can help avoid the conflict and consolidate the spiritual powers' balance by changing the perspective on nuclear energy by learning the spirituality of the atom and by avoiding polarity in reconsidering the new world order. Being involved in debating the spirituality of atom and the counteraction of faith and science, Bergon's novel reflects the current issues on the advantages and disadvantages of peaceful using nuclear energy by reckoning 'the nuclear' not only as a social cultural phenomenon of energy dependent society but also as a trigger of debates on 'science as a new religion' within the Nuclear Anthropocene.

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