most Americans' knowledge of each other. Media can provoke violence or induce passivity. In San Francisco, for example, a radio show on KFKE called Street Soldiers has taken this power as a responsibility with great consequence: "Unquestionably," writes Ken Auletta in the New Yorker, "the show has helped avert violence. When a Samoan teenager was killed, apparently by Filipino gang members, or a drive-by shooting, the phones lit up with calls from Samoans wanting to tell the network they would not rest until they had exacted revenge. Threats filled the air for a couple of weeks. Then the dead Samoan's father called in, and, in a poignant exchange, the father said he couldn't tolerate the thought of more young men senselessly slaughtered. There would be no retaliations, he vowed. And there was none." In contrast, we must wonder at the phenomenon of the very powerful leadership of the Republican party, from Ronald Reagan to Robert Dole to William Bennett, giving advice, counsel, and friendship to Rush Limbaugh's passionate disapproval.

The outright denial of the material crisis at every level of U.S. society, most urgently in black inner-city neighborhoods but facing us all, is a kind of political circus, simulating as it feeds the fantasies of the moment. We as a nation can no longer afford to deal with such crises by magnifying an excess of bodies, of babies, of job-stealers, of welfare mothers, of overreaching immigrants, of too-powerful Jews, in whispers liberal Hollywood, of lecturers and gays, of gang members ("gangsters") remain white, and no matter what the atrocity, less vilified than "gang members," who are black, of Arab terrorists, andynity women. The reality of our social poverty far exceeds these scapegoats. This right-wing backlash resembles, in form if not substance, phenomena like anti-Semitism in Poland. There aren't but a handful of Jews left in that whole country, but the giant howls of hatred and anti-Semitism flourish space. Jews blamed for the world's evils.

The overwhelming response to right-wing excesses in the United States has been to seek an odd sort of comfort in the fact that the First Amendment is working so well that you can't suppress this sort of thing. Look what’s happened in Eastern Europe. Granted, so let’s not talk about censorship or the First Amendment for the next ten minutes. But in Western Europe, where fascism is rivering up at an appalling rate, suppression is hardly the problem. In Eastern and Western Europe as well as the United States, we must learn to think just a little bit about the fiercely coalescing power of media to stir mistrust, to fan it into forest fires of fear, and revenge. We must begin to think about the levels of national and social complacency in the face of such revulsion ignorance. We must ask ourselves what the expected result is, not of censorship or suppression but of so much encouragement, so much support, so much investment in the fantasisms of hate. What future is it that we are designing with the devotion of such tremendous resources to the disgraceful propaganda of bigotry?

The Reader’s Prescence

1. Retert Williams's opening paragraph. Why do you think she begins her essay this way? What does the paragraph tell you about her? How does it prepare you for the rest of the essay? Suppose Williams began with an anecdote from her experience in law or teaching. Would the effect differ? Why and how?

2. Williams writes: "It's clear that radio and television have the power to change the course of history, to proselytize, and to conspire not merely the good and the noble, but the very worst in human nature as well." (paragraph 9). What is the significance of this statement relative to Williams's general argument? What does the Orson Welles example illustrate? What correlation is implied between this and the "hate mongers of radio?"

3. Compare Williams’s argument about “the fiercely coalescing power of media” (paragraph 27) to that of Marie Witten in “TV Addiction” (page 384). How do the two essays compare in substance (that is, in the points they make) and in structure and style (that is, in the way they build their cases)? Whose argument do you find most persuasive, and why? How might you write an essay on a similar theme? What governs your decisions?

Terry Tempest Williams

The Clan of One-Breasted Women

The environmentalist and writer Terry Tempest Williams (b. 1953) lives in Utah, where she is active in the movement to expand federally protected wilderness areas. She has been a professor of English at the University of Utah and naturalist-in-residence at the Utah Museum of Natural History, in K repell. An Unnatural History of Family and Place (1991), she documents the epidemic of cancer caused by nuclear weapons tested in Utah during the 1950s and meditates upon the meaning of this tragedy for her family. "The Clan of One-Breasted Women" appears in Repell. Her first book, Fierce In a White Stilt: A Journey to Nauru (1984), received a Southeast Book Award. Other books include, Coyote's Canoes (1995), An Unspoken History: Stories from the Field (1994), Desert Queer (1995), Leep (2000), and Red Passion and Patience in the Desert (2009). She also coedited Testament: Writers of the West Speak on Behalf of Utah
I belong to a Clan of One-brested Women. My mother, my grandmother, and six aunts have all had mastectomies. Seven are dead. The two who survive have not completed rounds of chemotherapy and radiation.

I've had my own problems—two biopsies for breast cancer and a small tumor between my clitoris and my vagina as a "borderline malignancy." This is my family history.

Most statistics tell us that breast cancer is genetic, hereditary, with rising percentages attached to family, children, or becoming pregnant after thirty. What they don't say is that living in Utah may be the greatest hazard of all.

We are a Mormon family with roots in Utah since 1847. The "word of wisdom" in my family aligned us with good foods—no coffee, no tea, no alcohol. For the most part, our women were finished having their babies by the time they were thirty. And only one family faced breast cancer prior to 1980. Traditionally, as a group of people, Mormons have a low rate of cancer.

Is our family a cultural anomaly? The truth is, we didn't think about it. Those who did, usually the men, simply said, "had genes." The women's attitude was that breast cancer was part of life. On February 16, 1971, the case of my mother's surgery, I accidentally picked up the telephone and overheard her ask my grandmother what she could expect.

"Don't, it is one of the most spiritual experiences you will ever encounter."

I hastily put down the receiver.

My family and I are the only family I know who took my brothers and me to the hospital to visit her. We met in a lobby in a large hospital. No bandages were visible. I'll never forget her radiation, the way she held herself in a purple velvet robe, and how she gathered us around her.

"Children, I am free. I want you to know I felt the arms of God around me."

We believed her. My father cried. Our mother, her husband, was thirty-eight years old.

A little over a year after Mother's death, Dad and I were having dinner together. He had just returned from St. George, where the Teapot Dome had completed the gas lines that would service southern Utah. He spoke of his love for the country, the sandstaked landscape, bare-bottomed and beautiful. He had just finished looking the Kolob trail in Zion.
Again and again, the American public was told by its government, in spite of facts, figures, and reason, "it has been found that the truth may be conducted with freedom without violating any law and without raising any question of a nature which may be regarded as a violation of the franking privileges." Accounting police for simply a matter of public relations. "Your best action," an Atomic Energy Commissary to the press, "is to be worred about fallout." A news release typical of the times stated, "We lied to no basis for concluding that human in any individual has resulted from radioactive fallout."

On August 9th, 1967, Senator John C. Stennis, a senator of the United States of America. Mrs. Allen's case was the first on an alphabetical list of twenty-four test cases, representative of roughly twelve hundred plaintiffs seeking compensation from the United States government for cancers caused by nuclear testing in Nevada. From Allen lived in Hawaii. She was the mother of five children and had been widowed twice. Her first husband, with their two oldest boys, had worn the tests from the root of the local high school. He died of leukemia in 1956. Her second husband died of pancreas cancer in 1978.

In a town meeting conducted by Idaho Senator Orrin Hatch, shortly before the test was held, Mrs. Allen said, "I am not blaming the government. I want you to know that, Senator Hatch. But I thought that if testimony could help in any way so this would not happen again to any of the generations coming after us. I am happy to bear this day to be statement of what we are hearing, is that there was a guy in the nuclear testing.

On May 10, 1984, Judge Harry S. Jencks handed down his opinion. Ten of the plaintiffs were awarded damages. It was the first time a federal court had determined that the nuclear tests had been the cause of cancer. For the remaining fourteen test cases, the proof of causation was not sufficient. But in spite of the split decision, it was considered a landmark ruling. It was not to remain silent long.

In April 1987, the United Court of Appeals overturned Judge Jencks's ruling on the ground that the United States was protected from suit by the legal doctrine of sovereign immunity, a centuries-old principle from England in the days of absolute monarchs.

In January 1988, the Supreme Court refused to review the Appeals Court decision. To one expert it does not arise whether the United States government was responsible, whether it led to its citizens, or even that citizens died from the fallout of nuclear testing. What matters in any case is not whether the United States government is responsible; the King, as President, has the duty to act on behalf of the people. The King is therefore wrong.

In American culture, authority is respected, obedience is revered, and independence thinking is not. I was raised as a young girl not to "make waves" or "rock the boat."

"Just let it go," Mother would say. "You know how you feel, that's what counts."

For many years, I have done just that — listened, observed, and quietly formed my own opinions, in a culture that rarely asks questions because it has all the answers. But one by one, I have watched the women in my family die of cancer, heroic deaths. We sat in waiting rooms hoping for good news, but always receiving the bad. I cared for them, bathed their seared bodies, and kept their secrets. I watched beautiful women become bald as Cytwens, explant, and Adabrackin were injected into their veins. I held their foreheads as they vomited green-black bile, and I shielded them with phantoms when the pain became unbearable. In the end, I witnessed their last peaceful breath, becoming a midwife to the接纳 of their soul.

The price of obedience has become too high. The fear and inability to question authority that ultimately killed rural communities in Nevada during atmospheric testing of atomic weapons is the same fate I saw in my mother's body. No blood, no sleep. The evidence is lurid.

I cannot prove that my mother, Diane Zion Tempest, my grandmother, Zetta Rosemary Dixon and Karolyn Blacket Tempest, along with my sister, developed cancer from the nuclear fallout in Nevada. But I don't prove they didn't.

My father's testimony was correct. The September blast we drove through in 1957 was part of Operation Plumbbob, one of the most intensive series of bomb tests to be initiated. The flash of light in the night on the desert, which I had always thought was a dream, developed into a family nightmare. It took fourteen years, from 1957 to 1971, for cancer to manifest in my mother — the same time, Howard L. Andrews, an authority in radioactive fallout at the National Institutes of Health, says radiation cancer requires to become evident. The more I learn about what it means to be a "downwind," the more questions I drown in.

What I do know, however, is that as a Mormon woman of the fifth generation of Latter-day Saints, I must question everything, even if it means losing my faith, even if it means becoming a member of a border tribe among my own people. Toleration blind obedience in the name of patriotism or religion ultimately takes our lives. When the Atomic Energy Commission described the country north of the Nevada Test Site as "virtually uninhabitable desert terrain," my family and the birds at Great Salt Lake were some of the "virtually inhabi-

One night, I dreamed a dream from all over the world echoed a blaz-

erous sun in the desert. They spoke of change, how they held the mean in their bellies and water with their phases. They mocked the pre-

sumption of even tempered beings and made promises that they would never fear the touch inside themselves. The women danced wildly as sparks broke away from the flames and entered the night sky as stars.

And they sang a song given to them by Shoshone grandmothers:

40
The women danced and drummed and sang for weeks, preparing themselves for what was to come. They would reclaim the desert for the sake of their children, for the sake of the land.

A few miles downstream from the fire circle, bivouacs were being erected. Rabbits felt the tremors. Their soft feathers puffed up paws and feet recognized the shuffling sounds, while the room of quietude and sage were smothering. Roads were cut from the inside out and dust devils hummed naturally. And each time there was another nuclear test, echoes reached the desert heart. Smoke marks appeared. The land was losing its muscle.

The women could hear it any longer. They were mothers. They had suffered labor pains but always under the promise of birth. The red hot pains beneath the desert promised death only, as each bivouac became a stillbirth. A contract had been made and broken between human beings and the land. A new contract was being drawn by the women, who understood the fate of the earth as their own.

Under the cover of darkness, ten women slipped under a barbed-wire fence and entered the contaminated country. They were trespassing. They walked toward the town of Mercury, on moonlight, taking their cues from cranes, kit fox, antelope squirrels, and quail. They moved quietly and deliberately through the maze of Joshua trees. When a hint of daylight appeared they rested, drinking tea and sharing their ration of food. The women closed their eyes. The time had come to process with the heart, that to deny one’s genealogy with the earth was to commit treason against one’s soul.

At dawn, the women draped themselves in mica, wrapping long streamers of silver plastic around their arms to blow in the breeze. They wore char marks, that became the faces of humanity. And when they arrived at the edge of Mercury, they carried all the bitterness of a younger day in their wombs. They passed to allow their courage to settle.

The town that forbids pregnant women and children to enter because of radiation risks was asleep. The women moved through the streets as winged messengers, twirling around each other in slow rotation, perking inside homes and watching the easy sleep of men and women. They were astounded by the stillness and périodically would utter a skull note or low cry just to verify life.

The residents finally awoke to these strange apparitions. Some simply stared. Others called authorities, and in time, the women were apprehended by wary soldiers dressed in desert fatigues. They were taken to a white, square building on the edge of Mercury. When asked who they were and why they were there, the women replied, “We are mothers and we have come to reclaim the desert for our children.”

The soldiers arrested them. As the ten women were blindfolded and handcuffed, they began singing:

You can’t forbid us to think
You can’t forbid us to dream
And you can’t stop the songs that we sing.

The women continued to sing louder and louder, until they heard the voices of their sisters moving across the mesa:

Call for reinforcements,” one soldier said.

“We have,” interrupted one woman, “we have—and you have no idea of our numbers.”

I crossed the line at the Nevada Test Site and was arrested with nine other Utahns for trespassing on military lands. They are still conducting nuclear tests in the desert. Ours was an act of civil disobedience. But as I walked toward the town of Mercury, it was more than a gesture of peace. It was a gesture on behalf of the Clan of One-Breasted Women.

As one officer clinched the handcuffs around my wrists, another fraked my body. She found a pen and pad of paper tucked inside my left boot.

“And these?” she asked sternly.

“Weapons,” I replied.

“Our eyes met. I smiled. She pulled the leg of my trousers back over my boot.

“Step forward, please,” she said as she took my arm.

We were booked under an afternoon sun and housed to Tonopah. Nevada. It was a two-hour ride. This was familiar country. The Joshua trees standing their ground had been named by my ancestors, who believed they looked like prophets pointing west to the Promised Land. These were the same trees that bloomed each spring. Flowers appearing like white Horses in the Majestic. And I recalled a full moon in May, when Mother and I had walked among them, flushing out mourning doves and owls.
The bus stopped short of town. We were released.

The officials thought it was a cruel jest to leave us stranded in the desert with no way to get home. What they didn’t realize was that we were home, soul-centered and strong, women who recognized the sweet smell of sage as fuel for our spirits.

The Reader’s Presence

1. Paragraph 3 reads, “This is my family history.” Which parts of Williams’s essay are particular to her family, and what do they add to the larger social history of her time and place? How does her family’s religion, Mormonism, play into the family history? What does she gain by drawing on the earlier spiritual tradition of the Shoshones, which is rooted in the same geographical area? What other “families,” besides her nuclear and extended family, might Williams belong to?

2. Examine carefully—and discuss in detail—the roles of dream and reality in this essay. Characterize the power of each. Consider also the relationship between dream and nightmare. How do you read the “dream” Williams recounts in paragraph 59 and following? Characterize the relationship between that dream and the “civil disobedience” she recounts in the following section (paragraph 49 and following).

3. Discuss the role of language in the essay. You might begin by examining instances of what could be termed Orwellian doublespeak. (In this context you might refer to Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language” on page 401.) What are the dangers and ironies inherent in this euphemistic, obfuscating prose? Examine carefully Williams’s own language and that of the Shoshones, as well as the written doctrines and documents to which Williams alludes or refers. Finally, reread paragraph 52, where she refers to her pen and paper as “weapons.” How effective a weapon is this essay itself in the battle for social justice?

Part V

The Voices of Fiction:
Ten Modern Short Stories