“Surviving” Adolescence: Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Transformations in Young Adult Fiction

Thesis submitted by

Anna Whateley
B.A. (Hons) Brunel University, P.G.C.E University of Hertfordshire.

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Queensland University of Technology

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Abstract
This study, entitled “‘Surviving’ Adolescence: Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic transformations in young adult fiction”, analyses how discourses surrounding the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic are represented in selected young adult fiction published between 1997 and 2009. The term “apocalypse” is used by current theorists to refer to an uncovering or disclosure (most often a truth), and “post-apocalypse” means to be after a disclosure, after a revelation, or after catastrophe. This study offers a double reading of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic discourses, and the dialectical tensions that are inherent in, and arise from, these discourses. Drawing on the current scholarship of children’s and young adult literature this thesis uses post-structural theoretical perspectives to develop a framework and methodology for conducting a close textual analysis of exclusion, ‘un’differentiation, prophecy, and simulacra of death. The combined theoretical perspectives and methodology offer new contributions to young adult fiction scholarship. This thesis finds that rather than conceiving adolescence as the endurance of a passing phase of a young person’s life, there is a new trend emerging in young adult fiction that treats adolescence as a space of transformation essential to the survival of the young adult, and his/her community.
List of Relevant Publications

(as Anna Free)


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Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements of an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________
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“Epilogue”

Rose Tyler: Is that why we're here? - I mean, is that what you do? Jump in at the last minute and save the Earth?
The Doctor: I'm not saving it. Time's up.
Rose Tyler: But what about the people?
The Doctor: It's empty. They've all gone. No one left.
Rose Tyler: [silent; looks at the Earth] Just me then.
The Steward: [to Rose] Who the hell are you?

(Dr Who, "The End of the World", Davies, 2005)

The 2009 season of the Doctor Who television series begins with the end of the Earth. The Doctor and his young adult companion Rose stand safely aboard a space ship and watch as the Earth explodes in cataclysmic – apocalyptic – proportions. Rose has to come to terms with the knowledge that her world will end, as will all human life, including her own. As in the dialogue above, Rose now has to consider “who the hell” she is when everything has ended / will end? The episode ends in the present day with the Doctor and Rose setting off to enjoy some chips back on Earth, but the everyday nature of their activity seems misplaced through their the knowledge that this will all be over one day. The Doctor tells Rose: “You lot, you spend all your time thinking about dying, like you're gonna get killed by eggs, or beef, or global warming, or asteroids. But you never take time to imagine the impossible. Like maybe you survive.” For the Doctor, surviving after his people have died is almost a punishment, living for eternity alone, searching for a sense of belonging. Rose is now faced with the same awareness of
the finitude of life and the infinitude of death, and yet she does not succumb to a morbid abandonment of living. She goes out for chips instead. She uses the experience on the platform of the spaceship to transform her self into one that can cope with future, timelessness and disaster. She survives the end of her world, and her society survives through her. Rose’s capability shows a resilience that the (adult) doctor respects and admires. The series thus begins with her embarkation into life after death.

Survival after the apocalypse, after seeing death, is the reason this thesis begins with an Epilogue: the end marks the embarkation point for looking at the increasingly blurred boundaries between before and after, future and present, life and death, and how a person that is formed through experiences on that blurred boundary line decides, in the face of a foreknowledge of disaster, to eat chips.
Chapter 1

Introduction

I have always been interested in this theme of survival, the meaning of which is not to be added on to living and dying. It is originary: life is living on, life is survival [la vie est survie]. To survive in the usual sense of the term means to continue to live, but also to live after death… It is not derived from either living or dying. No more than what I call “originary mourning”, that is, a mourning that does not wait for the so-called “actual” death.

(Derrida, 2004/2007, p. 26)

This thesis is concerned with survival, an enduring theme of both civilisation and literature. Derrida too finds “‘survivance’ at the very heart of life,” as survival in life, through life, and of life is essential and yet always and already connected to death (Derrida, 1984, p.28). How adolescence is portrayed in fiction brings its own layers of meaning to survival, and those layers – and their connectedness to apocalypse – are the conceptual foundation of this thesis. What Roxborough (1978) contends is the “novel of crisis” is increasingly becoming a novel of post-crisis, implying a sense of survival; and it offers the opportunity to consider the experience of life Derrida refers to above, of living after death without having “actual” death. In its focus on survival in young adult (YA) fiction, this study examines the transformations that are necessary to survive – to live – young adulthood, and the transformations communities must undergo in order to harness the potential contribution from young adults. Primarily, the analysis draws on notions of the apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic to illuminate these processes and spaces of survival as they are depicted in fiction. Specifically, the aim of this study is to analyse how discourses articulating the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic are represented in selected young adult fiction published between 1997 and 2009.
A young adult lives in a liminal space between being a child and being an adult, and the literature written for young adults is often analysed in terms of how protagonists navigate this space (Trites, 2000; Waller, 2009). According to Waller, the young adult novel ventures “away from childhood and towards adulthood” and away from “comforting familiarity” (2009, p. 29). The Bildungsroman is a common genre in children’s literature, and epitomises accepted and foundational societal conceptions of the process of maturation, whereby the subject matures and achieves the common goal of “individuality” and eventually adulthood, but can only achieve this goal (or telos) in socially sanctioned ways (Moretti, 1987, p. 16). The process of maturation in the Bildungsroman is reliant on a series of points “which the individual must pass on his [sic] way to maturity and harmony” (Abel, Hirsch, & Langland, 1983, p. 6). This scenario constructs the adolescent experience as one of endurance through to maturity (Brooks, 2003; Waller, 2009).¹ In contrast to the linear and troubled passage of the Bildungsroman, utopian and dystopian YA fiction displays a world in flux, projecting the inner struggle of the protagonist onto the social organisation (Bradford, Mallan, Stephens, & McCallum, 2008, p. 14). Yet, just as such texts are beginning to question the telos of “personal development” (p. 14), other adolescent fictions are exploring a notion of surviving adolescence that does not rely on reaching adulthood as a goal, that is, the adolescent protagonist “is not simply working chronologically toward a future adulthood” (Lawrence-Pietroni, 1996, p. 36). Instead, the protagonist and the community recognise opportunities for transformation divergent from the socially accepted linear process of maturation put forward in the Bildungsroman, towards a way

¹ This sense of endurance is further enhanced in the hero story, a common young adult novel narrative structure and sequence of events (as is further explored in chapter 3).
of being that can utilise the space and time of adolescence without the telos of adulthood. This is the path that this study pursues in its examination of recent YA fiction.

Survival is a common theme in YA fiction, and the “tortuous” condition of “becoming” more mature is fraught with extreme emotions that seem contrary to any sense of stability (Mallan & Pearce, 2003, p. ix). The adolescent protagonist’s desire for stability is often the focus of both YA fiction and children’s literature criticism, rather than the creative potential of the liminal space the young adult occupies. By refocussing on such creative potential, this thesis addresses a gap in current research in children’s literature. The title of this thesis, “‘Surviving’ adolescence,” draws attention to the word “survival” and its original meaning to “continue to live” after an event (OED), rather than endure through an event. In other words, the title refers to the notion that young adult subject can continue after a revelation with a transformed perception of life, rather than suffer through the experience of adolescence with the linear expectation of a chronological end point and adulthood. There is a sense in YA fiction that experiencing the contradictory state of adolescence (both, and neither, child and adult) can offer, rather than undermine, moments of agency and selfhood, through an “opening up” of the “liminal space” in its own right (Brooks, 2003, p. 10); and further, that this can occur without stepping out of adolescence and into adulthood. This new agential adolescent emerges with a transformed sense of self, as seen in fiction such as *Killing Aurora* (Barnes, 1999), *Vampire Academy* (Mead, 2007), and *Breaking Dawn* (Meyer, 2008).

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2 Note that ‘children’s literature’ is used in a generic sense to encompass both literature and criticism of texts written for both children and young adults.
The concept of transformative possibilities of adolescence is not shared by all scholars working in YA fiction. Waller considers specific transformations in terms of physical metamorphosis as a negative manner of progression for the individual who may remain “trapped in a dangerous stasis” (Waller, 2009, p. 44). Waller recognises the unique possibilities of fantasy fiction\(^3\) to challenge teleology: “fantastic genres can employ magical tropes to represent adolescence as a discrete period of distinct experience, rather than simply a stage \textit{en route} to the ideal state of mature adulthood” (p. 54). The process of transformation provides an experience through which the adolescent can mature or grow without reaching adulthood or moving towards an end point. Similarly, Bradford’s (2001) analysis of metamorphosis in YA fiction demonstrates two possible outcomes of transformation of the body. The analysis shows metamorphosis as either supporting a liberal humanist notion of a core self achieved through overcoming adversity on the way to maturity, or being used to explore notions of fluid self and the possibility of holding multiple subject positions. This thesis extends Bradford’s findings towards a broader definition of transformation that includes a transformed perception of self and society, and societal definitions of selfhood. I contend that the use of post-apocalyptic theories with YA fiction of \textit{any genre} potentially opens up new paths for analysis, by resisting the privileging of a teleological view of adolescence, defined by arriving at or achieving adulthood. These theories recognise the intrinsic value of reading adolescence in fiction as having transformative potential within the time of adolescence, rather that restricting transformation to the process of becoming an adult.

The opening comments to this chapter introduce pivotal concepts for this study –

\(^3\) Waller’s analysis focuses on “fantastic realism” where the protagonist steps out of his/her mimetic realist world for a short time, while also considering the fantasy genre as a whole.
transformation and survival – and how they have been understood and used in YA fiction. Other key concepts – teleology, dialectics, the apocalyptic, and the post-apocalyptic – will be discussed in the following sections. The purpose of this introduction is to map broadly the societal and literary influences that impact on changing views of adolescence, and the difference in theoretical terms of binarism and transformation. As a structural basis for this study, the discussion posits the three apocalypses of life, destiny, and death as they pertain to representations of adolescence in YA fiction, and how these apocalypses may render a view of life, experience and ‘truths’ in a potent way. After developing these points, this chapter then explains the aim of the study and concludes with a chapter overview, which provides a direction for investigating how Derrida’s epigraphic comment about “life is survival [la vie est survie]” occurs in the selected YA fiction.

**Teleology and Dialectics**

In order to understand contemporary conceptions of adolescence in young adult fiction that led to the “limbo” described above, the following discussion briefly considers conceptions of the child/young adult subject, and the possible influences that teleology has had on these conceptions. I propose that a dialectic tension exists between theorising adolescence in terms of binaries and the view of it as transformative. Binaries form the norms of the society and adhering to one side of a binary satisfies the *Bildungsroman* model of maturation; transformation requires transgressing those binaries and transformative elements in a text enables a consideration of the ways in which adolescence is reconfigured. The framework is an important element of this study as it will provide the conceptual means for undertaking subsequent analysis of the
apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic in the field. How this framework is applied to narrative is influenced by dialectics.

Dialectical logic is derived from the conceptual triad of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, in that the first two together culminate in the third term (Hegel, 1817/1975, pp. 79-82). The dialectic process, for the purposes of this study, focuses on the movement and flux between two propositions: thesis and antithesis. This thesis also considers the complications that arise when combining poststructuralist theories with a concept such as the third term, or synthesis. For Hegel, arriving at the synthesis requires that the first two positions are sublated, which in the dialectic process means that they are negated or abolished but nevertheless preserved as a partial element of the synthesis. This thesis is concerned with unresolved dialectics, which produce dialectal tension. Unresolved dialectics are most often formed by a contradictory proposition. Each side of a contradiction is inherent in, and constructs, the other. For example, contradictory concepts such as finite and infinite, nothing and being, subject and object, cannot be satisfactorily resolved (Hegel, 1817/1975, 1977). Being and nothing become, for Hegel, “becoming,” a term often used in the analysis of young adult subject formation. However, the third term (“becoming”) is a movement between being and nothing, and an acceptance of the contradiction, rather than a solid resolution of the metaphysical question over what constitutes being. While some Hegelian concepts are drawn on here, his teleological and utopian understanding of history is a point of departure from my use of his works.

The development narrative (or Bildungsroman) discussed earlier is perhaps a reverberation of Western society’s teleological orientation since the 1700s, which has been moving towards a notion of logic and dialectics, and away from a religion-oriented
society – the belief that existence on earth itself is the place of transit, and Heaven is the destination (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 101). Teleology, as the “study of ends or final causes” (OED), asserts that meaning is generated backward from a future end point, as all things have a “purpose” towards that end, implying design and intentionality in history. It also implies that an end point will come, or has come. Hegel applied his notion of dialectics to the evolution of society, stating that history was ended after the French Revolution (1776) because society could not improve upon the liberal democratic utopia (Hegel, 1817/1975). The Hegelian tradition of dialectical development supports the very idea that society is “heading somewhere,” and the destination retrospectively affects the present (Heffernan, 1995, p. 180; Heise, 1997, p. 12). More recently, Francis Fukuyama’s essay, “The End of History and The Last Man” (1989/1992), has re-invigorated this discussion by claiming (in line with Hegel’s utopian vision) that we are at “the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government” (p. xii). Written just after the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), and during the aftermath of the Cold War, Fukuyama argues that the West has won, that all other systems of government are falling into (neo)liberalism, and the end of history is marked by the hegemony of capitalist consumerism (1992, p. 108).4

Hegel’s dialectic model results in an end point, a finality that is also seen in the narrative structure of the *Bildungsroman*. Moretti sees the teleological nature of society reflected in the novel’s structure: “This teleological rhetoric – the meaning of events lies

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4 According to Stanley Kurtz the “question of our time may now be whether Huntington’s culture clash, or Fukuyama’s *pax democratica* is the world’s most plausible future” (2002, p.43). The debate between the two theorists is outside the scope of this study; accordingly, their visions for the future (however different) are not as relevant to my argument as the debate that Fukuyama’s article sparked.
in their finality – is the narrative equivalent of Hegelian thought, with which it shares a strong normative vocation: events acquire meaning when they lead to one ending, and one only” (1987, p. 7). The normative function of the telos resonates with the metanarrative that creates the destination and subsequently generates the meaning of events that lead up to that point. Dialectics influenced both socio-politics and narrative structure in the Romantic era. The twentieth century debates over the “end of history” prompted many responses to the notion of the realisation of telos, and Bloom articulates this realised end as threatening to a sense of identity: “Now that it appears that we have won, what are we and what are we to do?” (Bloom, 1989, p. 19). This implies that Hegel’s notion of synthesis has been reached, and the goal is achieved; yet where does this leave history, time, narrative and teleology?

The desire to keep a particular model of social structure or political situation could vastly benefit the dominant ideology of the time, installing a desire to live in stasis at the end. According to LaCapra, the “end of history” may “constitute an ideological attempt to remain fixated at an existing historical condition” (2004, p. 1). Similarly, Berger considers that after the Cold War, Western nations ceased engaging critically with their own political systems; and they “had entered a national age of post-thinking” and saw no need to attempt to improve on liberal capitalism between the end of the Cold War and the end of the century (1999, p. 33). However, Derrida (as do many members of the postmodern movement in general) argues that we have not changed as much as we (or Fukuyama) would hope, and warns that forgetting the “spirit of radical critique” undermines the value of transformation (1994, p. 88). 5 Poststructuralism and

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5 Transformation is also an important concept in utopian/dystopian fiction, as is considered later in this chapter.
postmodernism draw attention to the naturalised structural (or binary) divisions, and how language constructs meaning through these oppositions, which inherently question ideology and discourse (Belsey, 2005, p. 4). However, the influences of poststructuralism have been challenged since the events of the September 11 terrorist attacks, 2001 (9/11), which for many constituted a return to the binary world (good/evil) and an end to relativism (Hartley & Lumby, 2003, p. 48; Heffernan, 2008, p. 25).

The return to hero narratives since 9/11 (Lampert, 2009) coincides with the increase in relativity and transformative utopian texts (Bradford et al., 2008). A poststructural dialectic, as offered by Derrida (1981) and Bull (1999), provides a theoretical perspective to be brought to texts that does not rely on concepts of destination or telos, and instead upholds transformation and contradiction over resolution. The telos of adulthood (that the binary of child/adult imposes on the adolescent) and transformative possibilities of relativity and contradiction are co-present in YA fiction and create a socio-cultural limbo that accords with YA fiction’s representations of growth. Reading this state of “limbo” in s body of literature specifically aimed at readers who are themselves living in a liminal time and space allows a double reading of society and the young adult, as both are constructed by culture and contributing members to that culture. This double reading requires a framework for analysis that considers the dialectic tensions between binarism and transformation, and one that brings current theoretical positions on these discourses to the study of YA fiction.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic

One purpose of this study is to create a framework that is particular to YA fiction, while also addressing the transformative elements of the current socio-cultural climate, as they can be read in constructions of selfhood, through apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic models of analysis. The term “post-apocalypse” derives from the Greek *apocalypsis* (OED), or “apocalypse” as it is used by current theorists to signify the uncovering or disclosure (most often a truth) – with implications of cataclysm, from its use in the Christian Bible; accordingly, “post-apocalypse” refers to the moment or period after a disclosure, after a revelation, or after catastrophe (Derrida, 1984; Bull, 1995; Kumar, 1995; Heffernan, 1996; Berger, 1999; Bull, 1999; Quinby, 1999; Williamson, 2008). The use of notions of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic allows for a new perspective on dialectics and transformation in YA fiction that focuses on moments of revelation, and the effect of those revelations.

To achieve this perspective, dialectics can be interpreted through the apocalyptic, in the sense that accepting contradiction is both a realisation and a sublime moment which reveals the contradiction as an actuality that may or may not require resolution. The revelation changes everything that comes after it, while at the same time it retrospectively changes the meaning of preceding events themselves with that truth in mind. This perspective diverges from any form of final utopia, however, as the apocalyptic is an ongoing process (as discussed in the next chapter). The apocalyptic tone of contemporary culture is not a new phenomenon; Christian belief in the Revelation created a firm structure to social direction around the apocalyptic (Kermode, 1968, p. 26; Heffernan, 2008, p. 4). Yet the nature of that apocalypse, and the belief in its capacity to reveal a truth, has dramatically changed in postmodern times. The
secularisation of the apocalypse has not diminished its hold over social structure (the teleological nature of progression), and the eschatological rhetoric that defines the apocalyptic has been pervasive in twentieth century Western worlds:

The history of Christian eschatological expectation reveals that the end of the world has long played a significant role in the generation of meaning.... even when divorced from a traditional Christian context, the ends of the world may still form the boundaries, and thus also the shape, tone and perhaps the substance of secular discourse. (Bull, 1995, p. 7)

The traditional dialectic is one such secular and Christian discourse, as it maintains a goal and generates meaning retrospectively from that future end point; alternatively, as in the end of history argument put forward by Fukuyama, the dialectic is finished and the boundaries, shape and tone of apocalyptic discourses have been left floundering. Bull (1999), however, proposes a poststructural dialectic in an apocalyptic model that is cyclical, finding new ends from which to generate meaning while relying on the transgression of binaries. Bull’s combination of apocalyptic of poststructural precepts provides the opportunity to analyse the return to the binary (post 9/11) without falling into the traps of the end-of-history debate. For YA fiction, located as it is in the same liminal space as the society that produced it, the apocalyptic model allows for the inclusion of growth through the dialectic of integration. The resistance to telos inherent

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6 Eschatology is “The department of theological science concerned with ‘the four last things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell’,” and has been revised by the Oxford English Dictionary to include that recently “the sense of this word has been modified to connote the present ‘realization’ and significance of the ‘last things’ in the Christian life” (OED). Eschatological rhetoric is, then, a rhetoric of the end times.

7 These traps LaCapra describes as falling into “enlightened disempowerment – a kind of elaborately theorized fatalism,... or blank utopianism,” (2004, p. 8) or the “we have arrived” post-history model. The other aspect of post-apocalyptic young adult fiction, dwelling on this more cynical outlook on the future, is considered in chapters 1 and 5.
in the dialectic of integration determines that a similarly resistant and poststructural approach is taken to language, and the making of meaning in YA fiction.

Derrida’s deconstruction forms the basis for this thesis’s poststructural approach. Arising from radical critique, deconstruction provides a space within postmodern discourse to effect transformation that does not necessarily subscribe to a teleological way of thinking. By resisting the telos (and possibility) of a utopia or final state, Derrida’s promotion of “interminable self-critique” embraces moments of transformation in order to effect change (1994, p. 89). Deconstruction brings the same critique to language by questioning the underlying ideological implications of meaning generation. This study combines deconstruction with emerging theories on the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic. Berger (1999) and Heffernan (2008) provide models for literary analysis that utilise the secular post-apocalyptic to investigate how life after the “end” (the end of history and the end of teleologically-determined social structures) is conducted, and how the post-apocalyptic is represented in literature.

As this study is concerned with the apocalypses of life, destiny and death in YA fiction, it considers how narrative provides a unique opportunity to isolate moments of revelation and the effects these have on the characters. The moment that a young adult experiences a sense of agency for the first time, or the revelation of independence and a life beyond conformity, is the first apocalypse in YA fiction that will be analysed. Visions of the future inform how life is lived now, and this second apocalypse is the vision itself. Through prophecy and destiny the end is brought forward into the present, and living after this apocalyptic revelation becomes living in the post-apocalyptic. Death is the ultimate apocalypse, and fiction can overcome and live past death in an accessible and analysable space; accordingly, death forms the third apocalypse for this study. The
young adult space in some fiction has been lifted out of the teleological trappings of twentieth century society, and the change in the function of the apocalypse at the turn of the millennium (and into the 2000s) affects the new young adult worlds that are portrayed.

**Three Apocalypses of Young Adulthood: Life, destiny, and death**

Realisations about life and how to live it function as apocalypse in much YA fiction, as maturity is unveiled and a new understanding attained. As mentioned previously, novels for adolescents have grown out of the *Bildungsroman*, and involve a moment of revelation (an apocalypse) regarding how subjects can be more than they thought they could be. This was previously how to be a mature adult, which contains overtones of Derrida’s discourse on “*apprendre à vivre*… to mature, but also to educate” (2004/2007, p. 23). The double meaning of learning to live and being taught a “lesson” resonates with pedagogical overtones of young adult literature, and assumes that how to be an adult is teachable and achievable (James, 2008, p. 7). Derrida does not, however, imply that such a lesson can be taught or learned. Rather, he places the emphasis on dying, and exclaims: “not at all! Learning to live should mean learning to die” (p. 24). The importance of accepting death in learning to live can be viewed through the lens of the apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic, epitomised by the sense that “we are all survivors who have been granted a temporary reprieve” (p. 24), and that life is always living after the revelation of inevitable death.

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8 *Apprendre à vivre* translates from the French into English as “to teach how to live”. Derrida, however, takes it in the context of *apprendre à vivre enfin*, learning to live finally, and draws further meaning (as above) from its other uses and variable emphases as simultaneously passive and active.
The moment of revelation, the apocalypse, in YA fiction goes further than merely the possibilities beyond childhood as there has been a shift in contemporary fiction towards an apocalypse that reveals a sense of telos as destiny or purpose in life. Prophecy and destiny twist the apocalyptic through a manipulation of time, bringing the moment of revelation forward and changing perceptions before the actual event has even occurred; this is then living post-revelation, or living with the post-apocalyptic. Fantasy adolescent fiction narratives often develop around a prophecy – that a character will be special, doomed or unremarkable – which the unfolding story either disproves, or shows the character living out the “destiny” that was foreshadowed at the outset (Lukens, 1995, p. 82). This thesis is more specifically concerned with texts containing characters who challenge and overcome such foreshadowing and effectively question the concept of “truth” and belief in the gods (as the source of prophecy) within the text (as seen with Roxanna in Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith, Nahai, 1999). How these unfulfilled prophecies affect the lives of their subjects forms the second apocalypse in this thesis.

Death is a prominent concern of contemporary young adult fiction (James, 2008, p. 3). Although the binary of life/death has changed since the move away from dominant religious ideology in Western cultures, (excluding perhaps the United States), it still engages with a “contemporary secular humanism” that upholds a belief in life after death while rejecting dogmatic religions (Bradford et al., 2008, pp. 117-121). Thus no longer governed by religious texts, the space between (or after) life and death is open for interpretation. Ostry argues that impending death threatens a loss of the agency the adolescent has tried so hard to obtain (2004, p. 239). However, Ostry’s point implies that death only “engender[s] insecurities and fears,” without considering that it may offer “new opportunities” (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 182).
Death is always experienced through the changing cultural discourses, or lenses, on offer, but also through the literary responses to these discourses and cultural changes over time (Barley, 1995, p. 13; James, 2008, p. 2). Historical events shape the way discourses include (or exclude) death, and also how those discourses are viewed. The twentieth century brought with it mass death (from World Wars I and II, Hiroshima, the AIDS epidemic, the Gulf War, to 9/11, and the “war on terror”), and subsequent children’s and YA fiction responded with narratives that explained, comforted, questioned, mourned, and gave hope (Saxby, 1993, p. 416; Lampert, 2004). The threat of a repetition of the mass death inflicted by the Holocaust has been increased, superseded or changed by each subsequent political and cultural change (Noys, 2005, p. 3). Accordingly, since the 1960s there has been a proliferation of utopian and dystopian (including post-disaster) YA texts, such as Z for Zachariah (O'Brien, 1976) and Obernewtyn (Carmody, 1987) that exemplify a need to engage with new threats of nuclear warfare (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 7). Such fictions tend to locate their imagined utopian/dystopian worlds in a post-nuclear age, reflecting the Cold War nuclear threat, instanced by Children of the Dust (Lawrence, 1985) which follows three generations of young adult survivors from a nuclear holocaust. These fictions reaffirmed dominant discourses of fear of the unknown enemy, the potential for war within one’s own society, and the dangers of nuclear war. After the Cold War threat diminished (post 1989), utopian and dystopian YA fiction moved away from warfare, and came instead to centr predominantly on viral outbreaks and ecological degradation (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 14), emphasising responsibility and care of the environment, but also articulating a threat that emanates from everywhere, even from the air that is breathed. Death in these utopian/dystopian texts again occurs on a mass scale, and but it is no
longer caused by an embodied enemy. Rather, it is dispersed, anonymous, or the fault of microorganisms or general neglect of the environment. Just as these later political and environmental themes are found in children’s and YA fiction, so the change in cultural theoretical approaches has also shaped how discourses of death are engaged with and analysed in literature.

Representations of death are apocalyptic in that they reveal the manner of death and what happens after, but they also reveal something of the life before (Berger, 1999, p. 5). The sense of death is a condition particular to humans, according to Derrida: “the difference between human desire and animal need… is the fear of death” (1974, p. 184). He argues that animals do not know they are going to die, but humans do – and this puts us in a unique position of “anticipation” (p. 184). This anticipation, coupled with the apocalyptic nature of contemporary life (Dellamora, 1995, p. 8), demands that the transition from childhood into adolescence and then from adolescence into adulthood, is a process of learning to live with the disclosure of death. Death is doubly apocalyptic for young adults, as they are not only learning the realities of mortality, but also how to continue on living “post,” or “after,” this revelation. Trites observes with regard to YA fiction in general, that “death is often depicted in terms of maturation when the protagonist accepts the permanence of mortality” (2000, p. 119). However, much recent YA fiction depicting the mature (adult) characters struggling with mortality does not bear out in this idea. For example, in The House of the Scorpion (Farmer, 2002), El Patron murders clones for organ transplant in order to live well into his second century.

Analysis of the function of apocalypse in YA fiction has so far been restricted to post-disaster studies (Stephens, 1992b); and post-nuclear criticism (Braithwaite, 2000); and, indirectly, though utopian/dystopian research (Ostry, 2004; Bradford et al., 2008).
The apocalypse and post-apocalypse as a dialectical and transformative narrative structure offer new critical readings of YA fiction that can “uncover” how YA fiction is responding to the current socio-cultural and political changes during and after the millennial turn. They can also illuminate the survival of adolescence as the upholding of liminality as a space of transformation. In this way, YA fiction can be understood theoretically and textually as engaging in and endless dialectic of integration, and apprendre à vivre through accepting death that is inevitable. This consideration offers a new scholarly direction for the field of YA literary analysis.

This overview of the terrain informs the design of my study into the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic in YA fiction. The following section expands upon the aim of this thesis, and considers how processes of transformation articulate how the young adult subject survives the threats outlined above.

**Overview of the Study**

As mentioned earlier, this study sets out to analyse how discourses surrounding the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic are represented in selected young adult fiction published between 1997 and 2009. Its overarching concern is the way in which the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic shape survival for young adult characters. This thesis is concerned with an analysis of fictional texts, not readers’ responses to those texts. However, it does consider the subject positions offered to young adult readers through these fictions. Its focus is on the dialectics between the narrative space and characters, and how this interaction or tension offers a larger aesthetic about a “way of knowing” (Misson and Morgan, 2006, p. 26). This way of knowing, however, is bound up with
ideology which carries social values, attitudes, and questions with respect to discourses of death and the post-apocalyptic young adult culture.

To review the cultural theories surrounding the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic I draw on the primary theorists, including Derrida, Bull and Baudrillard, in the next chapter. I am particularly concerned to show how discourses of the post-apocalyptic are not bound to post-disaster fiction, but are evident also in other genres of YA fiction. Similarly, although this study gains much from the utopian/dystopian YA fiction research (particularly that of Bradford et al., 2008), my objective is to develop a model for narrative analysis adapted from Bull’s notion of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic. This review is thus pivotal in demonstrating how a gap in research is being addressed.

Just as this chapter has set the scene for the research, chapter 2 builds a theoretical framework that is unique and appropriate for the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic, and YA fiction. Firstly, chapter 2 reviews abjection in YA fiction as it relates to social theories of the apocalyptic, with a focus on Bull’s apocalyptic cycle (Bull, 1999; Wilson, 2001; McGillis, 2007; Falconer, 2008). This develops into the post-apocalyptic, which is important in setting the macro-level cultural scene that informed and inspired this research (Baudrillard, 1994b; Berger, 1999; Braithwaite, 2000; Heffernan, 2008). Thereafter, death as apocalyptic and previous research on death in YA fiction is discussed (Mallan, 2002; Noys, 2005; James, 2008). These diverse but related theoretical frames are significant as they inform the methodological approach of subsequent chapters, as well as problematise the inherent dangers and conceptual challenge in having an oxymoronic key term such as “post-apocalypse”. Further to this, the literature review considers current research responding to the social concerns
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outlined, but with specific focus on the young adult, including death; post-disaster; post-nuclear; utopia / dystopia; and liminality. In addressing issues surrounding the apocalyptic, these studies provide a basis and relevance for the timeliness of this research, and allow me to draw on the wealth of critical analysis in children’s and young adult literature.

Building on this theoretical framework, chapter 3 develops an approach for analysing the dialectic tensions apparent in narrative and discursive representations of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic in YA fiction. This methodology draws on poststructural approaches to the text, and the work of postmodern theorists such as Derrida, which are then tailored to fit the specificities of YA fiction by drawing on key scholars such as Bradford, Mallan, Stephens, Waller, and Falconer to develop a nuanced narrative discourse analysis methodology. A selection of nine diverse YA fictions will be analysed; though all are fantasies, they vary from, for example, science fiction, and ‘underworld’ genres (e.g., The House of the Scorpion, 2002, and Twilight, 2005), to mythical and magic realist genres (such as Monster Blood Tattoo, 2006-2008, and Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith, 1999). This chapter provides both a way to identify the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic in narrative, and offers tools with which to analyse them in terms of the narrative world, and the constructions of meaning within the text. Chapters 2 and 3 thus set up the theoretical and methodological underpinnings and approach to the subsequent in-depth textual analysis chapters that demonstrate how discourses informing, and arising from, the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic are represented in selected YA fiction.

Chapters 4 to 6 investigate how the three apocalypses of life, destiny, and death function within the selected texts. Specifically, chapter 4 utilises the apocalyptic cycle
model for analysis to consider how young adult protagonists survive through transformation. The focus texts, *The House of the Scorpion* (Farmer, 2002) and *The Otori Trilogy* (Hearn, 2002-2004) are analysed in order to explain how the markers of the apocalyptic are manifest in YA fiction, and to show how undifferentiation affects the protagonists’ experiences of selfhood, and their development from a position of exclusion from the binary, to establishing a new, more inclusive binary. This is followed by the *Monster Blood Tattoo* series (Cornish, 2006-2008), an incomplete apocalyptic cycle which naturally demonstrates that an analytic language and theoretical underpinning does not imply a simplistic or all-encompassing cycle, but rather one that has variations and deviations. This flexibility contributes to an understanding of how to use the apocalyptic model for analysis with other texts.

Chapter 5 questions the linearity of the apocalyptic by placing the apocalypse at the beginning of the text, and hence addresses how prophecy and destiny affect existence for young adult protagonists: how they live a post-apocalyptic existence. This chapter attends to postmodern disruptions through the analysis of prophecy and its effect (monstrous time), and how concepts of time, truth and the real are shaped in the texts. I use *The Oracle* (Fisher, 2003), *The Rat and the Raven* (Greenwood, 2005), and *Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith* (Nahai, 1999) to elucidate these concepts, each novel brings diverse narrative style and setting to push further the boundaries of the analysis.

The post-apocalyptic focus evolves in chapter 6 into the postmodern post-apocalyptic within the vampire narrative. Anderson’s *Thirsty* (Anderson, 1997) demonstrates an inability to survive through apocalypse, while making use of a post-apocalyptic analysis to represent alternative uses for this method of reading. This is followed by juxtaposing the *Twilight* series (Meyer, 2005-2008) with the *Vampire*
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*Academy* series (Mead, 2007), to reveal a new trend in popular YA fiction towards an engagement with the apocalypse of death, leading to (or perhaps arising out of) the discourses of the post-apocalyptic in the narrative worlds.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis, revisiting key elements of the theoretical and methodological framework, and discussing the implications for further research and scholarship.

**Conclusion**

As this Introduction has suggested, this study identifies and delineates a new trend emerging in YA fiction that conceives of adolescence as a process of transformation, rather than the enduring of a passing phase of a young person’s life. Maturity is no longer synonymous with adulthood, and the traditional telos of the *Bildungsroman* novel has been adapted into explorations in growth within the young adult time and space. This move within the literature corresponds to what is arguably a return to the binaries which run parallel to a sense of postmodern relativism. While the binary code forms the basis of many theoretical approaches to young adult literature, this chapter has introduced the possibility of incorporating the binary into a larger dialectic between binarism and transformation. The conceptual framework introduced in this chapter lays a foundation for a study of transformation through the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic that is “focalized” through the three apocalypses of life, destiny, and death within the “experience” of young adulthood. There is, however, a crucial role for the community in the apocalyptic that requires transformation on a social scale in order to survive.

The survival of adolescence is a complex and new direction for the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic, and offers much for all fields of scholarship concerned with
textual analysis. In this chapter, I have outlined the purpose and direction for this thesis, considering the key concepts, terminology, and perspectives that are to be employed throughout the work. By positioning this research at the juncture of current children’s and young adult critical literature and other literary and cultural theoretical perspectives, I am able to draw together a theoretical framework specific to studying the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic in YA fiction, while also making the research relevant to these areas of research. The next chapter develops this premise into such a theoretical framework, firstly defining the markers of the apocalyptic, and then moving into theories that inform the post-apocalyptic, including how young adult and children’s literature criticism has responded to these themes so far.
Chapter 2

Doom with a View: Surviving the end times in young adult fiction

This surviving is life beyond life, life more than life, and my discourse is not a discourse of death, but, on the contrary, the affirmation of a living being who prefers living and thus surviving to death, because survival is not simply that which remains but the most intense life possible.

(Derrida, 2007, p. 52)

In the epigraph above, Derrida asserts that life is more than avoiding dying, but involves an intensity of being. This proposition contends that rather than see surviving in life as defined by doom and death, life should be regarded as intensified existence. In psychoanalytic terms, the experiences, encounters and images of death call up the repressed from the unconscious, bringing with them horror, fear and threat. These notions are linked to abjection. For Kristeva, the abject (or non-being) is neither subject nor object. Rather, the abject relies on what is “ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable,” does “not respect borders, divisions, rules” of normality, and invokes repulsion and attraction through its ambiguity as neither subject nor object (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2). Because of its failure to respect binaries, the abject is excluded. Abjection as a concept for understanding marginalisation in fictional representations of adolescence, however, has limitations, primarily because of the inevitable erasure of the abject subject. As discussed in the previous chapter, society traditionally attempts to adhere to dominant binary codes and teleology, and the abject transgress such codes. Apocalypse theory is focussed strongly on the issues of exclusion and inclusion. As such, the apocalyptic can build on the notion of abjection/the abject to provide new readings of exclusion in YA fiction.
In apocalyptic narratives the formation of a character is heavily influenced by an apocalypse, or revelation (often of his/her own death). In his philosophically grounded book, *Seeing Things Hidden* (1999), Bull describes apocalyptic narratives as adhering to a cycle that repeats in a dialectic of social integration. To illustrate this dialectic, Bull draws on examples from the Bible, traditional stories and mythologies, in all of which a character who does not fit into the binary codes of the society is shunned or made taboo. Thus, Jesus embodies a transgression of the binary human and divine, and is consequently sacrificed. Significantly, his return, rather than his exclusion, establishes a new order. In Bull’s example, Jesus is shunned and executed, and his rebirth reveals that he is the son of God, the realisation of a contradiction, and he brings a new “age” (Bull, 1999, pp. 75-81). During a period of chaos, the apocalyptic is two-fold: at a personal level, the subject experiences an apocalypse that shatters previous notions of existence within his/her societal norms; and at a social level, through the shift in norms, a new future is revealed for the whole community (1995, p. 172). The excluded (taboo) subject then returns, and establishes a new equilibrium by integrating into the system and re-instating order. However, Jesus’s sacrifice is presented as the end to all sacrifices, which thereby effectively arrests the dialectic, and yet in Bull’s revised secular apocalyptic cycle the integration of binary-resistant characters is inexhaustible, and embraces the continual appearance of newly undifferentiated subjects. The society experiences concurrent and overlapping cycles of apocalypse, and is thus integral to the dialectic of integration. The subject (the taboo or shunned person), becomes part of the new binary, and is accepted, through a process that relies on the formative experiences of exclusion and revelation. The apocalyptic cycle offers a new interpretation of the process of
subject formation and re-envisions the abject in a way that incorporates death, and exclusion in terms of survival through transformation.

While the apocalyptic is chronological yet repeating in nature, and the post-apocalyptic confuses time and disturbs the chronological understanding of revelation, they are not exclusive. Rather, they run concurrently through the present. More specifically, the apocalyptic “runs” and the post-apocalyptic already “is.” In order to understand this intricate division and concurrence, this chapter initially considers the apocalyptic discourse according to Bull (1999), its relationship to abjection, and how it can function within poststructuralism. The discussion then develops into the post-apocalyptic by attending to destiny, prophecy, the simulacrum, and death (Berger, 1999), and how these important concepts are situated within current young adult and children’s literature scholarship.

The “doom” of abjection can be transformed into an intensity of being that allows for a “view” of the future that can incorporate death and visions of the end. This survival, or way of living that does not see only death as its opposing force, creates possibilities for reinterpreting fictional representations of adolescence, as addressed in this thesis. In accordance with purpose of this chapter of providing a conceptual framework for analysing death and apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic transformations in YA fiction, the following section considers the transformative time and space element of exclusion. In current scholarship, exclusion is predominantly viewed through the psychoanalytic lens of abjection. The following discussion considers abjection as the embarkation point for investigating exclusion in the apocalyptic.
Chapter 2: Doom With a View

Abjection and the Undifferentiated in Young Adult Fiction

Abjection during adolescence features widely in YA fiction and its analyses (McCallum, 1996; Wilson, 2001; McGillis, 2007; Mallan, 2009). Building on Kristeva’s work on abjection, Wilson views the state of abjection as hindering subject development: “abjection is the result, or effect, of some form of catalyst and... the phenomenon functions as a destructive force in subject development because its appearance facilitates the refutation of intersubjective relationships” (2001, p. 25). Stephens also writes of the effect of abjection (expulsion and rejection) on the young adult in fiction as the process by which characters, denounced by dominant cultural norms, must find a way to re-enter the system as an agential adult, or be lost:

Subjective agency is... only possible for the minority of characters who choose nonconformity and alienation. They are abjected by the community and have chosen self-abjection as the only means by which they may possess some element of agency. But theirs is a path fraught with risk, since it can entail exclusion from all intersubjective relationships... [and shows] an interest in abjection as itself a boundary state from which the abjected will either spiral down to social dysfunction, insanity or death or else turn existence around to wrest some form of agency from it... However, the normative assumption is that abjection can (and should?) be overcome. (Stephens, 2003, p. 124)

From Stephens’ perspective it would seem that the outlook is grim for those who do not fit into one of the two acceptable responses to abjection: either death (symbolic or actual) or the fight to “wrest” agency from a dire situation. The time of abjection is teleological in this sense as it is to be “overcome” and endured, with the end point of
achieved agency and adulthood (p. 135). Wilson also arrives at the conclusion that the abject must either re-enter the system of intersubjectivity or be effaced (2001, p. 30). Importantly, both Stephens and Wilson read the state of abjection as negative, and society as unmoving in its decree of “abject” against those subjects. The process of exclusion and re-inclusion, however, can be viewed differently through the apocalyptic by utilising the notion of the undifferentiated. In this way, the process becomes not only one of learning to survive, but of ensuring the survival of the society.

The Undifferentiated

The “undifferentiated” is a key concept in Bull’s apocalyptic; it possesses strong relations to the abject and the liminal state of adolescence. Bull argues that society is based on a binary system: one thing is differentiated by another, and what does not fit into this is labelled the undifferentiated (1999, pp. 88-89). While Bull works within a biblical context on many occasions in his elaborate basis for this argument, he also uses anthropological and linguistic research. Although his anthropologically-informed examples seem to be based on “primitive” cultures, I argue that the same interactions can be seen in our own culture, albeit with different “actors.” The apocalyptic cycle begins with the binary, for example, life and death. One differentiates the other: what is not alive is dead and vice versa. This is disturbed by the undifferentiated, which in this schema is undead. The undead do not fit at either end of the continuum, or anywhere along the middle. The liminality of adolescence also creates an undifferentiated state.

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9 While I subscribe to a poststructuralist, postmodern perspective (such as that described by Derrida, 1974, p. Ivii), the binary here refers Saussure’s structuralist interpretation of the most primitive speech patterns of many cultures, and serves as a base point from which to launch an argument that takes critical thought further than the “other” (Saussure, 1966).
Whereas childhood and adulthood stand as a binary opposition, the liminal do not submit to bifurcation and as such are undifferentiated.

The undifferentiated has defining characteristics beyond exclusion from the binaries that also resonate with the state of adolescence. Bull draws on Giorgio Agamben’s *homo sacer* and bare life (1998) to further explain the undifferentiated. *Homo sacer* is the figure of bare life that exists within a liminal time and space, in the “zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit, in which the very concepts of subjective right and juridical protection no longer [make] any sense” (Agamben, 1998, p. 170). Bare life is a life that is not protected by law or religion. While it is recognised through the process of labelling, it is excluded in that naming, or inclusive exclusion. Although Agamben’s theories are directly aimed at politically analysing the European Jewish Holocaust during WWII, some of his key concepts can be drawn on here to augment Bull’s undifferentiated.

Returning to the historical meaning of “sacred” and it implications in those historical settings can assist in bringing further meaning to present use of the term. To consider the homo sacer as the bandit illustrates how both exist outside of the law. To label someone as “sacred,” in Roman law, or label them as “banned,” in Anglo Saxon law, is to consider them already dead (Agamben, 1998, p. 105). Accordingly, their life is essentially forfeited and they can be “killed by anyone without committing homicide, but never submitted to sanctioned forms of execution” (Agamben, 1998, p. 103). This is the state of “bare life,” when death is constant and ever-present, and one exists on the threshold between life and death (p. 106). The concept of *homer sacer* is pertinent to both the liminality of adolescence in YA fiction and the role of the undifferentiated in the apocalyptic cycle.
Figures of bare life are undifferentiated, and hence apocalyptic manifestations that are still bound to a living existence, such as the clone and the monster. For example, the science fiction novel *The House of the Scorpion* (Farmer, 2002) follows Matt through his discovery that he is a clone created for organ donation to a powerful opium farmer. As discussed further in chapter 3, Matt has no rights as a clone. He is unjustly refused protection by the law, yet he is recognised as part of the society. In YA fiction research, the clone has been analysed in terms of the posthuman, and how “the prospect of a posthuman future represents a dystopian state” (Bradford et. al., p155). The clone is also inherently like Frankenstein’s monster, and can serve as a warning to readers of possible futures when technological advances go unchecked (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 158). Accordingly, the monster as it is defined by Nayar, “linked to ‘monstrum’ meaning omen, portent or sign and ‘monere’ which means ‘to warn’” (2007, p. 11), also provides a post-apocalyptic manifestation in YA fiction (see Cornish, 2006). While the monster is often considered in metaphoric or psychoanalytic terms (Bosmajian, 1995; Kidd, 1996), Nayar’s definition places it as “revelatory and futuristic” and in the realm of the post-apocalyptic. These figures of bare life are still alive, living outside of the binary, and as such break the taboos of acceptability in their societies.

**Taboo, Taboo Breaking, and Sacrifice**

Society traditionally uses certain *coping mechanisms* to deal with these undifferentiated elements by abjecting them, or, as Bull argues, inclusively excluding them through sacrifice or taboo. Falconer (2008) claims quite correctly that children’s and YA fiction has a history of taboo-breaking themes that arise from the culture of the time. Roxborough, too, agrees, claiming that “As long as cultures develop... previously
taboo subjects will serve as the focus of new stories” (Roxborough, 1978, p. 254). Taboo breaking in YA fiction generally falls into two categories: explicit and shocking events, such as incest or torture (Hunt, 1996, p. 6; Tarr, 2002); and comic behaviour in a carnivalesque manner (Mallan, 2005). YA fiction has engaged with most social taboos, such as torture and murder in *Tales of the Otori* (Hearn, 2002), incest in *Bloodtide* (Burgess, 1999), and sexual abuse in *Touching Earth Lightly* (Lanagan, 1996).

Children’s and early or pre-teen fiction contain many examples of taboo breaking on a mild level, as in the scatological humour conveyed in *The Day My Bum Went Psycho* (Griffiths, 2001), to more serious texts concerning child abuse as in *Sarah’s Secret* (Kupfer, 2005). In carnivalesque texts such as film adaptation of *The Cat in The Hat* (Welch, 2003), broken taboo coincides with “comic chaos” (Mallan, 2005, p. 19). The study of taboo is primarily conducted with reference to Freud’s definition as both “sacred” and “unclean” or “forbidden” (1950/2001, p. 18). Bull draws on Kristeva’s reinterpretation of taboo as repressing the abject, where taboo constitutes the “codes [that] are abjection’s purification and repression” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 209). The societal and discoursal implications of failed or rampant taboo can be further illuminated through the apocalyptic.

Taboo elements are abjected from society, avoided and shunned. For example, a sacrificial animal must be handled to be “killed and eaten,” while taboo animals cannot be handled, and “must be avoided” (Bull, 1999, p. 67). According to Bull (1999, p. 66), taboo elements are seen by the community as unclean, and in some sense contaminating and not to be touched. Sacrifice is the alternative for dealing with the undifferentiated. Sacrifice is more openly violent than taboo, while it also constitutes a more ‘inclusive’ option, since the sacrifice is touched, and often consumed, and thus literally digested.
into the binary in this way. Historically, it was most often a sacrifice that was used to re-establish difference by consuming or reverently acknowledging one side of a distinct binary, such as “goodness” or “innocence.” Strengthened difference banished the undifferentiated, as a way of quelling the “forces of primordial chaos, and maintained through the symbolic re-enactment” (p. 77). A well-known example is the use of a sacrifice to appease the gods and end disease or famine (Petropoulou, 2008, p. 4). The uses of sacrifice and taboo are ways of incorporating and assimilating the undifferentiated, to survive by protecting the binary code that holds society together.

While in Kristevan analyses the expulsion of the abject or taboo restabilises the symbolic order (1982, p. 209), the apocalyptic considers what happens to the tabooed element/subject, especially when such expulsions do not successfully re-instate order.

Only items that are not taboo can be sacrificed, as sacrifice requires handling, so that if a taboo item is handled then the handler is also considered to be contaminated and unclean. Contradictorily, when sacrifice is abandoned, its use as a coping mechanism in the community dissolves and “pollution” spreads (Bull, 1999, p. 77). Without the systematic cleansing of the binary system by either expelling or including the taboo item, taboo is spread widely and this pollution makes way for the apocalypse. The sacrifice may be tainted, as discussed later in many of the texts chosen for analysis. Tainting the intended sacrifice through poison, venom, drug or other contamination makes it un-sacrificeable. This act of tainting often coincides with the breaking of taboo. For example, in the *Otori* trilogy (Hearn, 2002-2004), when a girl is offered as a wife to make peace with a rival clan she is essentially sacrificed, yet when her previous sexual relations are uncovered she is considered tainted and her sacrifice is no longer useful.
Such breaking of taboo (in this case a sexual taboo) is often powerful enough to bring about chaos.

**Chaos and Pollution**

According to Bull, social unease or tension “pollutes” the societal structures when sacrifice and taboo are not employed or are unsuccessful in re-instating order (Bull, 1999, p. 67). The breakdown of sacrifice and taboo, both causing and arising from pollution, as coping strategies produce a state of contradiction: “when everything is polluted nothing can be sacrificed, and when nothing is sacrificed everything is polluted” (p. 78). The binary distinctions that imply order, and mechanisms that maintain those binaries, collapse at a multitude of levels. The unresolved dialectical tension between such pollution and the established coping mechanisms brings about social chaos. The apocalyptic embraces this period of flux, and “positively welcomes the intrusion of chaos into the existing cosmos,” rather than lamenting the loss of the previous order (p. 78).

Chaos and pollution coincide with the proliferation of symbols embodying broken taboos (1999, p. 71). These embodiments are the creatures of apocalyptic fiction: the vampire, the clone, the monster, the androgyne or the angel. The appearance of “strange hybrids” is a marker of the apocalyptic culmination in the “maximisation of undifferentiation” (1999, p. 72) These creatures are most often analysed as figures of abjection, which is extended in an apocalyptic analysis that considers their undifferentiation as the promise of change. In traditional interpretations of apocalypse, the maximisation of undifferentiation and chaos precedes the end of the world, or the beginning of the “end-times” (Bull, 1999, p. 71). Conversely, for Bull, chaos and the
appearance (or revelation of) the undifferentiated mark the evolution towards a new equilibrium where the hybrid is the saviour rather than the harbinger of doom. This evolution maps easily onto the teleological fiction of maturation, which (in very broad terms) traditionally positions the young adult protagonist as awkward, excluded and solipsistic, until through a process of chaos-ridden socialisation he/she develops a new sense of self and belonging (McCallum, 1999, p. 68).

_Return to Order_

The apocalyptic resolves itself in the compelling need to find order. To move from chaos to order the undifferentiated needs to be re-introduced. This is not the resolution found in the structuralist mode of thought, whereby the binary absorbs the difference into the pre-existing order (Bull, 1999, p. 55); nor is it found in the psychoanalytic order from maintained expulsion of the abject (James, 2008, p. 139). The period of exclusion that the undifferentiated experiences, while chaos reigns, ends with the return and re-integration of the undifferentiated: “The undifferentiated returns, that which was excluded is re-included, and a new order is created, less exclusive than that which previously existed” (Bull, 1999, p. 79). This is noticeably different from the process of abjection whereby the “abjected character […] struggles back to subjective agency” (Stephens, 2003, p. 123). In the case of the undifferentiated, the change (and survival) occurs on the part of both the individual and the society. The new equilibrium is fundamentally changed in some way, and the new mixture offers new binaries, ready to create new forms of undifferentiation. The dialectic of integration begins with a binary under the proviso that while the binary “may be universal… it is never total,” and the apocalyptic cycle addresses dialectical tension in the texts between the universality
of the binary, and the destabilisation of totality in a poststructuralist theoretical approach to analysing those texts (Bull, 1999, p. 54). The resolution of the apocalyptic cycle engulfs and supersedes the previous order, transforming the subject and society concurrently.

The apocalyptic resists telos despite its linearity, as it repeats itself indefinitely through time. Bull’s poststructural and dialectical interpretation of the apocalyptic differs from the end-of-history models put forward in the Introduction (see Fukuyama, 1989/1992). The integration of the undifferentiated is continuous, encompassing both the “dialectical and revolutionary” (Bull, 1999, pp. 79-81). Contrary to his statement that the dialectic of integration is infinite, Bull suggests that “the logic of apocalyptic seems to culminate in the maximisation of undifferentiation, in the mixture of mixture” (1999, p. 72). Perhaps, he is stating that the mixing itself is infinite, and the logic is the culmination of accepting of that mixture. If so (and as it is appropriated here) the dialectic of integration is linear and progressive, offering transformation without telos or end.

This section has mapped the progression from understanding abjection as a time and space to be overcome, to exclusion as apocalyptic possibility for transformation of both the society and the undifferentiated subject. An apocalyptic analysis “welcomes” chaos and recognises the transformative space it opens up by attending to the maximisation of hybridity and dialectic tensions between the binary and undifferentiation. The following section draws the apocalyptic cycle further into a poststructural framework, incorporating manipulations of time in narrative through prophecy.
Words from Above: Destiny, prophecy, and apocalyptic futures

Bull utilises Christian tradition and texts as both illustration and evidence of the apocalyptic, and in so doing invokes images of utopia (heaven) and dystopia (hell). These images extend to the common usage of the term “apocalypse” in contemporary popular culture to indicate a disaster, for example, the film Armageddon (1998). A connection between secularised and Christian apocalyptic themes is clearly evident in YA fiction that “gestures towards a version of contemporary secular humanism in which Christianity is naturalised as foundational to ideologies and practices” (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 121). The secularised Christ figure is identified in children’s literature by Hillel as the innocent leader who plays the parental role and maintains order through self-sacrifice (2003, p. 63). Yet, the innocence found in the child leader is incongruent with the subject of YA apocalyptic fiction, where the adolescent protagonist is, or has been, expelled from the normative order. The redeemer in YA apocalyptic fiction is tainted, and rather than her or his having to change or overcome this state, it is the society that transforms into a new form of social organization whereby the undifferentiated is accepted into a new equilibrium. The apocalyptic, however, is resistant to religious discourses that support teleology, through the possibilities for transformation and lack of telos, and is supported by the post-structural resistance to totalising systems of knowledge.

The lack of overt religious discourse in much mainstream YA fiction is a further indicator of the shift towards secularisation. According to Bradford et al. the creation of new worlds “shapes visions for improved world orders” (2008, p.2), as opposed to the reinforced status-quo found by Hillel and, as such, provides a mechanism for imagining the world, often after an apocalypse. In texts that deal with fundamentalist religions
directly, the trend is towards rejecting dogma in favour of “human relationships based on trust, equality, and empathy, and advocating plurality of beliefs” (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 121). However, Bradford and colleagues argue that there is still a focus in these texts on a reward (or punishment) after death, “a transcendent reality ‘bigger than us’” or the moralistic secular humanist reliance on choice and free will (pp. 121, 170). This humanist discourse determines purpose retrospectively from an end point (or the expected existence/reward after death) centring on a core self and a set of beliefs. By contrast, the apocalyptic requires not an end point but a transition from exclusion to inclusion that favours plurality, and undifferentiation celebrated ultimately as a mixture of beliefs and a fluid subjectivity (as discussed further in the next chapter).

Whereas fundamentalist religion threatens through the “‘viral’ evil which appears to erupt from within the body of the state” in the form of terrorism (Falconer, 2008, p. 116), the new threats for post-disaster fiction are environmental degradation and the spread of virus (Kumar, 1995; Bradford et al., 2008). Apocalyptic themes work with utopianism/dystopianism in that for the new world to arrive, that the old one must end somehow, usually by some form of disaster (Kumar, 1995, p. 205). In his article, “Post-Disaster Fiction: The Problematics of a Genre,” Stephens analyses the emerging genre of texts “set in a fantasy future which exists some time after the world we know has been destroyed by a cataclysmic disaster, usually caused by human actions” (Stephens, 1992b, p. 126). He therefore deals with issues related to what is commonly understood as post-apocalypse (and the term is often used interchangeably with post-disaster). However, the setting of post-disaster fiction is an imagined future that he states is “apt to be both simplistic and false” (Stephens, 1992b, p. 126). This perspective differs from analyzing discourses surrounding the post-apocalyptic that are potentially contained in
any realist or fantasy text. The apocalyptic does not require a disaster, as in the post-disaster, but only a revelation or an uncovering. However, there are overlapping concerns of the two understandings of the term post-apocalypse (as post-disaster and post-revelation), as both potentially deal with events that are problematic to represent, such as death and the end of the world. The focus on viral, seeping, unseen and (slow) ecological degradation resonates with the poisoned sacrifice in the apocalyptic cycle.

Post-disaster fiction mostly portrays the chaos that results from unchecked proliferation of the taboo or undifferentiated. Such chaos can be seen in the post-disaster text *Bloodtide* (Burgess, 1999), through the broken taboo of incest, and widespread undifferentiation through hybridity.

Post-disaster fiction is often studied alongside post-nuclear fiction in response to the Cold War and nuclear armament, and was the primary focus for post-disaster study prior to 9/11 (Stephens, 1992a; Braithwaite, 2000). The 1980s saw a revival of post-nuclear themes, a time when, Brian observes, nuclear war “pervades our culture now more than at any time since the 1950s” (1998, p. 27). At the time, this prompted questions such as: “Do we shield adolescents from truths we find unpalatable, from concepts of realism that are harsh and depressing?” (Parker, 1992, p. 44), and “Young Adult Books: For Members of the ‘Last Generation’?” implying that YA fiction was heavily concerned with the idea that humanity may be destroyed (Waters, 1985). Post-nuclear fiction may not be quite as popular since the turn of the third millennium, but analyses of post-nuclear texts have changed from focusing on whether or how they

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10 The apocalyptic does not require a disaster, yet it could be argued that most post-disaster texts contain apocalyptic moments.
should be written, to the language used in them as a key to cultural and social issues (Braithwaite, 2000).

Elizabeth Braithwaite’s article, “MIRV, MARV AND FOBS: Language and Significances in a Selection of Post-nuclear Texts for Young Adults” (2000), uses nuclear criticism (Ruthven, 1993) to analyse a selection of YA fiction. Braithwaite’s analysis suggests that frequent use of religious signifiers and eschatological rhetoric (a rhetoric of the end times and final events, such as “Armageddon,” “Trinity,” and “the Great White”), and apocalyptic imagery, with “flashes of lightning and peals of thunder,” encourages “the impression that nuclear power is something over which the individual can have little control and which might even be inevitable” (2000, p. 38). The sense of inevitability concerns the post-apocalyptic, building a tension that permeates the text (whether or not it is post-nuclear). A total nuclear disaster is apocalyptic only if it reveals some truth regarding previous life, at which point all life would be over, forming the “only ultimate and a-symbolic referent, unsymbolizable” (Derrida, 1984, p. 28). The a-symbolic referent is the ultimate conceptual dilemma about “the end,” or more specifically the apocalyptic moment, as it breaks down the signifying system through the revelation regarding the nature of something that was before inconceivable. Braithwaite identifies the particularities of the language used in post-nuclear texts, and indicates a field for further study in this observation:

This fascination with language, names and meaning in post-nuclear fiction also invites readers of the genre to examine how individuals perceive their own realities... It is an interesting irony in post-nuclear fiction that words can be presented at times as lacking any intrinsic, stable meaning, and other times as
having the power to construct a particular view of the world or to promote a particular ideology. (p. 43)

Apocalyptic discourses are evidenced widely in many aspects of Western culture, which necessitates that it is held in language. The textual traces indicate the pervasiveness of the end, and hold the power to construct the “realities” of youth culture. Yet, as Braithwaite explains, that same language is undermined not only in the post-nuclear, but also in poststructuralism and postmodernism as the arbitrary signifier is exposed (this point is expanded upon in chapter 3). Braithwaite’s reflection on the eschatological rhetoric of post-nuclear fiction identifies an area for research that this study addresses. The move away from post-nuclear fiction towards terrorism and other “viral” threats in YA fiction indicates a cultural shift that requires new analytic approaches that encompass the apocalyptic in post-nuclear worlds.

Post-disaster and post-nuclear texts generally fall under the umbrella term of utopian and dystopian fiction. Sands-O’Connor argues that utopian and dystopian fictions do not “present child readers with much in the way of workable alternatives” and suggests that “perhaps we are better off with the dystopias we know... [and] only glimpses of heaven” (2003, p. 191). By contrast, research undertaken by Bradford et. al. has found utopian children’s and YA fiction can become a site for “transformative possibilities” (2008, p. 11). In their comprehensive study, these writers conclude that “children’s texts refuse to give in to despair and nihilism.” Furthermore, their analytical approach “refused to accept the texts at face value,” and in so doing, they uncover the “potential for transformation both within and outside of the text” (p. 185). Despair and nihilism are perhaps as dangerous as the resigned optimism that Derrida sees in Fukuyama. Nihilism is essentially giving up. Sands-O’Connor’s belief that there is no
hope seems to align with this position; and so too Fukuyama in his belief that we have “won” and there is nothing else to achieve or strive for. Conversely, transformative utopian/dystopian fiction does not imply a simplistic journey into the future. Rather, it proposes the view that societies have the ability to engage critically with discourses.

The children and young adults depicted in utopian and dystopian fictions often are constructed as breaking with the adult generations and making the decisions that will (hopefully) save the world, taking “responsibility for the future... to overcome the problems the adult generation has created” (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 182). The concept of “transformative utopianism” absorbs these current discourses and transforms them into something that provides opportunities for creating a new and adaptable experience of selfhood with ability to not only act in the world but also to shape that world (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 184). As transformative utopianism is both a narrative and theoretical possibility, it can overlap with the post-apocalyptic that engages with how the end appears now, and affects the decision-making on how to go on into the future, rather than what that future will be. The act of textual analysis (as performed in this thesis) is not to be misread as an exercise in “‘textual’ games.” Such a game would, as Norris states, participate in the “rhetoric of crisis” in a way that serves to strengthen that rhetoric rather than engage with it (1995, p. 247). Instead, the goal of this study is to understand and explicate the need for a rhetoric of the end, and to “comprehend that rhetoric” (p. 247) in terms of transformative possibilities.

As discussed in chapter 1, the post-apocalypse takes place after the prophecy, after the vision of the end, but not necessarily after the event. For example, an apocalypse may
reveal nuclear capability (which is undoubtedly concerned with the end of the world): and we then live with the knowledge that we can completely destroy ourselves. This also furthers the secularisation of theme, the end of the world being brought about by human action, rather than by divine intervention. In accordance with this secular argument, the link between prophecy and the word of a god is broken, and prophecy instead becomes any foreshadowing of a possible future. For Bull, when a future is predicted, imagined or foretold, it is irrevocably brought into the mind and becomes a “hidden” part of the makeup of cultural subjectivities and possible futures. Being hidden also requires being partially known: “for something unexperienced or unknown hiding involves becoming more knowable… coming into hiding” (Bull, 1999, p. 26). “Coming into hiding” is in a sense a prophecy; after it, society can no longer continue as if that possible future were unknown. We cannot return to the unknown until what is hidden becomes completely forgotten. An apocalypse is the kernel of knowability, or possibility, which brings the end into hiding. We have no knowledge, nor can we have, of the end of the world outside of what occurs in narratives and images. A total disaster that wipes out life is beyond our comprehension, but not beyond our imagination. The sense that the end of the world is near stalks Western culture like a shadowy figure from the future. An apocalypse is a small confirmation that the inconceivable is possible. And therefore also, at some point, it pushes our perception to what was previously only imagined, so that apocalyptic uncovering is followed by conceivable post-apocalyptic existence.

Berger describes the post-apocalyptic that follows prophecy and how prophecy functions as the apocalypse itself:
Once the prophetic words have been uttered, the event may as well have occurred, for it must occur. In the mind of the believer, it has occurred. He has seen it and described it... Prophecy, then, not cataclysm, is literally the apocalypse. Everything that follows the revelation is post-apocalyptic. (Berger, 1999, p. 138)

Prophecy and the post-apocalyptic are intricately linked, as the utterance itself is the apocalypse, revealing the possible future and irrevocably changing the present. The invocation of the future means that it “has happened, is happening” (p. 32). This brings the vision of the future to bear on the present, and that revelation irrevocably uncovers knowledge of a new (notional) existence in the present and potential future. As that knowledge cannot become un-known, the apocalypse permeates the present. To give an example of this, we can consider how the media reports of 9/11, tsunamis and raging fires may disturb but nevertheless create a feeling of déjà vu – that we have seen it before – reproduced over and over in popular cultural films and texts. The actual event of part of New York being reduced to rubble when the Twin Towers fell cannot be viewed, read or remembered for many people who did not experience it without the filmic representations of similar disasters being replayed in our minds. According to Baudrillard, in “The Anorexic Ruins” (1989), the repeated vision of the end in mass media becomes catastrophic itself. As Baudrillard states, regarding a film of post-nuclear events, “this film itself is our catastrophe. It does not represent our catastrophe… it says that the catastrophe is already there, that it has already occurred” (1989, p. 37). In essence, for Baudrillard society is already in a state of “post-apocalypse,” – so that the film functions as a prophecy or portent. This is particularly pertinent in a world under threat of global terrorism, pandemics and natural disaster in a way that has not been seen
as graphically before, nor on such a large scale, due to rapid distribution of images and information through global communications technologies (Berger, 1999, p. 42). In contemporary culture, then, there has been an influx of prophetic visions of the end of the world through dystopian / post-disaster film and literature, and YA fiction has been a significant contributor. John Marsden’s series, beginning with *Tomorrow, When the War Began* (1993, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2001), expresses in its very title the post-apocalyptic dialectic between future and present, and explores through a group of young adults an immediate future that follows invasion from an unknown force. Likewise, *Children of Morwenna* (H. Smith, 2002) is set in a community rebuilt after a devastating tsunami. Post-apocalyptic discourse and sentiment are evident in other genres, such as the realist text *Killing Aurora*, which contains an overt intertextual reference to Baudrillard’s argument above that there is “no future” since the advent of the bomb (Barnes, 1999, p. 7).

As this section has argued, the boundaries between the apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic are not clear and defined, but, rather, overlap and co-exist. Utopian and dystopian fictions provide a vision of possible futures, and the post-apocalyptic brings that imagining to effect in the present. Cultural products such as those mentioned above, are apocalyptic as they reveal possible and/or imagined futures. Living with and after these visions is living post-apocalyptically. The following section builds the connections between the post-apocalyptic and representation. By attending to the ways in which postmodernism has disrupted notions of time and space in literature, and Baudrillard’s notion of simulation, I develop a way for reading the post-apocalyptic in fiction. Any form of survival in contemporary society must tackle the play of signs, and to use that play in order to survive marks the progressive nature of post-apocalyptic YA fiction.
Surfaces: Truth and the simulacrum in the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic

As the preceding discussion has argued, the apocalyptic narrative model and the post-apocalyptic use of prophecy are easily found in YA fiction. The changes to time and space that occur in the use of prophecy disturb and extend the apocalyptic into the post-apocalyptic. Surviving the apocalyptic often requires the undifferentiated young adult to establish a new and more inclusive social order. Analysing the survival of prophetic visions of the future requires an understanding of language and representation, which this section undertakes to do in terms of the simulacrum.

Adult fiction and literary criticism have explored the post-apocalyptic in texts such as Don DeLillo’s *White Noise* (DeLillo, 1985) (Heffernan, 1995; Berger, 1999). YA fiction has also responded to the post-apocalyptic in different ways. As mentioned above, this has been most markedly undertaken in *Killing Aurora* (Barnes, 1999) with its direct references to critical theorists, and through its problematising of representation. Other YA fiction has been more subtle, by having post-apocalyptic currents running through their narratives. Broad fantasy genres such as gothic, magic realism, science fiction and fantasy realism offer the most compelling examples, as the analysis chapters demonstrate. To analyse this shift to the post-apocalyptic, the apocalyptic must undergo a revision by taking into account postmodern concepts of time and space, and the simulacrum; these concepts bring out the post-apocalyptic in YA fiction.

The apocalyptic is bound by chronology: life before and after the revelation. However, the post-apocalyptic is non-linear and pervasive. The apocalyptic alone does

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11 *Killing Aurora* repeatedly includes advertising propaganda (pp. 2, 12, 21, 34) and also questions the possibility of accuracy in the reporting of events in news media (p. 14).
not provide a way to integrate the dialectic tensions between time and space, life and death, that are apparent in some YA fiction. For example, knowledge of the future (through prophecy) becomes part of the present in *The Oracle* (Fisher, 2003) and *Rat and the Raven* (Greenwood, 2005). Both of these texts, as demonstrated in chapter 6, question prophecy by questioning the act of representation itself. While such fiction lends itself to Bull’s analytic framework, and appears to be consistent with poststructuralist precepts through the negation of binaries, the apocalyptic cycle is disturbed by the placement of the revelation early in the narrative. The following discussion considers the socio-cultural environment from which the post-apocalyptic arises from. It then discusses theories of the post-apocalyptic and how YA literature and scholarship have responded to this new textual environment.

The post-apocalyptic fits within postmodernity (as a political and historical period) and accords with the scepticism of postmodernism, with respect to metanarratives and universal truths. One aspect of postmodernity identified by Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) is an “incredulity with the metanarratives” that he believes is central to the current era (p. xxiv). A metanarrative, or totalising system of knowledge (as discussed in the Introduction), appears to present the “Truth”: a system of knowledge and/or belief that provides totalities with both rules and punishments to structure society and knowledge. Examples such as the Christian Bible, Marx’s *Manifesto*, capitalism and science all provide systems of knowledge that lay claim to “all the answers.” By setting up “laws” regarding what is True, the metanarrative then also determines who has broken them. However, as Lyotard asks, “What I say is true because I prove that it is – but what proof is there that my proof is true?” (p. 24). His question challenges the legitimization of knowledge through the construction of self-totalising
systems. Incredulity towards these totalising systems is, according to Lyotard, the postmodern condition. Postmodern cultural products, then, use the narrative form to subvert the idea of a metanarrative.

Incredulity towards metanarratives is perhaps a reaction to what had previously been regarded (and in many cases, still is regarded) as the truth of language, or the ability for language to be natural and capable of signifying the object. Derrida questions the precept that language can “reflect or mirror things by natural resemblance,” and argues that the sign does not possess a natural resemblance to the world. In an attempt to represent the object (referent), the word as it is uttered in the mind (the signifier) never adequately refers to the thing (the signified), as “there is not a single signified that escapes… the play of signifying references that constitute language” (1974, pp. 7-11). As such, the focus of the postmodern is on what Derrida describes as the “play” between language and the world it attempts to signify. The deconstruction of truth as the play of language questions and de-legitimises metanarratives.12

Kneale notes that postmodernity questions the possibility of an ultimate signified, and “subverts those elements [that] suggest the existence of transcendent meaning” (1996, p. 22). It is this transcendent meaning that is challenged in some postmodern YA texts. An overt example of a text that undermines its own metanarratives, or totalities, can be seen in *The Chocolate War* (1978), in which Cormier’s use of postmodernist narrative structure and techniques questions totalising views of childhood, and exposes the postmodern condition through the power and bullying of the teachers and the inability of the young protagonist (Jerry) to effect

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12 This discussion of the sign straddles the postmodern and the poststructural, discussed more fully in chapter 3.
change in the oppressive Catholic boys’ school setting. Postmodern picture books often depict an overt and clear engagement with the precepts of postmodernity by utilising visual and narrative metafictive techniques (Allan, 2006). For example, in *The Three Pigs* (Weisner, 2001), the pigs appear to fly off their page into other fairytales. Moreover, the pigs themselves are all aware that they are characters constructed within a piece of fiction. The postmodern condition is also apparent in the thematic concerns in YA fiction that questions totalising systems and truth within the narrative world (Lawrence-Pietroni, 1996, p. 36). This subjective diffusion of multiple truths, which are not part of a totalitarian or teleological whole, is what the postmodern and the post-apocalyptic engage with. Questioning truth has the further effect of questioning prophecy, as prophetic words purportedly originate from a god or godly entity.

Baudrillard’s notion of the simulacrum provides a way of explaining apocalypse in a postmodern context. Simulation refers to a situation in which the real is re-presented so many times that the representation has become more real than “reality” (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 152). The simulacrum is essential to the treatment of truth and reality in post-apocalyptic YA fiction through postmodern society’s distrust of notions of a centre or attainable referent in language, and the unveiled “truth” of apocalypse. Baudrillard’s influential essay, *Simulations* (1983), argues that simulation is the only possibility in a postmodern world. Baudrillard appropriates the term “simulacrum” to serve as a pervasive societal phenomenon: “the simulacrum is never what hides the truth – it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true” (Baudrillard, 1994b, p. 2). We are at present in such a constant state of re-presentation that simulation now precedes the simulated. Baudrillard names this the “precession of simulacra” (Baudrillard, 1994b, p. 2, emphasis in original). For example, if a person stands in a field
looking at mountains and exclaims, “Oh, it’s as pretty as a picture,” we may understand from the statement that the landscape has been re-presented through paintings so often that the original referent (landscape) has become a mere signifier (of the painting). In terms of the YA fiction analysed in this thesis, the simulacrum is presented in a variety of ways, from the copy of a human (clone), to the sense of “real” death as televised death.

The copy thus has become more real than the real, and so ceases to be a copy, becoming instead the “hyperreal” (Baudrillard, 1994b, p. 12), which is the most extreme version of the simulacrum. There is, however, often a negative connotation attached. For example, M. T. Anderson’s *Feed* (2003) is set on a futuristic Earth where chips are inserted into people’s brains, permanently connecting them to a version of the Internet called the “Feed.” What was created to represent the lived experience now determines how those lives are lived, causing a “feedback” (p. 292). The hyperreal extends to the physical environment: for example, there are fields of filet mignon that provide food; this imitation is now the “original,” and cows a forgotten history (p. 158). This novel’s incorporation of simulacra allows a reading of Baudrillard’s theory at work in YA fiction, especially his notion of the hyperreal.

Baudrillard separates the simulacrum into four phases: (i) “it is the reflection of a basic reality;” (ii) “it masks and perverts a basic reality;” (iii) “it masks the absence of a basic reality;” and (iv) “it bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum” (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 11). The first phase is problematic in a literary and postmodern framework. In a deconstructive approach, the slippery nature of the signifier would challenge any claims of “reflection.” This point is taken up in chapter 3, where I argue that signification is always caught in deferral and difference. The second phase is,
for Baudrillard, an “evil appearance,” perhaps comparable to a lie. The example of
Disneyland is often used to illustrate the third phase: it “is presented as imaginary in
order to make us believe that the rest [of America] is real” (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 12).
The fourth order, the hyperreal, is the “triumph of the virtual over the real” (Baudrillard,
1995, p. 50): the simulation is so convincing that we no longer search for any truth
behind it, or perhaps do not believe that there is a truth to be found. In Feed, for
instance, Titus exists happily in his simulated world (reflecting a fourth order
simulacrum), and his bliss contrasts with the social outcast Violet, who is depressed over
the decaying natural world, and sees human existence as belonging to the second order
of the simulacrum (Anderson, 2003, p. 231). The disparity in experience for Titus and
Violet draws attention to how living with simulacra in a postmodern world goes largely
unnoticed. Experience is now more of a narrated future history. The photographic
exhibition of the Arctic, entitled Ice Blink (Nobel, 2008), utilises this concept with great
clarity.

Nobel’s photographs of the Arctic represent what people would expect the Arctic to
be (penguins, ice shelves, and beauty). Set in the artificial surrounds of museum
dioramas, zoo enclosures and aquariums, Ice Blink highlights the preconceived sought-
after compositions and subjects that photographs of the Arctic have become. Nobel
implies that the actual Arctic can no longer be seen without seeing its re-presentations,
so that the lived experience has been rendered secondary to its future remembrance. The
importance of the simulacrum and inaccessibility of the real for the post-apocalyptic is
the lack of “truth.” The photographs are not a representation of a true or “real”
landscape, but instead highlight the inability to represent any true landscape in a
postmodern world because the act of viewing has changed alongside what is viewed.
Likewise, the apocalyptic revelation is supposed to unveil a truth about the world, yet the postmodern post-apocalyptic merely discloses that there is no truth. It also shows how the link between the simulated and the real has no possible bifurcation, creating endless opportunities for transformation, as well as collapsing time and space. An apocalypse requires that something be revealed, irrevocably changing what came before and what comes after with its uncovering; the post-apocalyptic already and always exists, and a revelation merely uncovers that there is nothing left to reveal that is not already known: “there can be no unveiling because there is nothing under the surface” (Berger, 1999, p. 9). The postmodern post-apocalypse is contradictory and endless, and yet rather than resulting in a circular state, in which there is no new knowledge or new experience, it offers a space and (timeless) time that are not tied to telos, providing opportunities for transformation.

The presence of the end in post-apocalyptic texts is a change in the perception of time, namely, that the prophesied/destined end and the present can co-exist. Baudrillard sees the end of the world from a more temporal perspective, as he posits that the bomb is now “temporal” and it “immobilizes things in eerie retrogression” (Baudrillard, 1989, pp. 34-35). In a Baudrillardian world, the anticipation felt before the event/explosion would be an after effect of the temporal nature of the nuclear bomb. Baudrillard’s contribution to an understanding of postmodernism deals with representation in general, and also with death and the end, bringing the theoretical strands of the apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic, and postmodern together: “the post-apocalypse of the postmodern is Baudrillardian simulation” (Berger, 1999, p. 8).

The postmodern play on time is discussed in Ursula Heise’s *Chronochisms: Time narrative and postmodernism* (1997). Drawing on Heise’s work, Allan observes that
time is a construct, and one that changes in a postmodern world with a “development of and demand for a culture of instantaneity and simultaneity” (Allan, 2006, p. 81). The collapse of time into the present moment creates texts that see time as “an aspect of the referential illusion” (Allan, 2006, p. 77). For example, the future and the past, as presented in Anthony Browne’s picture book *Voices in the Park* (1998), span a generation, while both times seem to occur contradictorily in one afternoon. For Benjamin, time, or history, has become “vertical,” rather than “horizontal” or linear (Bull, 1999, p. 161). The post-apocalyptic is now, as the future and the past *are* present. Either the past is being remembered in the present (and thus reconstructed), or the future is foreseen in the present where “the sense of absolute newness merges with a sense that everything has happened already” (1999, p. 217). Non-linear time takes on a new significance when considering death, the end of the world, or possible mass destruction. Browne’s postmodern picture book disturbs a chronological understanding of time that relies on an unknown future, and in which a memory is always of a past event.

Taking the notion of vertical time further, the possibility of the end of the world has meaning only in the present time. With regard to possible nuclear fallout, Baudrillard states that the “explosion has already occurred” through the apocalyptic unveiling of potential self-destruction (1989, p. 34). According to this line of thought, there is no future, the explosion is now, in an “extended present.” Baudrillard claims that “this is the end of linearity” (1994a, p. 10), which he sees as freeing humankind from the future as a destination (teleology), and at the personal level as “eluding our own deaths” by the retroaction of events (p. 11). Accordingly, we can now live “beyond the end, not allowing time to take place” (p. 12). This leap in philosophical thought, one can argue, has not been fully embraced by either academia or society, and yet it resonates with
postmodern culture, and the experience of modern living. The post-apocalyptic draws on this sense of the end and its paradoxical nature. Heise asserts that denying endings paradoxically reinforces their importance, and recognises the hyperbolic tendencies of post-historians (1997, pp. 30-31). In this way, the post-apocalyptic does not deny endings, apocalypses or the importance of death. Rather, it embraces and lifts these concepts into a new way of reading. Baudrillard’s claim that we are “eluding” death is not upheld in YA fiction. Instead, death is challenged in texts that represent the survival of adolescence through the experience of death as apocalypse and of life as post-apocalypse, that is, after/with death. This leads to death as the third apocalypse for the focus of this study.

**Death and The End in The Post-Apocalyptic**

Death and the end are central notions to this study. This section considers the significance of death and the end to the post-apocalyptic. The discussion contextualises previous studies in children’s literature research on death as a way of demonstrating how death has been treated theoretically, up to now. In the light of the previous discussion on prophecy and destiny, the actuality of death can be read as every person’s prophesied end. In my examination of taboo earlier in this chapter, I explained how taboo elements must be abjected from society through sacrifice. The expulsion of taboo is also the expulsion of death, as both the corpse and the returned dead threaten equilibrium (James, 2008, p. 27). A failure to expel the dead, according to James, precipitates the appearance of monsters that seem to “articulate the presence of impurities” (p. 27). The corpse functions as taboo, but also as a place of expulsion and apocalypse in YA fiction. Experiences of death can be read through the monstrous, as an expression of non-linear
time, that brings the future in the form of life-after-death into the present (Baudrillard, 1989; Heise, 1997; Allan, 2006; Sipe & Pantaleo, 2008).

In young adult fantasy fiction containing post-apocalyptic discourses, the apocalypse of death often fails to shatter the subject and deny agency. Rather, experiences of, and with, death offer opportunities to strengthen the experience of self, and to support agency. The contextualisation of death within YA fiction challenges interpretations of revenants used in adult post-apocalypse literary criticism as merely psychological “scars” (Berger, 1999, p. 206). Narratives provide the opportunity for characters to live through exposure to death (through prophecy and revelation of death), and also to actually live after death (for example, as a vampire). In *The Oracle* (Farmer, 2002) the protagonist speaks to a god: “‘Am I dead then?’ *No, But you are not alive either*” (p. 318); and this undifferentiated space (neither life nor death) provides the third apocalypse for this research, as indicated in chapter 1 and above. The frameworks for analysing post-apocalyptic adult fiction, as used by Heffernan (1995), cannot be applied satisfactorily to the distinctive treatment of the post-apocalyptic in YA fiction. This section explains why and offers a way forward in proposing a post-apocalyptic framework that attends to the specific concerns of YA fiction.

Literary criticism in the field of children’s and young adult literature is beginning to respond to these unacknowledged discourses of the post-apocalyptic in a general way. For the most part, these responses are encompassed within studies of post-disaster, utopia/dystopia, and death. James (2008), Mallan (2002) and Trites (2000) examine death as a discourse that requires more than analysis in terms of trauma and healing in

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13 For example, Berger’s analysis of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* centres on the appearance of Beloved’s ghost as a psychological scar made manifest. The ghost is an embodiment of the social traumas suffered by African American peoples (Berger, 1999, p. 198).
adolescent literature. While these critics have attended to aspects of the discourses of the post-apocalyptic in some way, they have not done so explicitly. Previously, research on death as an act of violence or a need to grieve the loss of a loved one dominated critical responses to death in YA fiction (as in De Minco, 1995), and is described aptly by James as “preoccupied with death in a bibliographic or thematic sense, and largely focused on bibliotherapy” (James, 2008, p. 3). The recent research on discourses of death and gender in YA fiction (Mallan, 2002; James, 2008) suggests the study of representations of death provides “an unusually clear opportunity to understand some of the ways in which meaning is created and shared within a society” (2008, p. 2). I widen this research by engaging with death as a discursive tool utilising theories of the post-apocalyptic. This research will be focused on reading the space of death as indicative of a cultural need to engage with death and transgressions of the boundaries of life and death. As discourses of the post-apocalyptic are evident in YA fiction, it is important to develop a specific and tailored theoretical approach.

Despite the fluid boundaries between children’s and YA fiction, one theme that is not treated equally for each target audience is awareness of mortality (Trites, 2000; Falconer, 2008). In YA fiction, death is “an experience that adolescents understand as a finality,” whereas in a children’s text, death is “part of the cycle” (Trites, 2000, p. 118). Kerry Mallan notes that the representations of death (and of the living dead) in YA fiction have been on the increase since the 1970s, as a result of “removing death as a taboo of children’s literature” (Mallan, 2002, p. 176). While concurring with Mallan’s observation regarding YA fiction, Kathryn James also notes that the variety of representations of death in YA fiction is wide compared to those found in children’s fiction (2008, p. 3). Most importantly, in terms of this thesis, Mallan and James see
death in YA fiction as more than the need to familiarise the reader with the concept of mortality. Both consider the discursive function of death, gender and sexuality in YA fiction, and the inherent function of power within those discourses (Mallan, 2002, p. 175; James, 2008, p. 3).

While this study does not consider death in itself (for example, the politics of death, gender, violence or emotional trauma), the latter is a foundational concept. Primarily, I am concerned with the notion of being dead, or how the thought/prophesy of a future death affects life. For the texts studied in this thesis, death is a state in language, and an “end.” To describe death as a state in language refers to both the cessation of signification in dying, but also to the inability to speak/write death (Goodwin & Bronfen, 1993, p. 4). Death and “the end” are inextricably linked as they are almost slippages of the same meaning: “for every subject the end of his world is always the end of the world” (Morin, 1989). Without the subject there is no utterance, and without the world there is no referent for the subject to signify with that utterance. Derrida states that “catastrophe occurs with every individual death; there is no common measure adequate to persuade me that a personal mourning is less serious than a nuclear war” (Derrida, 1984, p. 28). With this in mind, death and the end are ultimately signifiers for the same referent: the cessation of the signification system, or the “destruction of the archive” (Derrida, 1984, p. 28), whether on a personal level (the death of the signifying subjectivity) or a societal one (‘death’ of communication through signification). The archive, according to Derrida, is the cumulative work of the human race. There is also the personal archive, consisting of the memories of that person. In a family it is the archive of “signature, name, heritage, image, grief” (1984, p. 28) that constitutes that family’s combined utterance to the world. The loss of this is tantamount
to a death. While life after the end of the world falls into the remit of utopian and dystopian studies, life after (or in) death is central to the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic.

Scholars have long debated representations of death, the presence of death in living society, and death culture. In the Victorian period, people were instructed on “a good time to die,” and how to have a good death (Barley, 1995, p. 143; Noys, 2005, p. 2). The twentieth century, however, has brought with it an increased exposure to death as it is seen through media: mass death that can be reported to world, including the Jewish Holocaust, the ’flu epidemic following, and massacres in Rwanda and other countries. These events resulted in a new experience of death: death whose sheer scale made mourning impossible, and, further to this, a sense that death may now be “a vast and anonymous operation carried out upon us” (Noys, 2005, p. 13). Indeed, Noys argues, we are “always exposed to mass anonymous death” in contemporary society, which results in the danger of believing “whatever we have done or might do in life is of no significance,” rendering us no more than a statistic in both life and death (2005, p. 13). All we are left with is the opportunity to become “someone who is capable of accepting the threat of death and living with it” (2005, pp. 14-16). Noys also argues that the one area scholars have avoided the most in death studies is the “profane banality of death” (2005, p. 149). This banality can be seen in the way that death is caught in its own endless representation, creating a distance that prevents reaching “actual death,” and in the over-politicising of death that reaches the point where exposure through the over-representation of death (death culture) is not fully recognised.

In psychoanalytic terms, death is the return to the Real; the journey through the symbolic has ended and the subject/object is no longer able to construct the world
through his/her consciousness; even in religious realms the subject moves on, and the object (the body) is memorialised yet static (Falconer, 2008, p. 116). This loss of the subject, for those left behind, has prompted the need to memorialise through tombs, pyramids, head stones or newspaper obituaries (Belsey, 2005, p. 64). The inscription on a tombstone is a symbolic remembrance of “a subject in culture”: the subject is given a way to thereby remain within language in the current world. Where remembrance previously belonged solely within the remit of religion, it is now dispersed, and “contemporary secular individuals,[sic] use media and technology to keep our ‘souls’ or subjectivity alive, acts that ultimately objectify us” (Hardin, 2002, p. 41). In Derrida’s terms, the slippage of the signifier does not allow the inscription to memorialise the subject in any accurate way, and can only represent the existence of the actual inscription itself; rather than objectifying the dead, the memorial inscriptions are caught in the play of signs.

The slippage of the signifier “death” returns us to Baudrillard’s phases of the simulacrum, or sign, which can be used to analyse images of death that are becoming more real than actually death. Death as simulacra reduces its apocalyptic impact and capacity to reveal any form of truth, and instead becomes the post-apocalyptic empty revelation: “even the apocalypse is domesticated; catastrophe happens elsewhere and is exposed, framed, and contained by the television set and tabloids” (Heffernan, 1995, p. 179). It becomes impossible to really see death on a massive, social scale: such events as the Asian tsunamis on Boxing Day 2004, the terrorist attacks in the USA on September 11, 2001, and Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, 2005, as they are “produced” to the rest of the world as cultural products via television, film, newspapers and fiction. Hardin (2002) posits that “as if ‘real’ televised death were not enough … the media creates a
scenario in which death does not exist unless it appears on television; essentially, the only ‘real death’ is that which is televised” (p. 23). This statement encapsulates how a sign (such as death) can move through Baudrillard’s phases, until it loses touch with its referent. Death as a signifier should essentially be coupled with a signified physical cessation of life, but in addition to the many connotations of “death,” it is constantly re-presented in the media, so much so that it becomes the re-presentation, the sign that has become so far removed from its referent that it is “pure simulacrum” (of the fourth order). Once these pure simulacra take hold, the original referent is lost to its copy for all the survivors, and the signified becomes the signifier (Hardin, 2002, p. 22). Yet the death of particularly famous people, and perhaps even large-scale atrocities, serve “as a fixed point in the lives of the members of that culture which is eternally fixed in time and can be repeated ad infinitum. Death allows for perpetual ‘life’” (Hardin, 2002, p. 43). The simulacra of death are the key to life after death in a postmodern society; they provide the consolation of life after death that secular society is denied, by letting the dead in through a new form of ritual remembrance that takes the place of religiously governed interactions with death (Berger, 1999, p. 217).

Despite the possibility of living after death that fiction offers, writing the moment of death is still problematic. James Berger refers to the attempt to write death as “circumscription,” or “writing around” (1999, p. 202). Circumscription is to take half steps towards adequately describing death in words, only to be always half a step away. It is not possible to describe death adequately, for as Steiner argues, “death has another

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14 However, it must be acknowledged that this is not a clear and stable dichotomy: it is a fluid categorization for the subject to grapple with in the postmodern view of life. When a person’s close loved one dies, death will obviously have a new meaning that is far removed from a popular media-generated one. However, it could be argued (but is not strictly in the remit of this study), that even in these personal moments, the culturally sanctioned process of mourning has a role in the internal dialogue of the mourner.
language” (1969, p. 114). Therefore, death must be circumscribed because its referent is infinite. Language is how we understand our world, it is our logos. However, death eludes this system, as the signifier “death” has an “incessantly receding signified” (Goodwin & Bronfen, 1993, p. 4). The infinitude of death opposes the finitude of language. Hegel defines the finite clearly as:

The nominal explanation of calling a thing finite is that it has an end, that it exists up to a certain point only, where it comes into contact with, and is limited by its other. The finite therefore subsists in reference to its other, which is negation and presents itself as its limit. (in Bull, 1999, p. 102)

Hence, what is infinite always excludes the finite – which then, paradoxically, becomes a limit to infinity. Likewise, death (or, more specifically, “after-death”) provides infinite possibilities, and yet it is always limited by life. The appearance of revenants, spectres or the living-dead is perhaps a way to “tame” the infinite, by binding it to a finite existence. In occupying a liminal space, these figures provide a source of analysis that is taken up in chapter 6. The study of death never includes death itself, as it is always unknown, so that as Noys says, “we are left with no real access to death at all” (Noys, 2005, p. 149).

One area in which YA fiction has become increasingly concerned is the manifestation of the undifferentiated as spectres, vampires and other liminal beings that transgress the bifurcation of life and death (De Marco, 1997; Grossman, 2001). Since Dracula (Stoker, 1994/1897), the vampire has undergone a makeover, evolving, in the present, into the creatures in the popular television series Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Billson, 2005) and the phenomenally popular young adult novel Twilight (Meyer, 2005). These new-look vampires are attractive, savvy youths who on the whole resist (or
are forced to resist) the urge to drink human blood, and instead drink synthetic or animal blood. They do, however, embody life after death, and undergo a transformation through an interaction with death. A vampire endures the experience of death, only to “wake up” retaining a sense of self from its previous life. Yet, his/her subjectivity is limited and their actions are governed by his/her need for blood. Recent and popular vampires, such as Edward in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) and Angel in *Buffy* (Billson, 2005), fight to maintain their hold on an agential subjectivity by resisting the urge to kill, and take action to quench their thirst without causing harm to humans. This change in cultural representations of the vampire indicates an attempt to control the infinity of death and a willingness to engage with death as a positive experience (in a sense).

In her analysis of death and gender/sexuality, Kathryn James refers to the liminal undead as questioning “what it is to be mortal, but can also point to deep-seated cultural anxieties regarding death and difference” (2008, pp. 20-21). James asserts, utilising Kristeva’s theory of the corpse as abject, that the appearance of the undead can “stand for a crisis of subjectivity; function to demonise those who threaten the stability of the cultural order; point to that which must be defeated in order for ideals and social cohesion to be maintained; or work to challenge the notion of death’s permanence” (p. 21). In terms of post-apocalyptic, it is this questioning of death’s permanence that is explored. The vampires in *Twilight* and *Buffy* often appear as transcended beings, more akin to angels.

Unlike the vampire, the angel has not endured death and as such is more a “transmortal” being. Berger describes the figure of the angel as also being beyond history, which allows the people touched by angels to also “step outside” history, unlike the ghost which is seen more as a returning of the dead as fixed in a moment of history
(1999, p. 53). In this way, angels enable transcendence from telos, which is similar to the vampire, who also escapes the telos of a life that ends with death. These liminal beings are connected to each other through their post-apocalyptic existence, that is, and existence after prophecy, yet not necessarily after death. The next chapter explores these post-mortal beings more fully, in terms of their function within the narrative, together with the analytical methods which enable the post-apocalyptic to be read through these character types.

The reasons for the resurgence in the popularity of the vampire in popular culture are open to speculation. However, the more pertinent issue for this study is how to theorise death in the post-apocalyptic. Earlier in this chapter I discussed how Agamben’s *homo sacer* is useful in the apocalyptic cycle. However, it falls short as an analytical tool for a postmodern, post-apocalyptic study of death. Noys believes Agamben does not consider what our “relation to death [is] in a culture where even death has become simulated” (Noys, 2005, p. 118). Noys also takes issue with Baudrillard’s notion of simulation for denying actual (politically governed) death, and argues that Baudrillard “offers no real explanation for why death comes to invade our whole culture” (p. 26). I argue that there is a place for both theoretical positions. James also asserts that Baudrillard’s notion of the simulacrum of death “helps to divide and circulate power in culture because power is established over those divisions where dissolution of unity and between life and death... occurs” and thus encompasses power in or over death (2008, p. 14). While bare life may account for agency, or lack of agency, in contemporary society, the simulacra of death account for the pervasiveness of discourses of the post-apocalyptic in everyday life, and the exposure to, and experience of, death in postmodern worlds.
Apocalypse and death are intertwined as both represent the end of life as it is known. While individuals may engage with discourses of death-as-apocalypse, and yet continue with their lives, like Rose and Doctor Who in the Epilogue, they are irrevocably changed through the knowledge, or information, of death. As this discussion has illustrated, death is often anonymous and occurs on a mass scale; it is also made manifest in the present by every prophecy or envisioning in media and narrative (Noys, 2005, p. 14). Arising from this exposure to death in postmodern societies is not only an understanding of the abstract and symbolic nature of death, but also of the monstrous and sacred liminal characters that embody the post-apocalyptic existence. The sense that each event has already been foreseen can be understood as living through the apocalypse and into the post-apocalyptic, and for the young adult it runs parallel to an awareness of mortality.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has mapped out the apocalyptic, how this then transforms into the post-apocalyptic, and how both these concepts and other related ones (post-disaster, post-nuclear) have been analysed to date in young adult literature scholarship. The post-structural dialectics of the apocalyptic cycle provide a new lens through which to look at abjection, taboo, undifferentiation and sacrifice. Importantly, the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic offer a future for the abject. This opens up opportunities for young adult narrative worlds to embrace the undifferentiated and evolve into a new state of equilibrium that is perceived as less limited than a previous exclusionary state. The transformation of the community through the embracing of the existence of the undifferentiated young adult subject combats the tendency to focus on the internal
growth of the subject in current scholarship. The apocalyptic cycle of integration is adapted into a model for narrative analysis in the following chapter.

The post-apocalyptic does not exclude post-disaster, post-nuclear, (transformative) utopian and dystopian fiction genres; rather, it provides an interconnected reading of them that focuses on their apocalyptic content while also questioning the very construction of those apocalypses and their effects. The prevalence of eschatological rhetoric and apocalyptic content may benefit from a post-apocalyptic reading and, as the next chapter discusses, the fiction chosen for analysis reflects these possibilities.

Postmodernity may support the apocalyptic chaos and rejection of bifurcation, but it also resists linearity and teleology. The questioning of metanarratives and the refusal of subscription to the totalitarian truths they contain allow for a reading of young adult fictions that shows a new desire for something to fill that gap, or provide a means for survival. The idea of surviving adolescence that this thesis proposes directs attention away from abjection and towards apocalypse; in particular, to the three apocalypses of life, destiny and death. I propose an analytical model in the following chapter that offers a way for illuminating how transformation is a vital process and outcome of survival.
Chapter 3

A Methodology for Reading the Apocalyptic In (Un)Real Young Adult Fiction

The world of independent and essentially dead ‘things’ has been replaced in our thinking by a world of processes in relations of mutual dependence. This is the first step in thinking dialectically.

(Ollman & Smith, 2008, p. 10)

The critical study of language is central to the methodology, since it is through language that the subject and the world are represented in literature, and through language that literature seeks to define relationships between child and culture.

(Stephens, 1992a, p. 5)

This chapter elaborates upon the theories of the apocalyptic and related concepts discussed in chapters 1 and 2 to provide a methodology that supports the approach to analysis undertaken in subsequent chapters. As mentioned in chapter 1, this thesis requires a method for analysing YA fiction that is tailored to the elements of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic discourses and narrative structures. Children’s and YA fiction that deals with trauma, disaster or coming of age has a tendency to be analysed according to themes of growth and morality (as in Saxby, 1999; Turin, 2003) using a psychoanalytical or dialogic approach (Kidd, 1996; McCallum, 1996; Trites, 2000). These approaches, with their emphasis on socialisation in the texts, do not take into account emerging apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic YA fiction that shows resistance to enculturation and integration into existing society. This study’s methodology encompasses the binaries that appear in other studies, but it also considers the contradictions and slippages that create tension within the object of study (narrative).

The three underpinning elements to the methodology are dialectics, language, and
transformation. The significance of these to the theoretical framework has been made in previous chapters. This chapter explains how they inform the analytical approach.

A dialectic approach considers the tensions produced by contradiction apparent in a text. Attention to the language of, and in, the text is crucial as through language we can access the discourses and representations that both inform, and are formed through, the narrative. Language in YA fiction, as Stephens (1992a) states, mediates a “relationship” between the young adult and cultures.\(^\text{15}\) The dialectical elements of the methodology further link the subject and language in fiction, but complicate this relationship. Possibilities for subject transformation place this thesis broadly within transformative utopianism (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 6). This thesis, however, takes a different methodological approach to Bradford et al. by offering a model for analysing dialectic tension, language and transformation as they impact on the young adult subject’s survival in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction.

Derrida draws on dialectical processes for much of his work which is based on Hegel’s contradiction, where apparently opposing concepts are seen to construct each other; yet he refrains from critiquing the dialectical process itself.\(^\text{16}\) Dialectics is inherently concerned with truth, and may seem inconsistent with an approach that draws on poststructural and deconstructive theoretical positions that question the possibility of truth. Truth is concerned with depth, while poststructuralism, and postmodernism in general, is concerned with surfaces (Shusterman, 2002, p. xi). Derrida emphasises the need for “pressure” on either side of the dialectic rather than a rush to find a speculative

\(^{15}\) Authors and specific readers are not a consideration of this thesis.

\(^{16}\) The dialectical tensions between surface and depth provide a site for analysis that in this thesis centres on the simulacrum and representation through language, or the play of signs (as discussed in chapter 2 and extended in chapters 5 and 6).
whole, and this is congruent with the approach in this thesis (1981/2002, p. 74). In a
general sense, deconstruction preserves the dialectic while both abolishing and
overwriting it at the same time. Deconstruction posits there is need for a double analysis
that is both dialectical and yet resistant to the dialectic. The possibility of a “third term”
in the dialectic logic is problematised only by giving a third term that is itself a
contradiction (Derrida, 1981, p. 43). In terms of this study, a possible resistance to the
third term is read through the use of différance, which describes the act of attempting to
signify, while resisting – in its “mis”spelling – any sense that such an act is possible. For
example, the “existence” of a vampire does not resolve the contradiction between life
and death, but is a constant reminder of the impossibility of such a resolution and
indicates undifferentiation, rather than a third term or entity. Derrida creates a dialectic
out of language, by pointing out the contradiction of representing the world while
simultaneously constructing it (1974, p. 41). This results in the play of the signifier
rather than a concrete synthesis that resolves the contradiction. The dialectic of
integration is an ongoing realisation of contradiction rather than a process of overcoming
a contradiction.

The culmination of the apocalyptic is the realisation that contradiction is the only
real “truth” (Bull, 1999, p. 126). The apocalyptic is inherently dialectical as the
undifferentiated represents not only the transgression of a binary but often a
contradiction between two things, such as mortality and immortality (1999, p. 115). The
undifferentiated is not a new “third term,” but a hybrid that defies definition by either of
its contributing parts. The apocalyptic embraces contradiction and relies on its opposing
states to progress through transformation. Therefore, the aim of using dialectics is not to
arrive at a conclusive resolution to contradiction, but to consider how the young adult
subject survives by accepting the contradictions, slippages and tensions, so that transformation is achieved. Transformation, in this context, is a way of seeing the self that does not rely of adhering to one side of a binary, or to one side of a contradiction, but, rather, carves out a new way of being that is both and neither at the same time. The young adult subject can be defined in dialectic terms as existing in a constant state of becoming (not child, not adult), while also caught in the postmodern play of signs as contradictory meanings about identity and community are made and remade.

To fully outline the parameters of my methodology, the remainder of this chapter has three sections. The first section develops a narrative structure of the apocalyptic with respect to the hero quest. This structure is appropriated into a model for analysis that extends and overlaps into the post-apocalyptic. Next, the discussion considers how the model (along with the theoretical framework of the previous chapter) guides deconstructive (and poststructural) analyses of the young adult subject in fiction. Finally, the discussion details the process of text selection and placement within the chapters and provides an overview of how the methodology is used to deal with the three apocalypses of life, prophecy, and death.

Narrative (Un)Structuring: Towards a model for post-apocalyptic analysis

Narrative discourse, the narration of a story (Genette, 1988, p. 13), is bound by the structures of language that assist in making meaning to the reader. Narrative’s ability to represent the world makes “a distinct ontological region of reality” (McQuillan, 2000, p. 20). All narrative discourse relies to some degree on conventions to communicate to the reader in a familiar way. Further, each genre has specific codes through which to convey meaning, offering the reader some familiarity, such as delaying an event in the Gothic
genre in order to create tension (Stephens, 1992c, p. 64). How these codes function within narrative discourse is drawn on here.

Narrative comprises both narratological and linguistic elements that together offer codes from which the reader deduces meaning. The narratological elements include fundamental conventions, such as plot, character, setting and theme, and also devices such as focalisation, sequence and point of view (Stephens, 1992a, p. 11). Focalisation as restricted to a perspective view of objects and other characters (Bal, 1982, 1997) is often a point of contention for YA fiction. The assertion that limited focalisation in YA fiction promotes acute solipsism is rejected by Waller, who contends that it is an appropriate form of narration for texts concerned with subject formation (2009, p. 56). This diegetic focalisation (where the protagonist/focaliser is the one who sees and relates the story from his/her point of view) in YA fiction does not necessarily promote solipsism for two reasons: the character may be deeply involved in intersubjective relationships (McCallum, 1999, p. 67; Fludernik, 2009, p. 153); and (within the apocalyptic) the abject subject is not left excluded from the societal system, but rather harnesses its contradictory existence to re-enter a newly defined society that it helped bring about. Thus both outcomes of diegetic focalisation result in intersubjectivity, which is a function of the apocalyptic. The chosen texts for this study generally use both first and third person narration, as is common in adolescent fiction. Limited focalisation is suited to an apocalyptic analysis that aims to follow the path of the undifferentiated characters within the socio-cultural setting of the story world.

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17 The exception is the magic realist text *Moonlight of the Avenue of Faith* (Nahai, 1999), which uses changing and various narration.
The following section attends to the hero tale and its relationship to the apocalyptic cycle, and details how narratological and generic elements are utilised in an apocalyptic analysis.

**Heroic Tales and the Apocalyptic Cycle**

Comparing the apocalyptic cycle with a common story structure such as the hero quest highlights the dialectic tensions between bifurcation and transformation. Sequencing of events in a narrative bears a relationship to the apocalyptic cycle in the story, and the progression into a post-apocalyptic “re-sequencing” that disturbs this cycle. The traditional episodic story structure is orientation, climax, and resolution/closure (Fludernik, 2009, p. 48). The heroic quest narrative structure – “separation-initiation-return” – derives from the episodic story structure (Campbell, 1968; Hourihan, 1997; Stephens & McCallum, 1998, p. 101, emphasis original), and is the closest current model to the apocalyptic narrative structure. The hero quest traditionally follows a set of events in a certain sequence that documents a heroic subject (typically white and masculine) as he leaves home on a quest, encounters strange beasts or obstacles that are overcome, fulfils the quest and returns home to establish order and be rewarded. This structure and sequence draw on those offered by Campbell (1968, pp. 244-245) and later Hourihan (1997, pp. 9-10) among others. Hero stories, and their narrative structures, rely on binaries: moral and immoral, good and bad, male and

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18 As seen in narratives as divergent and separated by time as Beowulf and Great Expectations (Dickens, 1860/1965).
19 The hero story structure can be seen in many popular young adult texts. For example, in The Lord of the Rings (Tolkien, 1954, 1954/1981, 1955) Frodo leaves his stable home in search of adventure, defeats the orcs and evil Lord Sauron, and returns home to glory and rewards. It is worth mentioning, however, that many hero narratives slightly alter the traditional hero quest, as Frodo is “tainted” by the One Ring, and eventually leaves his home.
female, and civilised and wild. The qualities of the hero are emphasised through their positioning against a “wild” (Hourihan, 1997, p. 15). This positioning also reinforces the hero as an accepted member of society, and the “wild” other creatures as abject; even when an opponent has characteristics that appear to be mirroring the hero, the “hero should always be safely on our side of abjection's border” (Helyer, 1999, p. 988). Heroes are destined for the task set to them, with an “overarching sense of fate,” which is always fulfilled, stabilising the binary between divine and human (Stephens & McCallum, 1998, p. 96). Many binaries within the hero quest have been questioned or re-written in contemporary hero tales, and yet the underlying dialectic tensions of inclusion and exclusion, “us” and “them”, remain.

Contemporary interpretations of the hero myth challenge the assumed binaries in the hero story. For example, the fantasy hero quest series *The Belgariad*, aptly beginning with *Pawn of Prophecy* (Eddings, 1982/2006), adheres closely to the structure of *The Lord of the Rings*. While the rewriting contains more agential and powerful women, and more ethnic types in the hero’s circle of friends, the series predominantly mimics the heroic stereotypes. The sequence of events is maintained; so too are the humanist ideals of finding one’s true self through adversity. Ursula Le Guin’s *Earthsea* trilogy (Le Guin, 1971, 1972, 1974) goes beyond such tokenism, with the introduction of a female hero in an additional fourth book (Le Guin, 1990), compassion for the dragon, and lack of aggression. In these books, destiny and fate remain intact, and the discovery of a “true” self is upheld. The binaries that underpin the hero story have been questioned without disrupting the structure of the narrative. The dialectic tension between “us and them” remains, even though who is considered “us” is expanded to include women/girls and dragons.
The apocalyptic cycle can be related to the hero quest and its rewritings, but the apocalyptic contains fundamental changes to the detail of the structure, the treatment of the binary, and teleology. The focus of apocalyptic analysis necessitates three key elements: establishing the undifferentiated and social breakdown; exclusion of the undifferentiated who then experiences an apocalypse; return of the undifferentiated and establishment of a new equilibrium. As discussed in chapter 2, the chaos resulting from broken taboo and failed sacrifice is a crucial marker for the apocalyptic (and post-apocalyptic), superseding or displacing the hero quest that relies on such coping mechanisms. The hero sequence reinforces humanist ideals of morality, charity and individual worth, and rewards the hero for expelling that which does not fit into the order, which is also precisely what the apocalyptic sequence seeks to include. The foundational concern in the hero quest is to enact traditional coping mechanisms (such as sacrifice and taboo, discussed in chapter 2) by banishing, murdering or suppressing what does not fit in the binary code. The apocalyptic embraces chaos through the dialectic, with order and structure incorporating the undifferentiated as a transformative process, changing the structures and coping mechanisms of the society through a dialectic of integration.

Traditionally, the cycle of the hero quest is complete when the narrative results in a happy ending and the hero achieves his goal (Hourihan, 1997, p. 9). The apocalyptic achieves closure on embedded cycles within the narrative frame, while there is no overarching “goal” state, as there are endless undifferentiations to be incorporated into the society of the text. Overlapping apocalyptic cycles within a text are common, and often contain an unsuccessful attempt by an adult to incorporate undifferentiation overlapping with the successful-adolescent cycle. In narratological terms, the plot and
subplot are “contrasted as they try to solve similar problems but in different ways” (Fludernik, 2009, p. 46). The narrative sequencing of the apocalyptic cycle is not a definitive or restrictive “structure,” but one that offers a model for apocalyptic analyses.

The apocalyptic cycle is better represented as a series of events that can repeat and overlap, using the metalanguage discussed in the previous chapter (including undifferentiation and apocalypse) and is incorporated into the subsequent analysis chapters. Chapter 2 detailed the markers of the apocalyptic (such as taboo and sacrifice) and by combining these markers with the structure and sequence discussed above the adaption presented in Figure 3-1 provides a more flexible and overlapping model for apocalyptic analyses. As such, the level to which a text adheres to the specifics of apocalyptic cycle is an area for expansion and variation, as I explain below.
Although the *Obernewtyn* series (Carmody, 1987, 1995) is not used in the analysis chapters, the text is well suited to illustrating an apocalyptic analysis. The beginnings of an apocalyptic narrative can be read through the unstable binaries as Elspeth (a heroic protagonist) fights to have Misfits (mentally talented humans and animals) recognised in their society. The binary of human and animal is persistently undermined by new subjects, such as the gifted Misfits, talented “beasts” (who can mentally communicate with talented humans). The collapsed binary creates dialectical tensions between humanity and inhumanity, as the “normal” humans attempt to suppress any notion that the Misfits are human, yet continue to rely on them to define their own humanity (Carmody, 1995, p. 497). The Misfits are excluded, and the society shows signs of chaos and pollution through rebel actions, an increase in sacrifice (actual and metaphorical), and general discontent. While the series is incomplete and no new equilibrium has been established, even the unresolved cycle provides a clear presence of apocalyptic markers as will be explored later in the chapter. The sequence of the apocalyptic cycle is important yet flexible, and can be useful in part, or more generally, as “the apocalyptic” in order to illuminate the function of the undifferentiated within the story world.

Apocalyptic markers are not restricted to apocalyptic narratives. Outside of the apocalyptic cycle, however, the same events may have vastly different effects. For example, the apocalypse in the hero quest is often placed in the “wilderness” or surviving near death experience (revealing that the hero is brave and can defeat the “evil” dragon despite the overwhelming obstacles). The outcome reveals the “good” qualities of the hero, and adheres to humanist ideals. In the apocalyptic narrative, however, the apocalypse returns to its root meaning, and provides a revelation that
changes everything from then on, and also retrospectively changes the past. To continue the extended example of Obernewtyn, it is because of the negative connotations possessed by the label “Misfit” holds in her society, that Elspeth lives in fear that she is a Misfit and will be found out. When she is discovered and sent to Obernewtyn (a place in the mountains for exiled Misfits), the revelation that her talents are both desired and natural within this new community changes not only her view of the future (and her possible inclusion within a social structure) but also her remembrance of her childhood and the society that treated her as an outcast. On a more fundamental level, dialectics are inherently apocalyptic because they seek “truth” in contradiction: the Misfits are an embodied contradiction whose existence cannot be denied, and so the Misfit becomes a “true contradiction” (Bull, 1999, p. 102). Undifferentiation is an embodied contradiction. The dialectical tension that produces undifferentiation culminates in chaos, and resolves itself through the completed cycle. In the Obernewtyn series there is a long period of social unrest and rebellion before the Misfits become recognised members of the community. For a narrative to be apocalyptic the society must change in some way and incorporate the undifferentiated into a new social structure that is more inclusive than the original. Such incorporation is complicit with the dialectically achieved synthesis.

In summary, an apocalyptic narrative is recognisable through apocalyptic markers, character types and contradictions that contribute to a dialectic of integration. While it is closely related to the hero story, the apocalyptic model has divergences that create new readings and possibilities. Dialectical tensions rather than the binaries themselves are essential to the analysis. Transformative possibilities are on offer to the young adult subject through the embracing of contradictions within texts. The next section considers how the apocalyptic cycle becomes post-apocalyptic.
**Post-ing the Apocalypse through Time and Space**

The apocalyptic cycle informs and underpins the post-apocalyptic. In a discursive and thematic way, this study opens up the concept of “the end” in narrative. It also considers how “the end” varies from apocalyptic to post-apocalyptic texts. Chapter 2 theorised the term “post-apocalyptic” and the current uses and theoretical applications provided in terms of textual analysis. The narrative structural implications of the post-apocalyptic are an important aspect of this methodology. Surviving the apocalyptic depends on the realisation that undifferentiation cannot, and should not, be excluded. The focus of this section is on the intricacies of “post-ing” the apocalypse backwards in narrative, and the implications for a dialectic of time and space within the apocalyptic framework.

The apocalyptic is inherently concerned with end points, and in narrative terms this comprises both “closure” and “endings” (Stephens, 1992c, p. 49). An ending refers to the conclusion of story events, as exemplified above in the hero is receiving rewards and the undifferentiation bringing about a new equilibrium. Closure has implications for a sense of “completeness” from which the significance of the story can be deduced (Stephens, 1992c). However, as Stephens notes, the sense of closure is influenced by the culture surrounding the narrative and the reader, and often relies on aligning the assumptions and values the narrative with those of the reader (Stephens, 1992c). In an apocalyptically-minded culture influenced by postmodernism, the notion of endings is open to wider interpretations in relation to narrative structure, while the desire for closure remains evident. The function of the end (as ending and closure) in these narratological terms is conflated with revelation (this also occurs in the hero and
apocalyptic narratives), and the end reveals the meaning of the story. The use of the end to provide meaning engages a dialectic of time and space with reference to cause and effect (Harvey, 1996, p. 109). The linearity of many Western narratives, this does not preclude them from including manipulations of story or discourse time and space (Stephens, 1992c, p. 47). A post-apocalyptic analysis, however, attends specifically to the dialectic tensions between cause and effect, over and above the logical sequence of events. The contradiction inherent in cause and effect in narrative is posed here by Arthur:

> It is natural to read a linear exposition as one in which later categories are developed from their antecedents... There is, however, another consideration. Since the linear progression cannot be validated as a deduction, it can only be reconstruction; as such what it is heading for must be granted. (2008, p. 213)

The logic of events leading towards their end point thus appears as development, or a reconstruction. The same logic works for the apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic: the post-apocalyptic by definition must come after the apocalyptic, but the apocalyptic is always and already post-apocalyptic. This logic’s law of contradiction provides a space for analysis that parallels the concerns of young adulthood discussed in chapter 1. In YA fiction, Waller argues, the end is always assumed to be a realisation of adulthood and maturity within an established society, and thereby forestalls the need for any other sense of ending (2009, p. 54). When adulthood and maturity are assumed to be the end point, this end can predetermine the events of the narrative, with the result mapping easily onto the *Bildungsroman* or hero story. The apocalyptic disturbs a presupposed end point by creating a new society that has new metanarratives for what constitutes an end.
In turn, a new definition of “belonging” or maturity to that new system is required; however, here the young adult is a contributor to the new system. The ramifications extend into the future with multiple cycles. The post-apocalyptic contradictorily confronts the end at the beginning (like the placement of an epilogue at the beginning of this thesis), bringing the future into the present, and creating a dialectic of time and space that converges with the overlapping apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic.

The post-apocalyptic text changes the sequence of events, moving the apocalypse to the beginning of the narrative through the use of prophecy. Narratologically, prophecy provides suspense (Fludernik, 2009, p. 25), and creates tension over its potential fulfilment (Misson & Morgan, 2006, p. 77). In the hero story it foreshadows the events and establishes the “blessed” nature of the hero (Campbell, 1968, p. 245). Prophecy is used in this conventional way in the third book of the Obernewtyn series, Ashling, when Elspeth remarks, “My sworn quest was the central defining truth of my life now... my quest shaped me” (Carmody, 1995, p. 417). Elspeth feels bound to her quest that was given to her in the form of a prophecy, and it shapes and defines her and how she acts in the world: “I should simply live and trust in the fates to bring me to where I was needed” (Carmody, 1995, p. 203). The effect of a possible event retrospectively constructs meaning in Elspeth’s life, and while suspense is created through each obstacle she faces, such a sense of destiny in a hero quest is rarely denied fulfilment in the closure. As discussed in chapter 2, prophecy complicates narrative through the monstrous time, or non-linear time that rejects a single perception of time in favour of overlapping and intersecting polychrony (D. Herman, 2002, p. 225; L. Herman & Vervaeck, 2005). Non-linear time denies an understood progression of “past” to “future,” thereby displacing the epiphany/revelation/apocalypse from the ending of a narrative to the beginning. This
manipulation of time differs from postmodern fiction narratives that “impede” and “undermine temporal progression” (Allan, 2006, p. 78). In terms of narrative, and narrative structure, D. Herman identifies the problem with non-chronological time as disturbing simple cause and effect when future events have bearing on the present. As with prophecy, the question becomes: “*How is what has not yet happened making its effect felt on what has already happened, is happening now, and is immediately about to happen?*” (D. Herman, 2002, p. 252, emphasis in original). This establishes the narratological implications for the dialectic contradiction of space/time inherent in the post-apocalyptic.

In the post-apocalyptic text, prophecy seems at first to determine the climax and resolution. For example, in *Thirsty* (Anderson, 1997) Chris is told by a celestial being he will save the world. However, the predetermination is disrupted and proves to be unfounded through concepts of truth, reality and the simulacrum: Chris is tricked, the being is in fact un-celestial, and Chris has instead relieved an evil lord from suffering. Traditional uses of time and space in narrative (the often lead to a fulfilled prophecy) form a dialectic tension with the actual events (becoming an unfulfilled prophecy). While the hero has positive prophecies laid upon her/him, the undifferentiated in post-apocalyptic texts are predominantly foreseen as doomed, with cursed endings, similar to the fate of the abject. In other words, it is imperative that the prophecy prove false for the survival of the undifferentiated subject. In the post-apocalyptic narrative, subjects are not bound by the strict (and narratological or heroic) elements of a sequence, and therefore can transform through stepping out of their prophesied destiny. Such a denial of prophecy requires both a distrust of the “gods” who utter prophecies, and the language through which they are perpetuated, as discussed further in chapter 5. There
are dialectic tensions between the fulfilment of the apocalyptic prophecy, and denial of prophecy in the post-apocalyptic. With revelation as the starting point, the end is left destabilised and open for much of the narrative.

A post-apocalyptic analysis can be taken further into the dialectics of existence through engaging the dialectics of life and death, and drawing further on the tensions of surface and depth that come into play when destabilising prophecy. In terms of a methodological approach to analysing death as an apocalypse, and the tensions formed through interactions with death, I make use of the ghost and vampire as manifestations that exist on the temporal-spatial terrain of the “borderlands” of life and death. This is not a linear borderland (which would essentially be “dying”) but rather a temporal tension between life and death, one that denies the time (finitude) of life and the timelessness (infinitude) of death. The contradiction in this dialectic is found in the post-apocalyptic narrative through explorations of ways to incorporate death into life, or accept infinitude in the face of a finite existence. In Killing Aurora, (as an example), the options for coping with death in life are present in the tensions between eschatology and secular apocalypses. In this story, the Christian peers at school are described as “eagerly awaiting their deaths,” and contrasted to Web’s news savvy declaration that “You’ve got a bomb, I’ve got a bomb, they’ve all got a bomb. Who gives a shit... bombs will always go off... its pollution that’s the real issue” (Barnes, 1999, pp. 12, 14).

An eschatological apocalypse assumes a definitive end/death followed by eternal life (with clear distinctions), while the secular post-apocalyptic is infinite and pervasive, and “pollution” provides the greater threat of death due to its pervasive presence within life.

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20 These concepts were discussed in chapter 1, and highlight what is another dialectic tension between common views of the apocalyptic as a religiously orientated future, and the media’s apocalyptic images of destruction.
The function of analysing transgressions of death in narrative is the exploration of these dialectic tensions, and to recognise that the best post-apocalyptic and (transformative utopian) fiction offer subject positions that come to accept contradiction and provide ways of surviving the presence of death in life. *Différance* and the slippage of signifiers (as discussed later) provides infinite movement in language that can be embraced for its irreducibility, and harnessed in order to offer new coping mechanisms for the young adult subject. While the post-apocalyptic is not so easily produced as a diagram (as with the apocalyptic cycle), the apocalypse is essentially dispersed and ever-present through the knowledge of inevitable death, and by confronting the dialectic of surface and depth the young adult subject can produce a new way of “becoming”.

This section has mapped the movement from apocalyptic to post-apocalyptic, including the overlaps and interdependencies of the two concepts. The apocalyptic cycle model for analysis provides a base point from which to move forward using the metalanguage and overall structure of events. The post-apocalyptic creates a new dialectic that places future and present in contradictory terms. How young adult protagonists survive this disturbance requires a focus on subjectivity, and the way this has changed in recent times. The concepts of apocalypse and post-apocalypse both call into question the stable self, the hero, who discovers a core and immutable way of being in an established society. The following section discusses the shift from humanism to poststructural multiple experiences of selfhood and how this is a relevant component of the study’s approach.
**Deconstructing the Young Adult Subject in Fiction: Language and dialectics**

The methodology of this thesis is distinctive through its focus on the layered dialectics inherent in the apocalyptic, and on how the contradictions and tensions of the dialectics offer subjective alignments that resist liberal humanist ideals and support survival through transformation for the young adult. The purpose of this section is to establish the importance of attending to the language in the fiction as part of the deconstructive process. As the following discussion elaborates, language is the medium of the dialectic and its contradictions. Consequently, the methodological approach involves consideration of how these contradictions with respect to subjectivity, agency, and reader-text relationships are integral to the analytical process.

In order for apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives to form closure, the ideological and discoursal constructions of selfhood must shift from humanism to poststructuralism. This shift was noted in chapter 1 (‘Binarism to Transformation: Towards a Double Reading Framework’). As discussed above, the hero quest enacts the enforcement of structures, metanarratives and ideologies of the fictional society by expelling the undifferentiated (wild) characters. The *Bildungsroman* adapts this slightly for the young adult by changing the focus from the social to the internal processes by which the protagonist comes to terms with social structures. The overall story sequence remains unchanged, and the society into which the protagonist or hero is enculturated remains a solid entity. The familiarity of the binaries in the hero story refuses the transformative possibilities of a poststructural understanding of selfhood as fluid, and the dialectic of being between presence and absence, and the play of signs that forms the focus of this section.
The construction of a “hero” (in terms of the traditional story sketched earlier in this chapter) relies on binaries surrounding morality, mortality, truth and identity, constructed within metanarratives, and producing core truths that were understood to be parallel. Poststructuralism seeks to disturb the totality that these binaries assume, the core truth of the self, and as a consequence, the twentieth century saw the decline of faith in the metanarrative. An “essential” self is reliant on the linguistic ability to represent the “truth” of both the subject and object as static entities. While liberal humanists propose that there is an inherent truth that the text conveys and in the character it constructs,²¹ theory post-1960s asserts that the search for such a truth is not a tenable project. The socio-cultural change towards postmodernism also produced a shift in approaches to textual analysis. Considering that an apocalypse is, by definition, the revelation of a truth, how this relates to poststructuralism and a fluid sense of self, rather than a humanist core self, is of paramount concern in this thesis. The ideological construction of selfhood in humanism relies on the reconstitution of the self in narrative, discovering the core self that always existed; the apocalyptic reveals the truth of contradiction, rather than a true self, and embodies a poststructural fluidity.

The inadequacies of language to represent the world form the basis of contradiction in a poststructural conception of the dialectic. Structuralism (Saussure, 1966) provides a model for understanding language through the sign, but its evolution into poststructuralism allows for the production of an apocalyptic understanding of the generation of meaning when considering both texts and the construction of subjectivities. Signification is a tripartite system where there is a signifier (a word), a

²¹ See the ways of reading offered by Practical Criticism (Richards, 1924) and “close reading” (Leavis, 1930).
signified (a concept or mind image), and a referent, which is the specific thing referred to. These elements form the sign, which is forever caught in language, and bears no “natural” relationship to the world (Derrida, 1974, p. 65). Deconstruction (Derrida, 1974) draws attention to the assumptions and unquestioned inconsistencies within a text through the process of “de-constructing” (or pulling apart) the construct of the sign, breaking down the forces that influence and create what is essentially an arbitrary system: arbitrary in the sense that the meaning (or signified) of a signifier has no natural connection to the referent. A deconstructive approach reveals that the connection between the thing in itself and its meaning in language is “entirely superficial” (Stephens, 1992a, p. 16). Stephens suggests, “langu... is not founded on any essential bond between a verbal sign and its referent” (1992c, pp. 246-247). The poststructural approach to language increases understanding of the interconnectedness between the divine and representation. Dialectical tension arising from the perceived separation of human and divine is of particular relevance when considering prophecy and truth in chapter 5. Before considering this separation and dialectic, we need to explore the connection between language and presence.

The importance of origins and endings in a deconstructive analysis of language benefits from an understanding of différance and trace, as they relate to subjectivity. Derrida’s différance (1968) is one of the terms deconstruction employs to describe how the signifier attempts to unify with the signified, but is lost in both “difference” (the sliding of signifiers) and “deferral” (the slippage of meaning). According to Derrida, as the signifier slides away from the signified, it is forever in pursuit of the “trace,” or the side-effect of différance (1974, p. 62). The trace is what is not the signifier, signified or referent; it is what is left over. By its very nature it cannot be thought, because “a
thought of the trace, of différance or of reserve… must also point beyond the field of the episteme” (p. 93, emphasis in original). Trace is the sensed element of semiotics, it “is the absolute origin of sense in general” (p. 65). The “absolute simplicity” of a stable and obtainable signified is the “originary trace”; in other words, attempting to find a true link from word to the world draws one back to finding the origin of life (divinity) or, conversely, the end of life, or a thing irreducible by language, and yet the trace is always a reminder that such a thing cannot be named/found (1974, pp. 62-66). The trace, inversely, concerns death, and the end of signification. The desire to link language to presence is the “subject’s relationship with its own death, this becoming is the constitution of subjectivity” (Derrida, 1974, p. 69; see also Stephens, 1992a, p. 268).

Searching for an anchor in the flux of language is a fundamental concern of YA fiction, and while humanism would assert that this anchor can be found, Derrida and poststructuralism place even the trace/search under erasure (trace) for its inadequacy to even signify being in the world. Trace does not imply a core self; “becoming” is the “play” between (and dialectic of) “presence” and “absence,” and can be read in the desire for experiences of selfhood within the world for the young adult (p. 71). Apocalyptic discourses rely on this play, or différance, undermining the ability for language to fix presence, truth and being in the world through revelation. The dialectic of presence and absence (through deconstruction and différance), and the tensions that arise from representing these concepts in narrative fiction, offer new approaches to analysing how the play of the sign can affect the experience of represented selfhood for the young adult subject.

Différance is essential to the study of apocalypse and revelation, as the search for purpose is also the search for the trace, and these searches in turn show a desire to
uncover the/an ultimate truth. As Berger states, the use of *différance* to study representation and truth “apocalyptically destroys these social and linguistic presuppositions, strips them and reveals them to be illusions” (1999, p. 111). The ramifications of revealing language to be “illusions” (as with the simulacrum) can be further implicated in the question of “who speaks?” In addition to its noted previously literary conventionality, prophecy is defined as “That which is done or spoken by a prophet; the action or practice of revealing or expressing the will or thought of God or of a god; divinely inspired utterance or discourse” (OED), and this places the onus of belief on the recipient. As such, prophecy can provide reason for and purpose to life, and the promise of what happens after life (Williamson, 2008, p. 5). This also reflects the “original trace” and the flux of language that will end only in origin or death. When the connection between the word and its meaning is questioned, or severed, then the speaker of prophecy is disconnected from any sense of original truth, and this inherently destabilises metanarratives (Derrida, 1974, p. 10). Thus, by attending to the undifferentiated subject’s interactions with prophecy, the divine and death, the underlying presuppositions of the text regarding truth and the self can be accessed through a post-apocalyptic analysis.

Incredulity with the metanarrative, or the postmodern condition according to Lyotard, is resistance to the discourses that construct meaning through language by way of totalising truths. Poststructural techniques in no way *de-value* a text, or reject language or the sign; signs “are necessa... [and] nothing is conceivable for us without them” (Derrida, 1974, p. 13); but poststructuralism unpacks them in order to understand the constructedness of language and culture. Totalities (as discussed in chapter 2) rely on a centre and a telos. While it could be argued that poststructuralism and deconstruction
risk becoming another metanarrative, Derrida comments that the concept of a core, or “centre,” is not denied, but instead challenged by poststructuralism:

First of all, I didn't say that there was no center, that we could get along without the center. I believe that the center is a function, not a being - a reality, but a function. And this function is absolutely indispensable. The subject is absolutely indispensable. I don't destroy the subject; I situate it. That is to say, I believe that at a certain level both of experience and of philosophical and scientific discourse one cannot get along without the notion of subject. It is a question of knowing where it comes from and how it functions. Therefore I keep the concept of center, which I explained was indispensable, as well as that of subject, and the whole system of concepts to which you have referred. (Derrida in Macksey & Donato, 2007, pp. 271-272)

Here, Derrida maintains the purpose of metanarratives while concurrently asserting the need to question the function of the “centre” and the subject. Whether or not Lyotard’s vision of incredulity with (or abandonment of) metanarratives is fully supported is not of concern. Rather, it is the process of questioning that Derrida sees as imperative. The “function” of truth, centre, self and discourse are inherently tied to the questions of language and representation. Similarly, analysing binaries runs the risk of merely reinforcing them, and the totality they offer. The function of the centre runs parallel to the function of contradiction and apocalyptic. The space between self and world, and life and death, and other binary opposites is the “central” contradiction that must be addressed to gain any new insights into the ways of being and becoming that are offered to young adult readers.
Agency

How the protagonist acts in the face of dialectic contradiction, or apocalyptic chaos, provides scenes of agency. Agency is the ability of the subject to act in the world. According to Bradford et al., agency has its own contradiction in that “an individual psyche may be attributed with a capacity for either self-alteration or remaking the world” and this works against “society’s propensity to represent itself as always already instituted, thereby denying the possibility of creative action to individuals” (2008, pp. 16-17). To create a sense of self that is not reliant on compliance with the subjectivities offered by a dominant discourse is also an act of agency. While humanist frameworks maintain that agency is achievable, connoting permanence and stability in that position of power and free will, poststructuralism creates scenes of agency that coincide with subjective moments. The construction of the young adult in fiction is often concerned with subject formation and agency, learning the importance of intersubjectivity (as discussed in chapter 2 regarding abjection), and achieving some form of identity as closure (Waller, 2009, p. 16). Indeed Waller argues that in YA fiction, adolescence is assumed to be a transient state; but the adolescent is far from fixed which remains a problem of representation:

The adolescent is already theorised as being “unfixed” or mutable... The questioning or dissolution of the self does not represent a radical re-shaping of material reality in these novels but portrays conventional ideas of adolescent immaturity, where identity must yet be form... permeating this discussion is a distinct problem of representation. (Waller, 2009, p. 57)
The mutability of adolescence in fiction has become the norm, yet rather than accepting the mobility of discourses and the fluidity of the subject, there is still a focus on “identity” in the fiction and the stability and core that it implies. As Waller notes, however, the “problem of representation” points to poststructural concepts that must on some level provide the possibility of a YA fiction that does not glorify the stable identity as equivalent to maturity, and offers a sense of agency that is not reliant on such concepts.

**The Reader-Text Relationship**

The reader-text relationship provides another layer to a dialectic methodology. Readers adopt a subjective position with respect to each reading, and can “try on” the subjective possibilities offered by the text that in some way echo their own experiences (Stephens, 1992a, p. 55). Despite the semblance of reality within a fictional text, it is eventually the reading process that creates meaning (Gee, 2007, p. 128). However, any reading is subject to the personal biases and ideological positions of the reader. As Stephens notes regarding the reader-text relationship, “the meaning of a text is constituted as a dialectic between textual discourse and a reader’s pre-existing subjectivity” (1992a, p. 47). The reader is offered a new subject position (albeit a temporary one) through the act of reading narrative fiction. Just as our sense of self or subjectivity is constructed through stories that are told to us, and the stories we tell ourselves, so YA fiction, through various narrative strategies (such as focalisation, person and tense), constructs a character’s subjectivity and attempts to position the reader to align with that subjectivity.
In fiction that lends itself to an apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic analysis, a character’s subjectivity is formed in dialogue with the social structures and discursive practices as they are represented in the text as part of what Rumbold sees as “a complex and ongoing process” of formation (1997, p. 16). The point of view offered by the text, particularly with first-person narration, assumes a certain authority; however, with subjectivity as a fluid and unstable concept, and one that in YA fiction particularly relies on intersubjectivity, the concept of “I” inevitably also becomes unstable. This is expressed here in a moment of introspection by Takeo in *Across the Nightingale Floor*:

22 “I did not know if this Takeo was real or just a construction” (Hearn, 2002, p. 92).

This questioning shows an awareness of constructions of selfhood, as well as a desire by Takeo to separate “real” from “construction.” This confusion over what is real and what is constructed is part of the dialectic that Takeo later understands. Contradictions of selfhood, in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic analyses, are considered in subsequent chapters in terms of the ability of the protagonist to accept a fluid sense of self.

As discussed earlier, poststructural theories of subjectivity point to the possibility of multiple selves that are prominent at relevant times. No narration of the self offered by a text requires that the reader “end up with their ‘real’ or ‘original’ selves but with yet another construction, another story about themselves” (L. Herman & Vervaeck, 2005, p. 112); yet this does not mean *ipso facto* the reader will have no sense of resistance when offered certain subject positions (Misson & Morgan, 2006, p. 71). Reading provides an experience of selfhood through the character depicted in the text that can be rewarded or punished by the narrative world (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 184). However, there are opportunities for resistant readings by both protagonist (in the narrative world) and

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22 *Across the Nightingale Floor* is a focus text in chapter 4.
reader (in the process of making meaning in the text). The dialectic between reader and text is caught in an unresolvable exchange that offers subject positions to readers, while at the same time meaning is constructed by the reader who may or may not take up these subject positions. Narrative can explicitly question the metanarratives constructed within the protagonist’s story world, implicitly seeking to align the reader to question the metanarratives of the actual world. However, it is not possible, nor a purpose of this thesis, to attempt to gauge how successful this alignment might be for real readers. The possibility that reading provides any sense of revelation for readers is a possible transformative outcome of reading that Derrida acknowledges (1981/2002, p. 63). The reader-text relationship, in terms of this thesis, draws on this transformative possibility as arising from the dialectic between the subjectivity in the text and that of the reader.

The following section explains text selection and how the analysis follows through on the theoretical and methodological design of this study.

**Placing the Texts**

In order to provide relevant contrast and comparison between the chosen texts, selection has been made from the fantasy genre, “un” real fiction, as reflected in the title of this chapter. The unreal is, however, treated in the focal texts as quite real. While there are mimetic realist young adult texts that engage with post-apocalyptic theories (as demonstrated through the examples given from Barnes, 1999), the fantastical elements in the chosen fiction allow for a more adventurous exploration of the undifferentiated, utilising the predilection of fantasy novels to engage with issues of societal structure and subject formation (Stephens, 1992a, p. 242; Grenby, 2008, p. 164). While there are also postmodern young adult texts that have absorbed the post-apocalyptic into the narrative
form, postmodern fiction already “question[s] from within” and deconstructs itself (Hutcheon, 1988, p. xiii). Criticism of such texts risks falling into an exercise in merely pointing out features, instead of deconstructing what maintains the appearance of totality in the text (Punday, 2003, p. 50). Furthermore, by restricting my selection to those published post 1997 (and seven of the nine texts published after 2002) there is a strong sense of the contemporary adding to the relevance of the study for current young adult worlds, both fictional and real.

The texts chosen for analysis are all broadly categorised as fantasy, a genre that adheres to a narrative discourse that includes fantastic elements within realist narration. The use of adult fantasy fiction for serious criticism has only recently come “off the edges of literary culture” (James, 2008, pp. 114-115), where it is an accepted genre for analysing discourses and ideologies in children’s and YA fiction (see also Stephens, 1992a, p. 287). Jackson, too, argues that the fantastical genres are not outside of discourse or “free” to create meanings completely without connection to the conditions of existence and culture that created them (1981, p. 3). Fantasy, as a “mode,” encompasses many genres, mostly including one of Torodov’s “marvellous,” “uncanny” and “fantastic,” as well as other classifications (R. Jackson, 1981, p. 7; Waller, 2009, p. 19). While Jackson concentrates on the psychological implications of fantasy within a text, Waller examines the constructions of adolescence in fantasy realism through discourse analysis. The discourses of adolescent maturation, identity formation, gender, and power form the basis for Waller’s study, which draws the conclusion that fantastic realist texts construct adolescence as a liminal state (p. 187). Waller’s restriction of fantastic realism to escapist fantasy reduces the contradictions within the text to momentary lapses as a reflection of the liminality of adolescence, and hence denies the
actual presence of contradiction in the “reality” of young adult subjects. A concentration on psychoanalytic implications of fantasy fails to recognise the tensions of being and nothing as they are situated within space and time. Bradford recognises dialectal tensions of space and time in metamorphosis, the “timelessness” of the metamorphic moment, and its metaphoric implications for adolescence as outside of childhood and adulthood (2001, pp. 151-162). While metamorphosis, in Bradford’s analysis, results in a return to the (human) self and enculturation into a society (sometimes with still present tension), apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic discourses address both the internal and external forces of the chosen texts (2001, p. 162). This study addresses the use of a broad range of fantasy subgenres, and the use of dialectics.

In the fantasy genre, all texts are written with predominantly realist narration presenting the fantasy as either fully acceptable to the characters’ reality, or given plausibility through a protagonist who is convinced of the “new reality” after coming from “our reality.” As Grenby states, “what seems particularly misguided is to regard fantasy and realism as mutually exclusive categories” (Grenby, 2008, p. 146). For the purposes of this thesis, the fantasy genre is one that “depicts things which are contrary to prevailing ideas of reality” (Grenby, 2008, pp. 145-146). Realism relies on verisimilitude, or the appearance of realness and believability (Stephens, 1992a, p. 241). However, all the texts included in the analysis do treat the fantastical as real, rather than as a figure of the imagination or a lapse in perception, or not so unreal. Further, they are mostly “secondary-world fantasies” that construct wholly other worlds with their own rules, truths and metanarratives, with which the characters have to engage (Grenby, 2008, p. 149). The two exceptions to this are *Thirsty* (Anderson, 1997) and the *Twilight* series (Meyer, 2005), whose protagonists Chris and Bella discover an unreal world that
exists within the one that has the appearance of reality. As Grenby states with regard to fantasies such as these, the protagonists “conduct us through this world, mediating our encounters with the fantastic until we become acclimatised to the weirdness” (2008, p. 151). Therefore, in both *Thirsty* and *Twilight* vampires seem plausible and actual, while also new and previously unknown (yet represented as having always existed) in the fictional reality the texts construct. The realist mode of narration interpellates readers, aligning them with certain subject positions, through these normalisation processes. This research considers how the discourses of the apocalyptic and adolescence are both normalised and normalising within the fantasy genre.

The following three sections outline the textual analysis chapters and how the text selection relates to genre and current research focus areas in the field.

*Other Lives: Chapter 4*

The texts chosen for chapter 4 examine the apocalyptic metalanguage in use, and also how it can be used in texts that do not adhere to a strict structure of the apocalyptic cycle. This chapter includes texts from science fiction and fantasy genres. Scientific discourses and metanarratives are not immune to the revelatory power of the apocalyptic. Generically speaking, “science fiction writers delight in the plausibility of their fantasies, daring their readers to disbelieve things which have been made to seem almost true,” and thus, create avenues through which to analyse the construction of truth (Grenby, 2008, p. 150). Constructions of truth are relevant for every genre, yet science fiction often draws on the scientific discourses that provide a culturally accepted model of truth through proof, thereby creating a genre in which the truth constructions are inherently, and paradoxically, questioned and utilised. Science fiction also draws many
analyses in terms of the utopian/dystopian impulse that warns about potential disastrous uses of scientific advancement. This impulse, however, should not limit the analytic opportunities of the texts. Focussing on the “small distance between the ‘real’ and the imagined” (Crew, 2004, p. 218) in young adult science fiction analysis negates a function of what is essentially a fantasy genre, namely to question discursive constructions of truth. It also attempts to create relevance through the potential “realness,” inadvertently privileging scientific discourses of truth.

The concept of a clone makes full use of Bull’s undifferentiated example of bare life (a life that is recognised, yet not protected by the law and society). The House of the Scorpion (discussed in chapter 4) locates the apocalyptic discourse through conceivable realism. There are also elements of other cultural metanarratives (such as the Mexican ritual inclusion of the dead) on offer to the protagonist through which he can develop survival techniques for both his position as ‘bare life’ and within his own adolescence. Where Zipes sees Farmer’s text as confirmation that YA fiction depicts “technological inventions” as “being abused to transform humans into automatons” (Zipes, 2009, p. 65), Bradford et al. establish that Farmer’s text “means that difference and identity are being redistributed” with “possibilities for the emergence of new relationships between human and machine, biology and technology” (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 181). This redistribution of difference can be illuminated through the apocalyptic as an act of survival for both the undifferentiated young adult protagonist and the society, as further discussed in the next chapter in my discussion of the apocalyptic cycle’s dialectic of integration.

23 The House of the Scorpion (2002) by Nancy Farmer won the Newbery Honour (2003), National book Award (2002), Michael L. Printz Award Honor Book (2003), as well as nine other local awards, and yet has not been the object of published criticism that has studied it in any depth.
The selection of texts is also informed by the analytical requirements for each chapter. Chapter 4 brings together two very different narratives, *The House of the Scorpion* and *Tales of the Otori* (Hearn, 2002-2004), through their adherence to the apocalyptic cycle. Hearn’s *Otori* trilogy provides an historical fantasy setting in a fictional Japanese feudal society, and incorporates magical talents such as invisibility. These first two texts allow for an in-depth look at the undifferentiated and how their societies construct taboo, sacrifice, exclusion and scapegoating as (failing) methods of survival. In the additional analysis of the *Monster Blood Tattoo* series (Cornish, 2006), the focus remains on the role of the undifferentiated. These novels create a new world, the Half Continent, complete with metanarratives and norms built into a familiar framework and setting, of the orphanage, journey and academy. The use of the monstrous in the Half Continent offers many undifferentiated elements particularly suited to apocalyptic analysis, including monsters; the incorporation of monster organs into human bodies; revenants; and re-animated corpses. The complexity of the Half Continent, the characters, and the protagonist’s confliction over subjectivity provide a fertile example of the apocalyptic, and how it leads into the post-apocalyptic.

*(Un)Fulfilled Prophecies: Chapter 5*

The apocalyptic cycle, and dialectic of integration, crosses over into the post-apocalyptic through the (un)fulfilled prophecies in the texts chosen for analysis in chapter 5: *Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith* (Nahai, 1999), *The Oracle* (Fisher, 2003), and *The Rat and The Raven* (Greenwood, 2005). This investigation of prophecy and the post-apocalyptic spans three forms of fantasy: magic realism, second-world fantasy and

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24 The third novel in the series is due to be published in 2010, yet the first two of the trilogy provide ample material to be included in this study.
post-disaster fiction. The fantasy genre is mostly written with realist narration, with the marked exception of magic realism. While Grenby’s description of magic realism as “revel[ing] in the impossibility of the things they show, goading readers into accepting them in spite of their better judgment” (2008, p. 150) is certainly appropriate for many texts, *Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith* does not show any “goading” in its use of the magical. Rather, it fits Hammer’s description of the inclusion of unexplained implausibility into a realist narrative world through magic realism by sustaining “conflicting perspectives in order to interrogate cultural ideologies that are associated with the narrative construction of point of view” (2006, p. 64). Nahai’s text, like many magic realist novels, utilises the genre to express a postcolonial resistance to Eurocentric narrative forms (Hammer, 2006, p. 64). Just as magic realism “supports ontological diversity,” it also lends itself towards the post-apocalyptic and contradiction, questioning the teleological drive of Western societies (Hammer, 2006, pp. 66, 68). The magic realist text provides “alternative ways of knowing” that culminate in “merged realities and blurred boundaries” (p. 67). In *Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith* this translates into a physical manifestation of prophecy, respectful of the traditional Iranian ways of survival, while also foregrounding a need to resist the teleology seen in Western societies through transforming those traditions post-apocalyptically in the dialectic of integration.

The combination of fantasy and prophecy in chapter 5 is crucial to fully explore the post-apocalyptic. The prophecy is found in many contemporary young adult fantasy texts.25 Fantasy often relies on prophecy, “a common motif in fantasy writing,”

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25 Such as *Bloodtide* (Burgess, 1999), *Obernewtyn* (Carmody, 1987) and *The Subtle Knife* (Pullman, 1995).
particularly to orientate or give “a sense of direction” to the reader in a strange reality (Grenby, 2008, p. 158). Yet the texts selected for analysing prophecy epitomise the tensions between the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic, as they challenge prophecy and destiny. Grenby also notes this change in the use of prophecy in fantasy: “A prophesised [sic] narrative structure can be constraining... Philip Pullman seems to be reacting against the lack of free-will in Narnia” (p. 59). In order to analyse the shift in use of prophecy, as well as question the source of prophecy (as defined earlier), the texts chosen for analysis provide differing accounts of deity, while all are set in societies that maintain a belief in the truth and reliability of prophecy. In The Oracle, the god is given a voice and made present in the text, allowing an overt interaction with the force behind prophecy, and, moreover, permits questions of truth and the dialectic of depth and surface through the simulacrum. Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith, as mentioned earlier, utilises destiny as a motivation for characters. While these two texts belong to second world fantasy and magic realism, the third fantasy text chosen is from the post-disaster genre.

Crossovers of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic with post-disaster, utopian and dystopian fiction genres, as discussed in chapter 2, are inevitable, as all concern potential futures.26 While the discourses of the apocalyptic focus on the revelation that occurs within protagonists’ experience of their world, and there is no focus on the “apocalypse” that a society experienced prior to the narrative’s start, the impact of revelation is always relevant. Multiple apocalypses (personal and societal) are seen in the post-disaster text The Rat and The Raven (Greenwood, 2005), set in a world returned to almost medieval conditions after a cataclysmic destruction of society. While this post-

26 Such crossovers can be seen in: Feed (Anderson, 2003), Bloodsong (Burgess, 2005), Obernewtyn (Carmody, 1987) and The Children of Morwenna (H. Smith, 2002).
Chapter 3: A Methodology for Reading the Apocalyptic

Disaster setting has many implications for the characters, it is the discourses of the post-apocalyptic and destiny that form the focus of the study. Indeed, in transformative utopian and dystopian fiction, argues Bradford et al., the reader is aligned to question the vision of the future presented (2008, p. 16). Greenwood’s novel provides the opportunity to demonstrate how these critical discourses can overlap and support each other, while offering new and unique perspectives. Chapter 5 investigates the crossovers, tensions and contradictions between the dialectic of integration in the apocalyptic, and the dialectic of space and time in the post-apocalyptic.

**Undoing Death: Chapter 6**

While texts in chapter 5 focus on the destiny of young adult protagonists, chapter 6 focuses on every person’s destiny, death, and explores how recent popular adolescent vampire fiction has questioned the ultimate apocalyptic dialectic of being and nothing, life and death. Historically, the most common prophecy has been that of the end times, with eventual cataclysm, as exemplified in Biblical narratives as “the most consequential end-time expectati... the resurrection of the dead.” It also typifies the Gothic genre (Williamson, 2008, p. 6): the apparition of animated dead still evokes considerable reaction, perhaps stemming from the belief that they usher in the chaotic forces of infinitude and death after the conceivable present existence, and represent the contradiction of life and death made manifest. Concurrently, the acceptance of revenants may be interrelated with the acceptance of this contradiction, and future end. The taboo-breaking inherent to both Gothic fiction and YA fiction creates a mélange of discourses that are particularly fruitful for an apocalyptic analysis (A. Jackson, Coats, & McGillis, 2007, p. 11; McGillis, 2007, p. 229). The Gothic narrative is a site for the undead,
experiencing its own revival in popularity since the turn of the millennium, as the turn of each century brings an “apocalyptic tendency” (Spooner, 2006, p. 21). The shift in Gothic sensibility that separates it from past millennial resurgences (in the 1790s and 1890s) is, Spooner argues, away from characters afraid of the ominous and dark unknown towards characters that are “self aware” and “supremely commercialised” (p. 23).

These characteristics are strikingly similar to those attributed to adolescence, and the popularity of teenage Gothic fantasy fiction may reflect this (James, 2008, p. 116). Gael Grossman’s thesis, “The Evolution of the Vampire in Adolescent Fiction” (2001), establishes a difference between adult vampire writing and young adult vampire writing. The conclusion Grossman draws, that “young adult literature [has a] lack of eroticism and lack of guilt association” (Grossman, 2001, p. 101), is clearly challenged by young adult texts such as Thirsty (Anderson, 1997) and Twilight (Meyer, 2008). Nevertheless, Grossman’s study has value for this research in that it acknowledges the trend towards the vampiric in youth culture. However, it fails to address death as a lifted taboo, and the living dead as representations of an apocalyptically-minded culture. As most current analyses of children’s and young adult Gothic fiction, including Grossman’s, stem from a psychoanalytic approach (including gender and sexuality) (see Kidd, 1996; A. Jackson et al., 2007; James, 2008), my research focuses on connections between the Gothic and the survival of adolescence.27 McGillis argues that the popularity of the Gothic in YA fiction is based on fear. However, he also sees the Gothic as responding to particular fears at the fin de siècle, such as terrorism and scientific advances, and that it “maybe

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27 There have been other studies concerning vampires and the “culture of consumption” (Latham, 2002), and in the adult fiction area a post-colonial approach is taken by Stephen Arata (1990), yet they remain founded on psychoanalytical approaches.
even combats this fear in some strange way” (McGillis, 2007, p. 231). This viewpoint aligns with the survival of adolescence through transformation and, in this genre, the transformation of fear into power, together with the hybridization of the body seen with Gothic creatures such as vampires (Bull, 1999, p. 72; McGillis, 2007, p. 231).

Spooner further argues that contemporary Gothic “possesses no original” and is founded on the re-production of Gothic narratives since before recorded language; she layers this with the prevalence of Baudrillard’s notion of the simulacrum (where the copy is more real than the real) in vampire fiction (Spooner, 2006, p. 32). The simulacrum inherent to the Gothic genre is coupled with the simulacrum of death as “dark glamour” that allows a person to “live beautifully with death” (Vinken in Steele & Park, 2008, p. 66). The Gothic sensibility lends itself to a post-apocalyptic analysis, because of both the inclusion of the undifferentiated undead, and the desire to incorporate death into life: “rather than definitively marking the end of life, death is inextricably intermingled with life” (p. 11). The dialectics between life and death, and surface and depth, run parallel in the Gothic. James addresses the Gothic in YA fiction in terms of horror, gender and sexuality, and the genre as a whole (2008, pp. 116-126), concluding that death in fantasy is a transgression of boundaries that is escapist “by imagining that death is not absolute” (p. 150). However, James acknowledges that such texts also engage “with ideas about transformation or change” (p. 176). Spooner’s Gothic is “intermingled with life” rather than just a transgression of life by incorporating the simulacrum of death into everyday existence. The texts chosen for chapter 6 refuse to use death as an escape, and engage with death as a transformative presence in life.

The fact that the three Gothic texts chosen for analysis have vampire protagonists brings the apocalypse of death, the post-apocalyptic existence after the revelation of
death, and the predilection for the simulacrum in the Gothic into a matrix of dialectics that provide a productive space for analysis. Anderson’s *Thirsty* (1997) offers a sardonic look at youth. It depicts the failures of a young adult attempting to escape his own vampirism. This novel is contrasted with two more recent vampire series that challenge Anderson’s bleak view of the young adult space and its ability to incorporate the apocalypse of death. Meyer’s *Twilight* series (Meyer, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008) is included in conjunction with Mead’s *Vampire Academy* (Mead, 2007, 2008b, 2008a) as two high-selling vampire series with teenage protagonists. However, they are set in vampire worlds that are vastly different, opening up a space for comparative analysis. The recent surge in the popularity of vampire fiction marketed to young adults has brought with it a variety of interpretations of “the vampire,” mostly drawing on the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon, 1997) character Angel as a New Age, sensitive, and restrained vampire icon (also seen in “Evernight”, by Grey, 2008). The two series chosen for analysis provide markedly different approaches to concepts of survival from those offered in *Thirsty* (1997), as they can be viewed through discourses of the apocalyptic.

By analysing these texts and discourses through the dialectics outlined in this methodology, chapter 6 draws together the theoretical and methodological strands of this thesis with the theme of young adults surviving through apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic transformations made manifest in fantasy fiction.

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28 *The Australian* newspaper reported that “worldwide sales for the Twilight Saga are now at 42 million copies, with 1.4 million of those sales coming from Australia” (AAP, 2009), which makes it more popular than the adult text, *The Da Vinci Code* (Brown, 2003).
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Conclusion

Reading the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic in YA fiction is a new pursuit, and the methodology contained in this chapter provides a theoretically informed and tailored approach that addresses the requirements of the theoretical framework and the fiction selected for analysis. This study examines a range of texts, protagonists, genre subsets within fantasy, and thematic concerns in order to test the approach. The variations, slippages and ambiguities that arise from “post-ing” the apocalyptic are analysed drawing on the dialectic of time and space. Each aspect of this methodology supports a lack of telos, and favours transformation as a means of progress, even in the face of mortality.

Each text analysed in the coming chapters has a relationship with death, and as discussed in the previous chapter, death is always already linked to the apocalyptic dialectic of being and nothing, and of life and death. The wide range of fantasy fictions, including magic realism, science fiction, post-disaster and Gothic fiction, provide the opportunity to ascertain the elements that the apocalyptic discourses hold in common narrative, and how these transform into the post-apocalyptic. The chosen fictions also contain a variety of undifferentiated characters, allowing their function in the narratives to be comprehensively analysed within the discourses of adolescence.

The theoretical framework provided in the previous chapter is congruent with a poststructural perspective. A study of language in the text gives access to underlying assumptions and constructions in the fictional world and deconstructs the signs that have certain meanings within certain discourses, and further, considers how each text provides a different opportunity to challenge or support these discourses. Narratological tools provide assistance with textual reference, and have been appropriated into the
framework for analysis. Discourses of subject formation overlap and intermingle with those of adolescence, apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic and form a fresh reading of YA fiction, and the ways of being that are being offered by contemporary texts.

The theoretical perspectives in chapter 2 and ways of reading contained in this chapter illuminate, and are illuminated by, the chosen texts, and form the focus of the next three chapters. These chapters examine whether surviving adolescence through apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic transformations is validated in YA fiction, or if not, and what a deviation means for the discourses in question. Approaching the concrete textual productions with theoretical positions based on contradiction enacts another form of dialectical tension, with the potential synthesis of theory and text that permits an insight into the effect of such tensions regarding adolescence and survival.
Chapter 4

Apocalyptic Discourses: The dialectic of integration

“Is it human? Is it monster? This thing sprung from the muds. We do not know for certain”

(“Swill” in Cornish, 2008, p. 585)

The apocalyptic model for analysis, as laid out in the previous chapter, underpins the approach to the three focal texts in this chapter: *The House of the Scorpion* (Farmer, 2002), *The Otori Trilogy* (*Across the Nightingale Floor*, 2002, *Grass For His Pillow*, 2003, and *Brilliance of the Moon*, 2004) and the *Monster Blood Tattoo* series (*Foundling*, 2006, *The Lamplighter*, 2008). How the apocalyptic cycle differs from the hero story is considered in this chapter, together with an analysis of the dialectic tensions that appear within the apocalyptic. The hero quest reaffirms the fundamental binary codes of the normative world by maintaining the goal of expelling the abject (whether or not this is achieved). In the apocalyptic cycle, the undifferentiated (those that do not conform with binary differentiation) participate in the dialectic of integration. With the apocalyptic model for analysis, the focus turns from the binary relationship to the dialectical tensions that arise between contradictory concepts (binaries that simultaneously oppose and construct each other), such as human and animal, life and death. Embodiments of such contradictions are central to the analysis. As outlined in chapter 1, the way the undifferentiated young adult survives, and *lives through*, undifferentiation creates the apocalyptic moments focussed on in this chapter. The ambiguities that the abject poses have been considered by Wilson as “the embodiment of anarchism” (Wilson, 2001, p. 24). This chapter argues that narrations of adolescence
within the apocalyptic cycle reveal that anarchy can be a precursor to a new state for both the undifferentiated and the community in which s/he resides. Furthermore, the young adult and community rely on this new state to survive their current time. While the apocalyptic recognises this ambiguity as abjection and alienation, it also pushes it further into the possibilities of surviving abjection without compromising the time and space of adolescence through erasure of self, or absorption into the original binary. For the undifferentiated young adult, survival requires coming to terms with his/her lack of differentiation, and for the community to survive it must also come to terms with the undifferentiated.

The central figures in the apocalyptic cycle are the undifferentiated: those who do not fit into a binary. The social position of the undifferentiated alters as the cycle turns, and as they play the roles of catalyst, sacrifice/taboo or saviour at different times. Although diverse, the undifferentiated protagonists in this chapter, monster, superhuman and clone, share defining features. Where Rossamünd is mostly human, in Monster Blood Tattoo, Takeo is an “enhanced” human in Tales of the Otori, and Matt is a clone in The House of the Scorpion. They are all paradoxically “inclusively excluded” by the societies they inhabit (Agamben, 1998, pp. 7-8). As indicated, this contradiction of inclusion and exclusion draws on the Roman figure of homo sacer: the person who is sacred and damned, and who can be killed but not sacrificed.29 The gods of the underworld have claimed this figure and he/she lives a “bare life,” that is, forever living on the borders of death. His/her status as such makes them unacceptable to the gods of life, and she/he is of no use as a sacrifice to appease them (Agamben, 1998, p. 170).

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29 While the Latin term “homo” is masculine, I have chosen to preserve the term yet include the feminine.
This chapter has two parts. In the first part, I examine *The House of the Scorpion* (Farmer, 2002) and Hearn’s *Tales of the Otori* trilogy (Hearn, 2002, 2003, 2004) as texts that elucidate the concepts of undifferentiation that form the basis of the apocalyptic cycle. These texts also provide the opportunity to consider how the apocalyptic cycle can be understood across YA fiction. This examination also considers how through the acceptance of contradiction, the dialectic of integration enables transformation for the young adult and her/his community, challenging the “heroic” need to banish contradiction, as discussed in the previous chapter. The structure of the apocalyptic cycle is a lens through which to view the events in the texts. It further makes the connections between societal coping mechanisms of taboo and sacrifice, chaos and exclusion, before culminating in apocalypse and a new equilibrium. In the second part, this chapter argues that there is an incomplete apocalyptic cycle in *Monster Blood Tattoo* (Cornish, 2006, 2008). Using the apocalyptic model for analysis enables a focus on agential subjectivity, and the dialectical tensions within apocalyptic discourses. The analysis also attends to the use of adult characters to represent maladjusted undifferentiated, and their role in the life of the young adult undifferentiated. The overarching concerns of the analysis are how the undifferentiated survive through the apocalyptic cycle, and how the community changes in order to facilitate the dialectic of integration. These twin concerns are central to my argument that the apocalyptic cycle and the apocalyptic model for analysis uncover coping mechanisms that are particular to the liminal young adult, and can provide new readings of exclusion in YA fiction. The apocalyptic cycle illuminated in this chapter establishes the metalanguage of the apocalyptic, and lays the chronological foundations from which to extend into the post-apocalyptic in the following chapters.
I. Setting the Apocalyptic Scene: Being undifferentiated

The first element of an apocalyptic narrative structure, as discussed in chapters 2 and 3, is the identification of the undifferentiated. The undifferentiated cross the borders between binaries, and the resulting hybrid occupies a liminal space between contradictory propositions. The manifestation of this space is embodied in the undifferentiated subject. The liminal space is reflected in the borderland setting of Opium situated between the USA and Mexico in *The House of the Scorpion*. The protagonist, Matt, lives on the opium farm (the Alacrán Estate) owned by tycoon El Patrón. The Alacrán Estate is closed to the outer world, and inhabited by El Patrón’s family, his bodyguards and staff, clones, and hundreds of eejits; humans whose individual brain function has been stopped. A chip having been inserted into their brains, Eejits are mostly captured refugees trying to escape from Mexico to the USA. They are then used as efficient labour for farming the opium, crop picking, lawn snipping, and other mundane tasks. Clones, on the other hand, are fatally “harvested” for their organs, and a select few (such as Matt) are left with their full mental faculties and raised as children (though not normally more than one child at a time is needed). Matt escapes to Mexico in order to avoid becoming an organ donor. He functions as the primary undifferentiated, yet the inclusion of the eejits also deepens the sense of undifferentiation on the opium farm.

Clones, although clearly alive, are constructed in the novel as living a suspended life. Matt expresses his existence as “only a photograph of a human” (Farmer, 2002, p. 84). His description resonates to some extent with Baudrillard’s description of clones as

30 The concept of hybridity and the liminal space is also used by Bradford, Mallan, Stephens, and McCallum with respect to transformative utopianism (2008, p. 27).
“the shadow, the mirror ima... which haunts the subject like a subtle and always averted death” (1994b, p. 95). While death plays a vital role in the apocalyptic discourses in Farmer’s text, the subject in question is not the one Baudrillard refers to as haunted, but rather the one doing the haunting, namely, the clone. To address Matt’s anguish at being “only a photograph” it is necessary to investigate his social location. Clones (including Matt) are alive, and yet they are excluded from the legal, religious and social recognition that, in part, defines a “legitimate” life. The clone, like Agamben’s (1998) homo sacer (sacred/damned man), similarly exists in a paradoxical state of inclusive exclusion. In Roman law, if a person was declared “sacred” they are then excluded from any legal or religious protection, and yet, in labelling the homo sacer as excluded, her or she is also paradoxically included (Agamben, 1998, p. 72). They cannot be sacrificed, as it would be a superfluous offering when they have already given themselves to the gods: “Sacer designates... a guilty person whom one consecrates to the gods of the underworld” (Alfred Ernout-Meillet in Agamben, 1998, p. 79). They can be murdered without the act being considered homicide, indicating their status under the law. In this same way, in The House of the Scorpion, clones are recognised by the law while being excluded from any legal protection.

The eejits in The House of the Scorpion have had their intelligence severely inhibited, any trace of individuality removed. They are given the mundane, repetitive and filthy jobs that no “human” would consider, and are kept in “pens” (p. 173). Most clones are also altered; at birth their mental development is halted and they are raised only for their organs. As Noys notes with regard to the sub-human, the eejits and clones are considered to be “something monstrous that exists between the animal and the human” (2005, p. 19). Clones, including Matt, are often treated as animals; he is in all
other respects a “normal” human. In a seemingly friendly exchange between children, Maria (the daughter of El Patrón’s political ally Mendoza) appears to consider the treatment Matt has received as worse than that given to the animals she equates him with, and remarks:

Rosa said they didn’t give you dinner. She’s so mean! I have a dog at home, and if he doesn’t get fed, he howls… you have to promise not to bite me… Emilia says clones are as vicious as werewolves… I sleep with my dog all the time – are you sure you don’t bite? (Farmer, 2002, pp. 30, 34)

While Maria sees Matt as akin to a new puppy, and treats him as such calling him a “bad clone!” (p. 59), he is not afforded many of the rights of an animal (for example, the puppy is allowed in the house, whereas initially Matt is not permitted inside). Like the werewolves to which Maria compares him, Matt is considered neither human nor wild animal, as he is caught in the liminal state between existing and not-existing; he is alive and yet does not have ownership of his own unique genetic makeup, as he is always a copy. While the “eejits” exist as homini saceri, as the barest form of life, Matt at least has knowledge of his own existence. He is still, nevertheless, the undifferentiated in The House of the Scorpion, and is a pivotal element in the apocalyptic cycle.

Hearn’s Tales of the Otori trilogy is set in a fictional Japan called “The Three Countries,” in the time of warrior classes and clans, and before advances in technology. The society is feudal, with warriors (the ruling class), “outcastes” and farmers. The dominant religion follows “the Enlightened One,” with two subordinate religions: that of the “Hidden,” who worship one god, and the other, the collective outcaste nature spirit
worship. Inheritance, honour and family name are crucial to survival in the warrior class. The first of the series, *Across the Nightingale Floor* (2002), follows Takeo (in first person) from humble beginnings in a secret mountain village that follows the religion of the Hidden, an ancient yet subjugated and punished faith. Takeo witnesses the slaughter of his family and the population of his entire village and the violent expulsion of the Hidden from the social order. These acts mark the moment when he understands his own undifferentiation: “at that moment the world changed for me. A kind of fog rose before my eyes and when it cleared nothing seemed real. I felt I had crossed over into the other world” (2002, p. 5). After escaping, Takeo is found by Lord Otori Shigeru, who adopts him as his successor and son into the high warrior class belonging to the Otori clan, hiding his past as a believer of the Hidden religion. It becomes evident that Takeo is of mixed parentage; his father was one of the Tribe who possess unusually enhanced mental abilities, which in Takeo’s case are supernatural hearing, stealth and invisibility. The Tribe are mercenary spies, and Takeo is torn between his allegiance to them and to Lord Otori.

The undifferentiated in both texts are abjected; they are taboo and considered unclean. According to Bull, “the unclean are those species in whom the characteristics of the clean are absent or mixed” (1999, p. 62). They are defined by their difference from the binary structure of the society to which they try to belong, and yet they are similar enough to require acknowledgement by society in some form. Both Takeo and Matt contain enough mixed elements of the accepted and the abjected to be considered a threat to the binary code to which each society conforms. Takeo is now a member of a powerful clan, yet displays “unnatural” talents; and Matt appears like a normal human, yet embodies the consumable and taboo clone. Attending to the apocalyptic discourses
in the text reveals that the Alacráns have attempted to hide the undifferentiated by establishing the taboo on clones from the outset. The narrative begins with Matt’s creation, and while it uses Biblical phrasing, for instance, “In the beginning…” (Farmer, 2002, p. 2), this framing problematises the notion of “origin” within the context of growth chambers and glass tubes. The society’s mechanism for coping with the undifferentiated, both clone and altered human, is to “hide” them in different ways; acknowledging the taboo while trying to subvert it. In *Tales of the Otori*, the outcastes are untouchable and unclean due to the abject nature of the (essential) duties they perform, such as burning the dead and cleaning human waste. The outcastes live literally on the periphery of the society, and cannot look or be looked upon by non-outcastes when they enter the general domain to go about their work. Similarly, the eejits in *The House of the Scorpion* are hidden in plain view, working on the fields where they are occasionally seen by the Alacrán family, yet without any cognition of their existence. Both outcastes and eejits are “seen through” rather than acknowledged. The clones used for organ harvest, however, are unclean and taboo: Celia (Matt’s adoptive mother/carer figure) secretly tells Matt, “all of us have been warned not to talk about clones” (Farmer, 2002, p. 124). As the intelligence of nearly all clones is halted at birth, though Matt’s is not, his undifferentiated status is magnified. Taboo and sacrifice, as Bull notes, are a society’s attempt to control the undifferentiated elements that threaten the stability of a binary. Matt seems to be a human clone, as opposed to being a human or a clone, and his hybridity (or undifferentiated status) reveals this dialectic as always already present. Matt’s existence makes the taboo on clones more difficult to uphold, and also draws attention to the dialectics of origin and death simultaneously through his unnatural creation and the unnatural death for which he is initially destined.
In *Tales of the Otori*, Takeo also holds a magnified undifferentiated status. Takeo mourns his village as he and Shigeru travel to the Otori home. Takeo stops speaking, metaphorically ceasing his utterance to the world after the familiar system of meaning generation is taken from him: “Something was happening to my voice, I could feel it draining away from me” (2002, p. 14). He describes his newly undifferentiated self: “My state of half-being, my speechlessness, persisted” (2002, p. 58). Takeo’s “half-being” develops in parallel to the emergence of the powers he has inherited from the Tribe. He sees his mixed parentage as the mixing of “three bloods” (2004, p. 23). His mother’s Hidden religion, and its tolerance of difference, is shunned and feared by the clans. Shigeru describes the society’s attempts to suppress their presence with sacrifice: “The Hidden are tortured and murdered – crucified, suspended upside down over pits of waste, hung in baskets for the crows to feed on” (2002, p. 174). Takeo is adopted and brought into the clan society by Lord Otori Shigeru, who is educated and secretly compassionate towards all religions and peaceful ways of being in his community (2004, p. 8). Just as when Matt is brought into the big house to live with the other “normal” children, Takeo’s adoption compounds rather than overcomes his undifferentiation. While Shigeru accepts both Takeo’s Hidden past, and his Tribal links, his tolerance is rare in the society. To protect Takeo from persecution Shigeru must uphold taboo, and silence Takeo’s Hidden prayers. Takeo relates his first attempt to pray after Shigeru finds him: “I knelt on the floor and said the prayers we always used before the first meal of the day. ‘You can’t do that,’ Lord Otori said... ‘not even alone. If you want to live, you have to forget that part of your life’” (2002, p. 13). Further, Takeo’s father was an escaped Tribe member, who rejected the murderous ways of the spies in favour of the Hidden. However, Takeo inherited his father’s powers and once the Tribe learn of his
existence they attempt to lure him to their order. These powers are feared by the non-Tribe peoples. As Takeo’s Tribe teacher Kenji warns him, “the warriors think it’s sorcery... they’ll despise you for it” (2002, p. 158). Takeo internalises this warning: “I did not want to be reminded I was an outsider, even a freak” (2002, p. 158). The other students learning the sword reinforce his fears, and confirm Kenji’s warning through “often whispered insults... Sorcerer. Cheat” (2002, p. 159). As seen in these examples, the Three Countries utilise taboo and sacrifice as a coping mechanism to abject the undifferentiated from mainstream culture; however, these mechanisms are beginning to fail.

This use of taboo as a coping mechanism is also seen in Kaede’s story in Tales of the Otori. Lady Kaede Shirakawa (Takeo’s eventual wife) is the daughter of a minor lord who provides a counter-narration in the third person. She has lived a fraught life since the age of eight, held hostage by a rival clan – a common practice to maintain a tentative peace. Kaede is “cursed” when she brings death to two men: a guard who attempts to rape her, and a much older man betrothed to her, who actually dies of natural causes (2002, p. 95). There is no literal cause for the taboo at this point, but the reputation of being cursed functions like a taboo and Kaede becomes a scapegoat to explain the men’s deaths. Her unparalleled beauty damns her further, as she notes: “people began to say that to know me, to desire me, brings death” (2002, p. 142). Her beauty draws people in, but her tainted past repulses them. Repeated references to her curse accentuate the attempts to expel her from society. Her reputation as dangerous contradictorily makes her more attractive to powerful men who wish to “tame her,” and, through her, perhaps tame death also. Although Kaede tries to stop people repeating her

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31 Curse is revisited in chapter 5 with regard to the role of prophecy in the post-apocalyptic.
ill fortune, the “Ladies” in her company assert: “it will always be said... It is part of the
Lady’s life now” (2002, p. 101). She is not merely taboo for her ill-fated history with
men, she also threatens the gendered binaries of the society by desiring knowledge and
power, even sitting “cross-legged like a man” when in safe company, in a culture of

Taboo makes something forbidden, and because that thing is then considered
unclean, there is always a fear of contamination. When Kaede pricks her finger on a
needle, “Junko quickly pulled the silk away before she stained it” (2002, p. 95). This
instance highlights the metonymic association of the stain on the silk with the stain
Kaede brings to the stable binaries of the society. In a related way in The House of the
Scorpion, Matt is treated as unclean when the household discovers he is a clone by
reading the tattoo on his foot that states: “Property of the Alacrán Estate” (p. 23). Before
the discovery, Matt’s injured feet are being treated by a maid, whilst he lies on a clean
sheet on the couch. The maid tells Matt: “‘you’re brave not to cry’” (p. 22). As soon as
his tattoo is revealed, everything changes: Mr Alacrán shouts at the maid, “‘You idiot!
You need a vet for this little beast!... How dare you defile this house?’” (p. 23). The
sheet now stained with his blood must be burned, and they take “the creature” outside
and dump him on the lawn (p. 23). In order to remove any evidence of the contaminating
undifferentiated the other children wash and change, further indicating the taboo on
clones. Bull’s example of slime provides a strange, but useful analogy: “the dissolution
of difference is instantly contagious: slime elides the distinction not only between self
and world but between all other objects in the world” (Bull, 1999, p. 60). Just as slime is
sticky and leaves behind traces of its presence, Matt has left behind his blood, which
must be “radically excluded” (Bull, 1999, p. 60), because it is a reminder of a transgression of boundaries and is a sign of abjection.

Matt’s “unveiling” to the other characters is an important step in the apocalyptic narrative, as the society attempts to reinforce the taboo on clones. Taboo works as “exclusion through the avoidance” (Bull, 1999, p. 68), necessarily hiding what does not fit in the “normal” functions of the society, where the clone/human boundaries are more distinct. Matt is forced to live in a caged room, full of sawdust (as litter), and given the minimum of care by a hateful maid and an apathetic doctor. He must not be killed, because he is destined to be used for organ transplant. However, he cannot be integrated fully into the household. In this apocalyptic narrative the threat of chaos is magnified when the taboo is broken. María breaks the taboo by visiting Matt on his first night in the cell, and although she treats him almost like a new pet (as described earlier), she nevertheless talks, touches and interacts with the taboo clone. This gesture is similar to Shigeru’s acceptance of Takeo. In the apocalyptic, the disregard for taboo “becomes the primary index to the proximity of the end” (Bull, 1999, p. 71), and begins a series of events that lead to the apocalypse in both novels.

The identification of the undifferentiated, as demonstrated here, coincides with the recognition of the failure of societal coping mechanisms of taboo and sacrifice. This process of identification is used throughout the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic analyses in this thesis. The broken taboo embodied in the undifferentiated characters is now extended outwards into the broken taboos in the community, leading to chaos and apocalypse.
**Chaos and The Spread of Pollution**

With taboo and sacrifice in place, the society can continue to function. However, the spread of “pollution” (or social unease) provides a heightened dialectical tension that is essential to the structure of the narrative in apocalyptic fiction (this can vary in post-apocalyptic fiction, as will been seen in chapter 6). The use of taboo as a safeguard mechanism, however, breaks down, and apocalyptic narratives climax in a clash of taboo and sacrifice, as will be demonstrated below. Pollution builds up towards chaos, and its wide-reaching effects exacerbate the inevitable disruption to the initial social equilibrium in the narrative. The chaos and disintegration of codes lead to the exclusion of the undifferentiated.

While travelling to Lord Iida’s castle for the organised marriage of Shigeru and Kaede (*Tales of the Otori*), Takeo witnesses many disregarded taboos (such as people travelling during the Festival of the Dead, which is normally forbidden) and attempts at scapegoating (through hanging followers of the Hidden religion). According to Bull, “the scapegoat is perceived to be both the source of disorder and the means of reconciliation” (1999, p. 63). Iida, the current ruler of the Three Countries, is an intolerant and “evil” man bent on destroying Shigeru and the Hidden so he can maintain his totalitarian rule. The arranged marriage between Shigeru and Kaede is meant by Iida as punishment of Shigeru due to her curse. Iida is not a popular ruler, and for a superstitious society the arrival of wild storms seems to symbolise the discontent felt about him. Iida understands this and attempts to shift the blame for the storm onto the Hidden, as Kenji notes: “The Tohan seek to avert unrest by blaming the Hidden for the disasters of the storms... Four are suspended from the castle walls” (2002, p. 190). Iida
seeks to scapegoat the Hidden to distract from the problems of his government, and to maintain the status quo and the present binary code. This accords with Bull’s point that “ambiguity has been excluded to preserve binary distinctions, just as a scapegoat may be sacrificed to maintain social order” (Bull, 1999, p. 97). The growing unhappiness with Iida’s rule becomes sympathy with the Hidden. As taboo against them wanes, the use of the Hidden as a scapegoat loses its relevance. Takeo uses his powers to access the cages and give the Hidden suspended in cages a merciful death with poison, and even though he remains unidentified his actions are deemed to be those of the “Angel of Yamagata,” and the legend is spread far, showing support for the compassionate action and disregard for taboo (2002, pp. 202, 205, 218, 219).

Actions such as avoiding, sacrificing and scapegoating undifferentiation fail as a means of survival, and chaos spreads, collapsing the social structure. The political situation is fraught with instability, division and deceit. Seventeen-year-old Takeo fights his internal war over his lack of a stable sense of self, and introspectively ponders “if this Takeo was real or just a construction created to serve the purposes of the Tribe, and the Otori” (2002, p. 92). The dialectical tensions between Takeo’s internal sense of self and the external constructions of self resonate with the young adult experience of “becoming” through intersubjectivity discussed in chapter 2. Shigeru plans to have Takeo murder Iida in revenge for his brother’s death, as a necessary prelude to uniting the Three Countries under a tolerant and benevolent rule. Their mission is thwarted when the Tribe kidnap Takeo to prevent his capture by Iida in what they see as a doomed assassination attempt. Takeo, bound and gagged by the Tribe, and led by Kenji (his teacher and Shigeru’s friend), laments Kenji’s treachery: “I tried to scream in outrage at the enormity of the betrayal” (2002, p. 249). He is silenced, as before when he
transformed from being one of the Hidden to become one of the Otori clan. Takeo is symbolically expelled from the signification system as he once more defies labelling. Takeo thus occupies multiple subject positions from Hidden, to Otori, to Tribe member. In one sense, he embodies the failing social organisation around him. Bull describes such a period of chaos as “resulting from the mixing together of all the previous woes” in the society (Bull, 1999, p. 70). As taboos fall away and the coping mechanisms fail, dialectical tensions arise between inclusion and exclusion, leading to chaos from unresolved contradiction in both the subject (Takeo) and his community.

The chaos and disregard for taboo in *Across the Nightingale Floor* (the first book in the series) culminates in the second book, *Grass for his Pillow*, when the universal taboo on incest is broken. While Takeo has gone into hiding to be taught by the Tribe, Kaede returns home husbandless as Shigeru is now dead. Her father is now senile, and while he teaches her, against his better judgement, how to manage the property he also lusts after her: “While I taught you I lusted after you. It was my punishment for going against nature. I am completely corrupted by you” (Hearn, 2003, p. 135). His attempt at rape is thwarted by two close members of the Tribe who protect Kaede and kill him, making his murder appear as an honourable suicide. The attempted act of incest is the nadir of societal breakdown, and ushers in a time of exile for both Kaede and Takeo. Kaede is hidden from the wider society as she takes over the management of her small estate, while Takeo escapes to the monastery to avoid all claims on him by the Tribe, the Otori clan, and the Hidden. The apocalyptic is marked by more than abjection, taboo and the “unclean,” but also by “strange hybrids” such as Takeo himself, as a hybrid of all the

peoples in his society, and Kaede, who is both female and now powerful (Bull, 1999, p. 72).

Chaos, exclusion and broken taboos are also to be found in *The House of the Scorpion*, as Matt is sent to live in the Big House, and is inclusively excluded within the domestic space. When El Patrón (from whom Matt was cloned) leaves, he insists that Matt be treated with respect, “educated, well fed, and entertained. He is not to be mistreated” (Farmer, 2002, pp. 62-63). Despite these orders from the lord of the house, the taboo is not lifted, as evidenced when El Patrón’s car leaves and “the servants parted around Matt as though he were a rock in a stream. He was ignored. Not mistreated, just ignored” (p. 64). Matt not only is unseen by the household, even by the servants, but he is also tormented by his peers, such as Tom (also a rival for Maria’s attentions). When Matt fights with Tom, only Tom is punished. Matt begins to understand how he is treated like Maria’s dog Furball: “Matt wasn’t punished at all. While this would normally have been accepted by Matt, he is concerned that Furball is not punished for his crimes either. He couldn’t understand the difference between right and wrong” (p. 85). This incident can be read as supporting the concept of clone as *homo sacer*. Matt is excluded from the legal system (which allocates punishment), and he is beginning to realise that the treatment shown by Maria is not what he considers to be equitable. As discussed earlier, Maria thinks of Matt as a pet. Similarly, Takeo in the *Tales of the Otori* series, has been referred to, and refers to himself, as a dog; that Shigeru found him like a lost dog, an association he extends to his hearing ability: “‘like a dog?’ ‘Yes, like a dog,’ I replied. ‘Useful to your masters.’” His words stayed with me. I was useful to my masters, to Lord Shigeru, to Kenji, to the Tribe” (2002, pp. 77, 215). Both Takeo and
Matt are “useful” to their masters, as skilled mercenaries or organ donors, and, as such, are protected, yet shunned in their own intersubjective circles.

Takeo is rejected by his peers, as mentioned earlier, through “whispered insults” calling him a sorcerer (2002, p. 159). In a similar way in The House of the Scorpion, Tom gives “voice” to the society’s feeling of disgust about Matt’s taboo status:

Tom was the master of the near miss. He punched the air near Matt’s head, practising – he said – karate exercises. He whispered insults too low for anyone else to hear. “You’re a clone,” he murmured. “Know what that is? A kind of puke. You were puked up by a cow.” (p. 67)

Tom is referring to how clones are “grown” inside brood cows. His whispers are constant throughout the text, repeated in Matt’s mind when Tom is absent from the house. The phrase “puked up by a cow” carries many subtexts that all point to Matt’s taboo status. Not only was he grown in an animal, he was not even birthed by that animal but abjected, or “puked.” Tom seems to enjoy reminding Matt of his origins and the reasons why Tom considers Matt abhorrent, re-enforcing the taboo despite Matt’s preferential treatment by El Patrón. Whilst Matt must be kept in the Big House on El Patrón’s orders, everyone (apart from Celia, his mother figure, and Tam Lin, his body guard) still treats him as taboo. He must be taught, yet no teacher will teach a clone, so he has to have an eejit teacher. Despite having Celia and Tam Lin, he is excluded from society, and as the narrative moves on he begins to realise the magnitude of this position: “underneath Matt felt a hollowness” (Farmer, 2002, p. 84). He is inclusively excluded by the household. Furthermore, he realises the other family members are thinking what Tom whispers to him, and that he causes unease in people. It was only
when he was revealed as a clone (when the tattoo on his foot is revealed) that pollution started to spread, leading to chaos.

Matt’s “original” (from whom his DNA was taken) exacerbates Matt’s exclusion, and the subsequent pollution arising from this. El Patrón is 148 years of age, the result of his many transplants from cloned boys like Matt. His long life is referred to as vampiric by many characters and at a family dinner someone comments: “the old vampire… managed to crawl out of the coffin again” (pp. 99, see also pp. 173, 213). El Patrón claims passionately that he was “owed” the lives of his clones, as justice for the deaths of his siblings (Farmer, 2002, p. 233). While Matt is to be sacrificed so that his original can keep living, it is unacceptable for taboo people to be eaten (metaphorically, through organ donorship) because they are unclean. By giving him several low doses of arsenic, Celia slowly poisons Matt, which further taints and pollutes the “sacrifice” Matt would otherwise have made to save El Patrón’s life. The ability of the scorpion to stab itself is metaphorically enacted through the possibility of El Patrón poisoning himself with his own clone. In this text, the focus on both origin and end (birth and death), perverts rather than adheres to “the human need for purposes, for teleological and evolutionary myths” (McCallum, 1999, p. 127). The dialectical tensions between origin and death are also evident in the displacement of Matt’s birth to the brood cow “puke” and death for organ transplant, and El Patrón’s extended life and constant rebirth through his clones. The “need” for telos and origin is constructed in the text as a harmful condition to both self and society. Matt must be released from his own telos as organ donor to “overcome” originating from a brood cow. The collision of sacrifice and taboo, birth and death,

33 He is also compared to an Egyptian Pharaoh, hoarding jewels and presents to accompany him to the afterlife (Farmer, 2002, p. 140). This aspect of El Patrón’s character will be explored later in the return of the undifferentiated.
marks a breakdown of the coping mechanisms of social structures that are no longer
sustainable.

Pollution of the social fabric is evident in *The House of the Scorpion*, as the
family are growing uncomfortable with El Patrón and his “drug lord” friend Mr
MacGregor’s rejuvenation. Moreover, the men hold positions of such authority that
nothing can be done about the manner in which they disregard taboos, much as the
ruling class breaks taboos in *Tales of the Otori*. Early in the narrative the only mention
of the taboo in front of El Patrón and Mr MacGregor occurs when El Viejo is present at
the dinner table. The exchange is significant as Matt realises El Viejo is El Patrón’s
grandson, and understands that he looks so old because he didn’t have any “whatever-
they-were implants” (p. 106), as Matt calls them. When El Viejo’s son declares, “‘Father
decided implants were immoral... and I honoured his decision.’ A sudden intake of
breath around the table told Matt that Mr Alacrán had said something dangerous” (p.
106). Matt’s statement about the implants shows his lack of awareness regarding the use
of clones, and the use of implants from clones is hidden from him. The second passage
also confirms the family know that the men are breaking the taboo on clones by using
implants.

Before a period of exclusion, Matt realises the extent of his undifferentiation
when he discovers the existence of other clones, and comes to understand his own
“destiny” as an organ donor. Matt discovers a clone (with his intelligence removed)
chained to a bed: “Matt thought it was some kind of beast, so alien and terrible was its
face”, but Tom explains, “It’s not a boy... It’s a clone” (pp. 119-120). The clone is
almost the living embodiment of the sickness of the society, the result of hiding the
undifferentiated (clones), as it writhes and screams on the bed. Matt’s reaction is
extreme: “[he] felt as though he’d been punched in the stomach” (p. 120). Even though he learns the destiny of the clone is to provide a new liver for Mr MacGregor, Matt does not identify with him or comprehend his own destiny.

Later Matt reflects on this encounter and tries to understand why anyone would make a “monster” (p. 190) like the clone on the bed. The moment of revelation for Matt is accented in the narration through the use of flashbacks:

Matt remembered Mr. MacGregor and El Patrón sitting in adjoining wheelchairs after their operation. Got me a new liver, Mr. Macgregor had said, patting his stomach, and went in for a set of kidneys while I was at it. He’d looked at Matt with those bright blue eyes that were so much like Tom’s, and Matt had been revolted.

No! It couldn’t be!

Matt remembered the birthday party where El Patrón had so suddenly recovered his mental abilities. Fetal brain implants – I must try that sometime, MacGregor had said. It’s done wonders for you.

It couldn’t be! (pp. 190-191, emphasis in original)

Each remembered fragment of conversation from his past is italicised suggesting that it comes to him unwilling. His presentation of the evidence like a murder-mystery climax allows him to refuse to believe for as long as possible that his beloved El Patrón could be “evil.” The adults’ discussions sound commonplace, and yet when they come together in Matt’s flashbacks there is an uncaring and casual nature to those comments about the use of fetal body parts. The indifferent, matter-of-fact tone of their remarks elides the fact that a taboo has been broken. When Matt first hears the adults, he is unaware of the significance of the comments, or what they actually refer to. By speaking
the comments in the open, the transgressions are hidden in plain sight. When the accumulation of evidence is too great to ignore, Matt repeats “It couldn’t be!”, as he tries to come to terms with what the evidence shows him. As apocalyptic as this seems, in fact Matt has merely fully accepted his own undifferentiation and abjection in the chaotic clash of taboo and sacrifice, preceding a time of exclusion.

The pollution in *The House of the Scorpion* stems from the undifferentiated, Matt, and society’s inability to cope with his presence. The “ingestion” of the clones, or, literally, their incorporation into the body of the original transgresses the coping mechanism of the society and causes a breakdown. The poison in Matt’s body is metonymic of the poison spreading throughout the society. This section accordingly has examined the failure of taboo to rid the society of the undifferentiated or polluting elements. The elders in the two narratives, El Patrón and Iida, are leaders who disregard taboo while at the same time punish others who do the same.

The next section maps the process of exclusion, the apocalypses that occur in this unique space and time, the return of the undifferentiated to the society, and the establishment of a new equilibrium.

*From Exclusion to Apocalypse*

Comparable to experiencing abjection, the undifferentiated are excluded (or exclude themselves) from society, or become “inoperative” (Wilson, 2001, p. 24). However, in the apocalyptic this is not a time of “terror” but a time of realisation and transformation that is imperative for the young adult to survive. McCallum sees “exclusion” as a strategy and process for denying the “transgressive other” an “active subject position” in his/her respective community (1999, p. 123). While the lack of
“activity” is seen in both focal texts here, this section argues that exclusion in the apocalyptic cycle does not necessarily result in solipsism, fragmentation, or “dissolution of the self” (p. 115). As outlined in chapter 3, the hero enacts the exclusion of the abject/undifferentiated, and the undifferentiated experiences exclusion in order to transform. Furthermore, in apocalyptic discourses exclusion precedes apocalypse (revelation), leading to a reintegration into society and the establishment of a new equilibrium. The apocalyptic provides a continuous and overlapping dialectic of integration that is similar to “transformative utopianism” as “always an unfinished business” (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 31). The following discussion demonstrates how each focus text sets this “unfinished” integration in motion.

In Tales of the Otori, Takeo escapes the Tribe, who were also untrusting of his multiple loyalties and inability to adhere to one side or other (Otori or Tribe, further complicated through his Hidden origins). He moves towards revelation during exclusion, as he realises he cannot deny part of his undifferentiated self. He must embrace his varied inheritances, along with his visions for the future, and create multiple and different selfhoods that can continue on into a new way of being within a different configuration of his community. Takeo, exhausted and starving after escaping the Tribe, is helped by the outcaste Jo-an. His willingness to speak to outcasts shocks even himself, and yet he can see that the taboo is a social construction: “they were treated like dogs, beaten and starved, but I saw men... no less than any warrior or merchant” (2003, p. 206). Prophecy begins to take a role in the story as Jo-an takes Takeo to the prophetess in the mountains, who states, “Three bloods are mixed in you,” and prophesies that he will unite the country in peace (2003, p. 212). His multiplicity is attained during states of enhanced liminality, and the prophetess’s recognition gives him
a renewed sense of agency. His acceptance of his own undifferentiated status allows him to transform his abject self into an agential subjectivity that can act towards a new equilibrium for the society founded on the notion that “maybe it’s all one” rather than divided along the lines of belief or heritage (2003, p. 223, 2004, p. 25).

Takeo’s revelatory moment begins his return to society, as he accepts that his embodiment of contradiction is itself “true” and acceptable. He muses on the twists of his life and multiple selves that have led him to this realisation:

I felt that something profound had suddenly been revealed to me, something I could not put into words. My heart seemed to miss a beat in astonishment... I saw the truth that lay behind the teaching and belief... the warrior as much as the outcaste, the priest, the farmer... What name could I give to that clarity? Heaven? God? Fate? Or a myriad of names like the countless old spirits that men believed dwelled in this land? They were all faces of the faceless, expressions of that which cannot be expressed, parts of a truth but never the whole truth. (2004, pp. 25-26)

Language seems inadequate to signify the multifaceted truths of life that Takeo is drawing together, as these “cannot be expressed.” While Trites suggests that adolescent fiction that engages with religious discourse attempts to “repress” the subject, Takeo here is not searching for “an unseen patriarchal deity who must be obeyed” (Trites, 2000, p. 41), but attempts, rather, to comprehend the multitude of spiritual “voices” in his life. The origin of prophecy, a godly utterance, here privileges the revelation over the source, and, as a consequence, the separateness of religions blurs and all are united under the belief in “parts of a truth” that do not require a totalisation or “the whole
truth.” The truth, as Takeo describes it, is connected to belief systems that also support an after-life (“Heaven? God? Fate?”), and his search for a signifier is the search for the “trace” (Derrida, 1974, p. 62). Death and origin are the ultimate signifiers, as discussed in chapter 3, and Derrida describes the endless *différance* (as experienced here by Takeo) as resolving itself only through death. Totalising religion is concerned with “reduction of the trace” by asserting knowledge of death/afterlife. Takeo recognizes the fallibility of attempting to reach the ultimate signified, and the *différance* between the religions and truth mingles and falls apart in the contradiction that Takeo embodies. His acceptance of the play of the sign becomes an acceptance of death in life, and an acknowledgement of the elusive, yet pervasive, trace.

Death is a presence throughout the Otori series, and during his exclusion Takeo comes to terms with his acceptance of the outcastes, who handle the dead and send them into the afterlife (2003, p. 222). Jo-an visits him at the monastery, and Takeo wonders “if he were not alive at all but a visitant from another world,” moving Takeo towards acceptance of death in life (2004, p. 15). Kaede also experiences death in her exclusion through illness. Further, she “dies” after miscarrying Takeo’s child and is then brought back to life: “she felt its spirit was now safe until it began the journey of life again” (2003, p. 272). Her recovery leaves her feeling “that a weight had been lifted from her” and she is ready to “take up life again.” Accepting death allows her to move forward in life with a new sense of agency that others see as a “supernatural power” (2003, pp. 273, 287). Takeo has been seen as an angel since he brought a merciful death to the Hidden in Yamagata, and occupies an “almost supernatural state” (2004, p. 365) as he accepts his undifferentiation as an enhanced life through the acceptance of death. In *Brilliance of the Moon* (the last in the series) Takeo fights to rule the country (with Kaede) according
to this philosophy, and the undifferentiated return to restore order under a new equilibrium, much as Matt does in *The House of the Scorpion*. Both texts support a reverence for life, and yet to achieve this reverence the characters must accept the presence of death.

In *The House of Scorpion*, Matt is fully ejected from the order of things when he runs away across the border from Opium, into Aztlán. While the experience follows the typical hero death-and-rebirth motif, the apocalyptic model of analysis allows us to perceive Matt’s own undifferentiation, and the eventual changes to the community of Opium through his experiences. This section of the novel, aptly entitled “La Vida Nueva” [The New Life], is completely removed from the chaotic situation in Opium. This time of exile for Matt is fraught with images of death, and can be seen as a journey *through* death. He lives on the bed of a dead river, surrounded by whalebones. His existence revolves around the plankton factories, where he farms and eats the plankton (Farmer, 2002, p. 282). Matt, and his companion Chacho, are exiled to the whale graveyard. They barely escape as the sand tries to drag them under amongst the huge skeletons, they are given a new chance at life over the borders. The (metaphorical) swallowing by a whale and being spat out again directs one to the Biblical story of Jonah and the whale: “But you brought my life up from the pit” (Jonah. 2:6). Like Jonah, Matt’s and Chacho’s lives are brought out of the pit/whalebone graveyard, and also metaphorically out of the “pit” of their lives at the orphanage.

The first reference to life in death is made in the pit. As Matt is thinking of ways to escape, bats fly out of the depths. He exclaims to Chacho, “They’re just frightened and they’re cold!” and he realises the bat that has clung to him has her own baby: “a mother trying to rescue her young from the flood” (p. 332). The empathy he has for a
fellow creature seems to carry the wish that he had been proffered a similar feeling by the El Patrón household. Chacho’s belief the bats will try to suck their blood evokes the vampire imagery associated with El Patrón. The two boys face death in the pit, where Chacho’s invocation of vampire imagery indicates the possibility of a life after death, but one that is reliant on death (through draining the blood of others, as in the standard vampire tale, or perhaps the extension of El Patrón’s life through cloning). Matt saves himself from the pit, and Chacho is rescued later with the help of friends. The four boys, Matt, Chacho, Ton-Ton and Fidelito (two boys whom Matt has helped previously), set out for freedom across the desert in a shrimp harvester. Although this is a “return” of sorts, from the death of the whalebone pit and in accordance with the hero story, the journey through death continues in Aztlán.

The experience of this waiting time in Aztlán as a journey through death is intensified by the ongoing street parade for the Mexican festival “El Día De Los Muertos” (The Day of the Dead). The absence of this festival from Matt’s childhood (when all other holidays had been observed) is indicative of the state of moral chaos in Opium, where any meaningful interaction with death and the dead are denied. The contrast between Opium and Aztlán, where death is celebrated as a part of life, is difficult for Matt to understand, as he asks: “How can anyone throw a party for death?” (p. 351). His exposure to a more positive relationship with death at the community level paves the way for his own acceptance of both death in life, and his existence as a human and clone.

During this process, he dons a skeleton outfit in order to stay undetected by The Keepers from the plankton factory who are trying to find them. In this, he essentially “becomes” his previous destiny as an organ donor, or as the living dead:
Very reluctantly, he pulled the mask over his head. It fitted him like a second skin, with holes for his eyes, nose, and mouth. It felt like being buried alive, and he had to struggle against panic. He took a deep breath and willed the horror away. (p. 352)

With this action of pulling on the skull mask, the novel parallels the actual death of El Patrón (who has entombed himself in Opium), with Matt’s living death as a clone. Not only is Matt not El Patrón’s original, he is not human: he is alive and dead, and neither all at once. A contradiction, according to Derrida, is always *both* either/or *and* neither/nor, which creates the dialectical tensions present between life and death, and human and inhuman. The experience above, just as for Takeo, marks the beginning of a new time, when death is accepted into life, and the boundaries become less distinct. Seeing people dressed as El Patrón draws on the already present dialectical tensions between life and death, and when Matt enquires into this he is told: “‘That’s only the Vampire of Dreamland’… He felt a wrenching sense of loss, which didn’t make any sense at all. If El Patrón had lived, he – Matt – would be dead” (pp. 354-355). Matt questions his own mourning at the loss of El Patrón after he is informed of his death, especially when he could have saved him through donating his organs. Matt is perhaps recognising the worth of his own life, which he must do to fulfil the apocalyptic cycle by returning to Opium. As he flies back into Opium, and uses his DNA to pass security, he accepts that he now owns that DNA. The return of the undifferentiated is, according to Bull, the catalyst for the new order. The chaos that reigns during the time of pollution, culminating in the apocalypse, is ended by the very thing that was excluded (1999, p. 77).
The apocalyptic recognizes death, or experiences of death, as offering the possibility to survive, or live after, death. Rather than being effaced, the undifferentiated can return with a renewed and multiple experience of selfhood that is reflected in social change towards acceptance. After his exclusion, Matt returns to Opium and establishes a new order, where the undifferentiated are integrated into a more inclusive social structure that constitutes “a new system… that operates on principles different from those of the old” (1999, p. 79). The “new system” in The House of the Scorpion acknowledges Matt as a human, whereas the old system did not. However, the new system does not end there, as other binaries have also been altered. Opium and Aztlan are no longer completely separated, as Matt agrees to open lines of communication again and to modernise Opium. Matt envisions a future when he will attempt to reverse the eejit operation, and return them to their previous selves. Whereas El Patrón had many members of his family and guards entombed with him, in the fashion of the Pharaohs, Matt has an almost clean slate, with no blood relatives to threaten his position. He recognises the possibility for agency by expressing that people “could have said no” to the subjugation of the eejits and clones. In this way, the narrative constructs a future scenario that supports the integration of other undifferentiated in concurrent and overlapping apocalyptic cycles (p. 380).

The many undercurrents in Tales of the Otori also show overlapping apocalyptic cycles. Takeo fights for recognition despite his own mixed heritage, while at the same time asks that the outcasts be tolerated; and Kaede fights for acceptance as a woman in the patriarchal world. Takeo’s victory is possible only with the outcasts’ help. At one point they build a bridge to help his army cross floodwaters. The warrior class will not
cross for fear of contamination, so Takeo assures them that “any pollution would fall on me alone” (2004, p. 48). At the peak of war and chaos there is an earthquake, which ties together Takeo’s and Kaede’s separate timelines (in terms of narrative) and also incorporates apocalyptic imagery. Kaede embraces the flux of binaries (that potentially allow for her to be a powerful woman), and during the earthquake she “felt what she always felt: shock, amazement that the earth could quiver like fresh bean curd, and a sort of elation that nothing was fixed or certain” (Hearn, 2004, p. 204). She also hopes to fight her forced marriage to, and imprisonment by, Lord Fujiwara, who keeps her as a silent trophy, “like the flawless treasures he prized” (2004, p. 192). Later, another earthquake marks the end of her captivity and the falling walls of Fujiwara’s house symbolise the collapse of the binary codes that kept her trapped playing the role of “prize” wife to Fujiwara, rather than permitting her to be the ruler of her clan. As Fujiwara burns to death he screams, “I just wanted to possess you” (2004, p. 356). This contrasts with the guard’s oath of allegiance to her as a ruler, demonstrating his acceptance of her own power: “I know you can defend yourself,” he says (2004, p. 356).

By overlapping Kaede’s and Takeo’s respective journeys, their marriage surpasses the hero story motif of a “trophy bride” (Hourihan, 1997, p. 51). Her role is centred more on transforming aspects of the community that Takeo cannot reach, such as the inner world of the subjugated and separated women. Kaede’s experience in the dialectic of integration works in tandem with Takeo’s, and both rely on the abandonment of stability and the incorporation of undifferentiation.

Just as Kaede embraces the lack of fixity, Takeo accepts his multiplicities and contradictions: “the logic of apocalyptic seems to culminate in the maximisation of undifferentiation, in the mixture of mixture” (Bull, 1999, p. 72). The fluidity of Takeo’s
experience of selfhood can be read through a postmodern lens as demonstrating “the multiple nature, and shifting character, of the signified,” (Rumbold, 1997, p. 20). The play of signification in the text is demonstrated in the way that others rename him: Shigeru replaces Tomasu (his childhood Hidden name) with Takeo, who observes: “I lost my name, became someone new, and joined my destiny with the Otori” (2002, p. 12), and with gratitude for his rescue Takeo willingly takes the new name. When the Tribe claim him, they also rename him: “I was given the name of Minoru” (2003, p. 46). However, he retains the name “Takeo” and is also referred to as Tomasu by the prophetess. He feels dislocated from each family in some way as he does not wholly believe in any of their teachings: the Hidden cannot kill, and he has killed; the Otori should kill without thought, and he is merciful; the Tribe are mercenary while he is ethical. He has temporarily taken up the subject positions offered through his biographical journey, symbolised through his multiple names, and yet feels distanced from each. Rather than attempting to construct a humanist core self that aligns with one of his blood lines, he reconciles his concern over not conforming to any religion: “I had to believe in nothing so everyone else was free to believe in what they wanted” (2004, p. 383). He finds power in a shifting selfhood that allows others to interact intersubjectively with him by finding themselves in some part of him, acting more as a vessel for mixture than as a an unmoveable core.

Each subculture in the Three Countries is changed through the apocalyptic. The outcastes are recognised as humans, the warrior class accept Kaede as a powerful ruler in her own right, and the priesthood take on some of the values of the Hidden learnt through Takeo. Further, the Tribe have accepted Takeo as their new leader, and begin to question their mercenary ways, conducting their spying and subterfuge without
thoughtless loss of life. This does not imply an easy transition or blissful new utopia, but, rather, the continuation of the integration within an apocalyptic discourse. While the apocalyptic is multiple and layered, it revolves around the undifferentiated as the catalyst for change. The hero story promotes dominance over the “symbolic figures” that are obstacles (Campbell, 1968, p. 84) or “wild things” in order to fix the self: “mastery of the wild things is mastery of himself” (Hourihan, 1997, p. 155). However, this is questioned by both the discourse of inclusion and integration in the apocalyptic, and the unclear definition of “wild things” in the focal texts of this chapter. To focus further on the metalanguage of the apocalyptic, including wild and monstrous things that are also caught in the dialectic of integration, the second part of this chapter looks at Monster Blood Tattoo (Cornish, 2006, 2008) to investigate the role of the monster and a further use of the apocalyptic in an incomplete cycle.

II. Mixing Monster Blood: Extending the apocalyptic model for analysis

The apocalyptic markers such as taboo and undifferentiation in the apocalyptic cycle are examined in more detail in this section outside of the strict cycle, by drawing on the model for analysis in Figure 3-1 (chapter 3). In the previous section, I proposed that Matt and Takeo return to restore order after a period of exclusion, and usher in a new social equilibrium that incorporates undifferentiation and new ways of being. The protagonists of these texts, however, are either of natural origins (Takeo) or made through scientific intervention (Matt). The opposition between natural and artificial in these texts is disrupted through the monstrous in the Monster Blood Tattoo series (Cornish, 2006, 2008). The analysis of this series extends the discourse of the
apocalyptic outside of the complete cycle, and demonstrates the relevance of the terminology and function of undifferentiation in narratives that do not conform to the specific sequence of events in the apocalyptic cycle. The apocalyptic cycle remains incomplete and yet the use of apocalyptic analytic features in the model for analysis elucidates the effect of undifferentiation. This section concentrates firstly on the monstrous embodiments of undifferentiation that can be read through a dialectic of human and animal. The section then considers the processes of closure and disclosure in each of the focal texts in this chapter, along with a comparison of the roles adults play in the apocalyptic.

*The Animal Within: Monstrous embodiments of undifferentiation*

The Half Continent, in *Monster Blood Tattoo*, is a world similar to England at the turn of the nineteenth century. The Half Continent is inhabited by people and monsters considered very dangerous and a threat to the community. The battle to keep the monsters away from the “civilised” society of the Empire provides the organising metanarrative of the society, determining the social structures and the belief that monsters must be banished to maintain order: “For over fifteen centuries” the Empire “had fought the monsters, so Rossamünd had been taught. Indeed, they had made it possible for civilisation to endure” (2006, p. 17). The monsters are undifferentiated, between human and animal, as many possess human traits, including language and intelligence. In order to minimise the potential for contamination, there are strict rules on travel between walled cities and compounds, and all people take many safety precautions. There is also the belief that “skolds” will protect citizens with the use of chemical concoctions to fight the monsters. Monsters are, however, inclusively excluded
in some instances; for example, “gastrines” (boxed living organs that propel ships, “a kind of senseless animal”) have no rights even though they are “alive” (2006, p. 342).

Monster fighters are independent and can be hired for protection during travel. The monsters emit “Threwd [...] that ghastly sensation of hidden watchfulness and a threat that thrilled all around” (2008, p. 5), reflecting the threat of undifferentiation they pose.

The narrative follows Rossamünd, who lives in a “foundlingery” (orphanage) before he is sent to work as a Lamplighter on the Imperial Road system. His arduous journey to The Manse for Lamplighter training occupies the first book, Foundling (Cornish, 2006), followed by his training in the Manse and first posting in The Lamplighter (Cornish, 2008). Lamplighters light the road lamps but are also responsible for defending themselves against the threat of monsters on the roads at night.

Rossamünd is raised among “boys of a similar age from poor and obscure origins like his” (2008, p. 2). However, he is considered weak and different from the other boys for both his “girl’s” name and his inability to fight during training sessions. Rossamünd is favoured by Craumpalin, the doctor/potion maker, and Fransitart, the retired sailor and dormitory master, who despite his “typically gruff and removed nature” cares for Rossamünd with affection (2006, p. 15). Fransitart surprises Rossamünd when he reveals the monster blood tattoo that the older man normally keeps hidden (that tattoo is given only after slaying a monster, and is made by using its blood). Rossamünd sees the tattoo as “awe” inspiring, and is shocked that Fransitart “just seemed ashamed” of the tattoo (2006, pp. 21-22). Fransitart reflects: “th’ creature I killed di nought to deserve such an end... and I am sorry for it now,” thereby calling into question the taboo on “loving” monsters. Rossamünd is both appalled and curious:
People were good. Monsters were bad. People had to kill monsters in order to live free and remain at peace. To feel sympathy for a bogle or to take pity on a nicker was to be labelled a sedorner - a monster lover! – a shameful crime that in the least had its perpetrator shunned, or stuck in the pillory for weeks or, worst of all, executed by hanging. (2006, p. 22)

Rossamünd here rehearses the dominant ideological response to monsters, and the punishment for transgressing the binary codes that differentiate human and animal (through exclusion or sacrifice). Despite Rossamünd’s recitation of the taboo on monsters and monster loving, the compassion Fransitart shows to the monsters prompts him to question his own values.

The binaries are further confused by the contradictory presence of Lahzars: monster fighters who have monster organs. After leaving the foundlingery, destined for a Lamplighter’s career, Rossamünd becomes lost and is kidnapped by people akin to pirates. After escaping their hold, in his first act of agency, he jumps from the boat and runs into the forest. He is saved from starvation by the acerbic Europe, an experienced monster fighter. Europe’s function within the apocalyptic is complex, as she provides both a form of undifferentiation and evidence that the adults are not able to survive undifferentiation as capably as the young adults. Europe has had monster organs transplanted into her body, becoming a “fulgar” with special powers: “Once put inside a person’s body these mimetic organs could give the subject unheard of abilities; the power to generate deadly arcs of electricity inside the body (the fulgar), or send for the brain-frying waves of invisible energy (the wit),” (2006, p. 360). She uses this ability to fight monsters. Whereas the Lamplighters fight monsters as part of their job of lighting the road lamps, the Lahzars work for private hire. The process of becoming a fulgar, and
history behind the current social situation in the text provide a backdrop to a slow apocalyptic pollution within the Half Continent.

The Lahzars are created surgically by the Cathar peoples. Displaced from their own country to the north, the Cathars settled in the Half Continent just outside of the jurisdiction of the Emperor. The Cathar’s ability to transplant monster organs into humans is feared and considered wrong and yet the service the Lahzars provide – fighting monsters – is considered necessary. The word “lahzar” is Cathar for “‘those who have returned (from the grave)’, called so because of the long period they are under the surgeon’s knife” (2006, p. 360).34 They embody the dialectical tensions between life and death, human and non-human. The monster organs do not always sit well, requiring “treacle” daily to keep them from spasming. When Europe’s assistant dies, Rossamünd has to make the potion for her, but when he touches the box that holds the components and mixing tools he pulls “his hand away quickly as he felt a faint, queasy dread emanating from within it” (2006, p. 127). Rossamünd comments that the treacle “looked like steaming black oil, gluggy and evil-smelling. The foundling almost gagged at the stink of the stuff… A tingle of disgust shivered down Rossamund’s ribs as the fulgar drained the dregs and sighed a contented sigh” (2006, pp. 130-131). As the ingredients are mortally dangerous to handle, Europe seems to consume death to stay alive, quelling the physical symptoms of the dialectical tensions between human and monster, and life and death, within her own body.

Rossamünd shows ambivalence towards Europe throughout the Foundling: “she was a great beauty, but there was a hardness to her and a darkness.” He even finds she

34 There may also be intertextual reference to Lazarus, who Jesus raised from the dead; and perhaps Lazar house or hospice.
smells “sweet, yet salty and sharp, too” (2006, p. 120). Europe saves Rossamünd from certain death from being on the roads alone, but she is less kind towards the monsters. Rossamünd witnesses her killing of monsters with horror. As she slays the “misbegotten shrewd,” it seems to ask, “but why?” As the monster falls to his death, Rossamünd shouts, “No!... no... no... no...” and “drop[s] to his knees in terror” (2006, pp. 140, 142). Despite his fear of them, Rossamünd’s natural reaction is to feel pity for the monster. Europe is confused by his sedition (monster-loving), a confusion compounded by his assistance in their next battle. Rossamünd realises he must help and throws his chemical potions at the monsters, and drags Europe to safety. To settle her spasming organs, Rossamünd makes her treacle. This act effectually unifies her monster organs with her human body, metaphorically demonstrating Rossamünd’s purpose for unification within the narrative. Rossamünd clings to the safety Europe provides against monsters he (contradictorily) both loves and fears, attempting to amalgamate the disparate parts of his undifferentiation that cannot be “fixed” with a potion.

Rossamünd has a natural aversion to the treacle that suppresses Europe’s monster organs, as he does to other monster suppressing devices. While setting up to sleep overnight outdoors, Europe’s assistant sets up “cones of repellent” designed to deter monsters, but the cones make Rossamünd “feel wretched. His head began to pound and his very soul was gripped by an urgency to flee” (2006, p. 131). The conclusion of The Lamplighter proposes that Rossamünd is a monster, a “rossamünderling” or “manikin,” created in the throwdish mud after a person has fallen in, being “reformed from the debris of human matter, birthed from the throwd, a wicked repeat of some lost and departed person” (2008, pp. 585-586). This accusation, as yet unproven, comes from Swill, the “secret maker of gudgeons and clandestine traitor to the Empire” (2008, p.
Rossamünd and Europe are both returned from the dead as reanimations of a previous human in the form of a human-monster, or monstrous-human. Where Europe suffers the pain of her organs and keeps death at bay with potions, Rossamünd appears human, to all intents and purposes. He matures over the course of the story to discover great strength, despite his small stature. While he is not sure if he is actually a monster, his physical strength and extra-sensitivity to threwd appear to be the result of his monster blood. Rossamünd and Europe embody the extreme forms of undifferentiation seen in *Tales of the Otori* and *The House of the Scorpion*. Furthermore, they are both linked to death.

The concept of threwd in *Monster Blood Tattoo* is closely linked to the wilderness and untamed places of the narrative world. This association is reminiscent of Hourihan’s observation that “in early myths the wilderness is the wild, unpredictable forces of nature while the devouring dragon or monster is death and primeval chaos, so that to kill is to bestow life and establish human order” (1997, p. 25). In contrast to this, Rossamünd is *connected* to threwd, which situates him alongside the “wilderness.” Rossamünd’s “birth” from the threwd marks him as the manifestation of undifferentiation and the disintegration of the dualism of nature/human in the narrative. Threwd is an elusive concept within the narrative world of *Monster Blood Tattoo*, and provides an almost tangible dialectical tension. However, threwd is nearly always given a negative connotation: “[threwd] can make a person feel uneasy as if under unfriendly observation” (2006, p. 404). This unease is supported in the thought that the land may be conscious: “although no-one is certain, the most popular theory is that the land itself is strangely sentient, intelligent, and aware” (2006, p. 404). The monsters are always
connected or drawn to this threwdish land. If the land has sentience, then threwd is the repulsion and rejection of human-kind for their crimes against nature (through the black arts, and “intrusions and misuses” of the land and its inhabitants). For the land to have sentience disturbs the binary of living/non-living, object/subject. The monsters are less affected, and they do not seem to damage their natural environment (2006, p. 404). The sentient threwdish land also further acts as Rossamünd’s vessel of creation, the threwdish mud from which the “rossamunderlings” purportedly spring (2008, pp. 585-586). Rossamünd’s origin in the essence of the “horrors” creates a dialectical tension between origin and death (further explored in chapter 6), both the reanimated dead human that fell in the mud, and the living/non-living threwdish land.

This connection to death, or return from death, contributes to the social fear and hatred of Rossamünd and Europe, likening them to “rever-men,” the human-made monsters that have no will other than their intended purpose to kill. The rever-men are the abomination of both the monster and human worlds. They are constructed from dead animal, monsters, and human body parts, described here by Freckle (the glamgorn monster, and Rossamünd’s friend):

That is an ill-made rever-man, all bits and bobs and falling apart. Those wicked ones who made him do not know their wicked business. He’s not knit too well at all, and none too sharp in the knitted noggin neither. Oh how he hates, full of grieving over half memorie and wild hungers! They hate we natural ones most of all, ‘cause we are made all right and they are made the everyman’s way – all wrong. (2006, pp. 270-271)
The monsters consider themselves the “natural ones,” and include Rossamünd in this category by using an inclusive pronoun “we,” as opposed to the more objectivised description of the “ill-made” rever-men. The Lazars, due to their surgical interventions, are also considered by some as a form of rever-men, which explains the society’s difficulty in accepting them. The rever-men epitomise the breaking of already falling divisions between monster, animal, and human (just as monsters are neither human nor animal), layering the undifferentiation. Referred to by Numps as “runny-men” (2008, p. 213), they disrupt the borders among animal, monster and human, and are essentially signifiers that “run” and slip (différance). The “runny-ness” can also be read as akin to the “slime” of undifferentiation that contaminates and pollutes (Bull, 1999, p. 60). While some members of the society are almost ready to accept monsters into a new way of social being, the rever-men are so far removed from the current apocalyptic that they represent more than just a hybrid, and are something that perhaps a future apocalyptic cycle would address. Fouracres, the friendly postman who assists Rossamünd on his journey, is the only character to show compassion to a caged rever-man: “Let’s leave this wild, broken fellow ter his raging” (2006, p. 286). Fouracres sees the transgression of taboo (in the rever-man’s creation) and the effects on a society that seems unable either to accept them, or to refrain from creating them.

Fouracres and Rossamünd cannot understand the “raging” of the rever-man, and the implied regret over this demonstrates how an apocalyptic narrative questions assumptions regarding the destructive impulse of unclassifiable “creatures.” The monsters are uncertain about attacking Rossamünd, despite his allegiance to the

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35 Rossamünd encounters other “seldomors” (monster lovers) on his journeys – Numps, Sebastipole, Dolours, Fouracres, Madam Lieger, and Aubergine.
Lamplighters, as expressed by one monster: “why do you ssside with themmm?” [sic] (2008, p. 520). The monster is clearly demonstrating a desire to understand Rossamünd’s motivations, rejecting a simplistic impulse to destroy. The monsters articulate the dialectical tensions between human and monster as parallel to the act of signification. Rossamünd fights his own predisposition to distinguish between monster and human, according to the hero quests he read as a boy. The desire to “name” creates a strong sense of “us and them,” and is constructed (and learned) through language and discourse as a human trait. When asked by Rossamünd what kind of monster he is, Freckle states: “‘They’ve taught you to divide and conquer too, I see – rule by division, divide by rules – the everyman creed…’” (2006, p. 268). Freckle draws attention to the act of signification as an attempt to reassert a binary social structure, cementing the dividing line between monster and human. Later, Freckle comments: “I have watched you learning all the dividing, conquering ways with your friends who would not be friends if they knew,” as he knows Rossamünd is a monster before it is revealed (2008, p. 492). Rossamünd’s designation as a “human” affords him the friends that abhor monsters. While Rossamünd can increasingly sense the dialectical tensions between human and monster as the series continues, Freckle hints at the contradiction Rossamünd himself embodies from the outset.

The survival of Rossamünd’s contradictory existence rests on his ability to transform his faith in the signification system. His struggle to do this reflects the pull between relativism and bifurcation. Rossamünd cannot choose between human and monster, which resonates with the difficulties Takeo faces in forming an allegiance to one aspect of his “makeup” in Tales of the Otori. Rossamünd mourns death equally for all forms of life, as he laments after a battle: “men and dogs and monsters, everything
was dead... *too much... too much...*” (2008, p. 525). The dialectic tensions apparent between human and monster, and that arise from the *différance* of the signifier in a society that revels in its ability to label, manifest in Rossamünd’s compassion for, and fear of, monsters. Rossamünd’s ability to question signification relies on his interactions with both humans and monsters.

The first signifier Rossamünd learns to accept is his name. Rossamünd implicitly trusts Europe from their first meeting. How people react to his name indicates to him their “trustworthiness,” (2006, p. 37). Rossamünd apologises: “my name really is Rossamünd, and I know it’s not the right kind of name for a lad but I was given it while I was too young to argue and now it is written in the ledger and there is no going back on that...” (2006, p. 121). He sees his name, or signifier, as a stable and unchanging mark defining his “self”. When he asks Europe what she thinks of his name she replies, “So, some would have it meant for a girl? What concern is it of mine how your sires chose to label you? Things are more than their names... It’s just a word, little man” (2006, p. 216). She further questions the stability and reliability of signification in her criticism of the bureaucratic capital city, “babbling away and filling the world with words” (2008, p. 593). Mirroring Rossamünd’s own destabilising attitude to signification, Europe implies that there is a gap between the signifier (Rossamünd) and the signified (the subject).

The post-structural apocalyptic model implicitly questions the validity of defining things through opposition. The undifferentiated lack an opposite, and nonetheless incorporate contradiction, as they are caught in *différance*. Europe and

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36 In contrast to Saussure’s assertion that things are defined by what they are not, poststructuralism questioned the idea that everything would have an opposite through which to be defined (Saussure, 1966; Derrida, 1974).
Rossamünd embody the contradiction and defy the labelling either as monster or human, alive or dead. Any attempt to define them as one or the other slips, unable to anchor to either signifier, and hence Europe’s lack of faith in a language that serves to divide (as also expressed by Freckle) while being unable to encompass the range of beings to which it needs to refer. Uncovering the fallibility of language and the instability of the binary reveals pollution is rife, and that chaos is reaching its peak, culminating in the appearance of rever-men. Rossamünd’s transcendence from the hero quest with which he was presented into the alternative relativity of integration invites readers to engage with his self-questioning and shifting selfhood, the latter accentuated by moments of agency that question the dominant discourses concerning rightful action.

*Monster Blood Tattoo* thus demonstrates the role of the undifferentiated in destroying all binaries and dualisms in the community. The following section considers the closure offered by this text, an incomplete cycle in that no new equilibrium is achieved, and returns to the previous focus texts in order to ascertain the possibilities for transformation through the dialectic of integration within the apocalyptic narrative.

*(Dis)closure in The Apocalyptic*

The apocalyptic narrative, as discussed in chapter 3, embraces closure while simultaneously offering an open ending that implies a future that foregrounds the inclusion of the undifferentiated at the fore. In the hero story, closure is certain and definitive: “the achievement of the hero’s quest is a victory of the good and the closure asserts that evil can be clearly identified and defeated” (Hourihan, 1997, p. 52). In apocalyptic narratives good and evil are problematic concepts, and the achievement of the dialectic of integration is the continuance of the “quest” rather than the hero’s
victory, and a return to the previously existing binary. Closure, as the analysis of the three focal texts in this chapter demonstrated, is provided; however, the telos implied by the hero story is replaced with the vision of overlapping and future apocalyptic cycles. While the undifferentiated play a pivotal role in the new equilibrium, there is less a sense of heroism than an “advance towards... previously impossible social contradictions” (Bull, 1999, p. 293), such as original and clone, included and excluded, human and monster.

The apocalyptic narratives of the first two texts analysed, Tales of the Otori and The House of the Scorpion, realise the dialectic of integration and achieve a sense of closure with an implied view to the future as a continuance of the process through overlapping cycles. The excluded undifferentiated, Matt and Takeo, bring about a new equilibrium that is more inclusive than the previous social order. In both texts, there are indications of the next apocalyptic, and the still-excluded undifferentiated (Kaede’s concern over the role of women, and the plight of orphans and eejits in and around Opium). Through an apocalyptic analysis, the classification of abjection is extended forward in the narrative, and poses a new and transformative outcome for the expelled young adults. The incomplete cycle in Monster Blood Tattoo maintains the apocalyptic discourse, while bringing to light the unique placement of the abject adolescent in the apocalyptic.

Analyses of transformative utopianism in YA fiction, as referred to in chapters 2 and 3, have shown that such fiction supports the possibilities for transformation over nihilism (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 129). Seen in this light, both Tales of the Otori, and The House of the Scorpion may be understood as transformative utopian texts that provide this transformation through the apocalyptic cycle. They position readers to align
with the protagonists, and experience through these narratives the possibilities beyond abjection and exclusion. The apocalyptic in the incomplete series *Monster Blood Tattoo* appears to be heading in the same direction, as Rossamünd attempts political action by writing to the Emperor about the transgressions occurring in the Manse, and offering a vision for a better future. Rossamünd recognises the importance of both intersubjective relationships within his own age bracket, and also of those with adults, monsters, and the severely traumatised Numps. His disregard for age, status and designation promotes a sense of community involvement that is essential to transformation and a new equilibrium.

Europe, however, provides an example of the adult generation’s unsuccessful attempts fully to incorporate undifferentiation. Europe has over sixty traditional “monster blood tattoos,” each received after slaying a monster. The dead monster’s blood is inserted into the human’s skin, where it “reacts strangely with *everyman* blood” (2006, p. 371) and leaves a permanent mark, a metaphorical sign of the incorporation of the undifferentiated into the human body. By rewarding monster killing, the society objectifies and reduces the monster to an inscription. The tattoo signifies the actual (dead) monster, and the act of signification draws the monsters into the language that (as Freckle pointed out, above) divides and conquers through labelling. It further attempts to reduce the play of signifiers, the *différance*, through literally inscribing the individual. Rossamünd refuses to be tattooed, thinking that the tattoos are “disrespectful” to the monsters (2008, p. 529). Although he does not realise it, he is already a monster – he *is* the undifferentiated – and as befits his role in the apocalyptic cycle, he embodies the flux and contradiction monsters also embody.
Furthermore, Rossamünd recognises that, as Fransitart had warned him, “‘not all monsters look like monsters, do ye get me? There are everyday folk who turn out to be th’ worst monsters of ‘em all!’” (2006, p. 22). Tired of the slaying at the end of *Foundling*, Rossamünd yells at Europe, “‘you’re the worst monster of all! You just go around killing no matter what! That poor schrewd did nothing to you!’” (2006, p. 286). Accordingly, Europe’s protesting organs reflect the society’s (even her own) revulsion from the intermingling of the monstrous and abject. The court system is forced to accept her authority (as the Duchess-in-waiting of Naimes) when she removes Rossamünd from the court after accusations are made that Rossamünd is a “rossamunderling”. The response from the court officials constructs them as “monstrous”: they “snarled and glared... spluttered and even cursed” (2008, p. 595). “Monstrousness” becomes the act of exclusion and murder, defining people through action, or a lack of action, against the dominant discourses of good and evil. Rossamünd demonstrates that he is developing a sense of subjective agency through his undifferentiation, and indicates that he is willing to act against the prevailing social norms.

Change within the apocalyptic in YA fiction is reliant on adolescents’ resilience to (and acceptance of) disturbed bifurcation, and their ability to survive through apocalyptic times through to transformation. They are not lone figures, however. The adults who have failed to incorporate undifferentiation work with the young adults to form a new and more inclusive society. The death of Shigeru in *Tales of the Otori*, murdered for his support of undifferentiation, and Tam Lin, in *The House of the Scorpion*, who dies while supporting Matt’s cause, do not merely provide a warning to the young adults that they will be punished if they try to bring about change. Rather, their deaths are treated as society’s failing to accommodate the need for change. The
young adult undifferentiated characters, by *living through* the apocalyptic, show the society how it is possible to do so. Europe acknowledges Rossamünd’s effect on her existence in her farewell letter: “*you have been a revelation*” (2006, p. 297, original emphasis). Each adult asserts that the young adult’s “path need not be fixed” and stable (2006, p. 50), while showing their own difficulties in effecting change in the society as a whole. Contradiction leads to transformative possibilities for the young adult space, and in turn produces change in the society. Emerging utopian YA fiction also shows a move towards adult characters who have not “abandoned their youthful idealism,” or who merely act as “wise” advisors (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 183). The adult characters in these three apocalyptic narratives thus show fallibility, hope, growth and willingness to follow as well as lead in the reformation of societies.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how apocalyptic discourse allows for characters to construct their exclusion as more than abjection, and how through revelation, they find worth in hybridity and undifferentiation, over stability and conformity. Rather than change taking place only within the subject, the apocalyptic transforms the society and culture that produced the undifferentiation. It is Matt’s, Takeo’s and Rossamünd’s undifferentiation that eventually ensures (rather than risks) their survival despite obstacles. The apocalyptic integration continues through dialectics, and yet is seemingly resistant to telos, with many indications that the dialectic will continue in the societies after the narrative achieves closure. While the undifferentiated protagonists may return to establish new ways of being, they are not “heroes.” These apocalyptic narratives resist the liberal humanist implications of hero stories, as the protagonists experience shifting
subjectivities rather than achieving a core identity, and they enact scenes of agency that question the dominant discourses of their communities.

In this chapter’s focus on the apocalypse of undifferentiated life, an acceptance of death (as crucial to survival) has emerged. The appearance of the undifferentiated in each text coincides with death and exclusion in the society. The protagonist’s period of exclusion and the resulting apocalypse are also inextricably linked to origin and death. Matt, Takeo and Rossamünd each have their origins questioned (respectively: genetically modified; hidden and contradictory lineage; and monster from the threwdish mud), and each enters a dialogue with death in order to return to survive his exclusion. Rather than adolescence as a state of endurance, young adult liminality is established as a time and space that has unique opportunities for transformation of both the self and the community. Readers are encouraged to accept the end, and also to accept the multifarious origins of the protagonists, which indicate a defiance of telos that is continued through an analysis of the post-apocalyptic and prophecy. The following chapter engages with these concepts, and utilises the metalanguage of the apocalyptic laid out in this chapter (the undifferentiated, taboo and sacrifice, chaos, exclusion and return, and apocalypse), together with concepts of truth, prophecy and the simulacrum.
Chapter 5

Post-Apocalyptic Crossings: The dialectic of time and space

It isn’t us doing these things. We have no choice. It’s the gods, it’s the people – it’s you; the sheer weight of your belief in us makes us act the way we do. I felt it so strongly. None of it was anything to do with me at all. (“Sigurd,” in Burgess, 2005, pp. 54-55)

Sometimes, or perhaps always, it was the knowledge of one's tapestry, not the fact, that made it true. The tapestry was not the thief of agency, it did not rob her of making her own life: it was a guide, a map to a place that was already within her heart. (“Marwen,” in Bates, 1992, p. 125)

The previous chapter focused on survival, and how certain texts can be read using the metalanguage of the apocalyptic model to play out the role of the undifferentiated in bringing about a new and more inclusive social structure. In accordance with the aim of this thesis – to analyse how discourses surrounding the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic are represented in selected YA fiction – this chapter focuses on the representations that do not fit into the apocalyptic, and which become therefore post-apocalyptic. The metalanguage established in the previous chapter underpins the apocalyptic model for analysis, including apocalypse/revelation and the undifferentiated, and is augmented in this chapter by additional concepts: organic time, truth and curse. With these latter concepts, the model “crosses” into the post-apocalyptic. The aim of this chapter is to ascertain how a post-apocalyptic existence affects the way undifferentiated young adult subjects transform in order to survive.

To examine these concepts fully, this chapter has two objectives: to develop aspects of the apocalyptic model, including postmodern deconstructions of truth and the real into a post-apocalyptic reading of selected YA fictions; and to establish the links between the post-apocalyptic and the dialectic of time and space, and to consider the
subsequent tensions between the present and the future that arise from this dialectic. Accordingly, there is a particular focus on the agential subjectivities developed in the texts. An underlying feature of this chapter, particularly considering the inclusion of dystopian settings in some texts, is how the discourses and narrative structuring of post-apocalyptic fiction align with the notion of “transformative utopianism,” with their shared advocacy and promotion of transformative possibilities (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 5).

The focal texts for this chapter are: *The Oracle* (Fisher, 2003), *The Rat and the Raven* (Greenwood, 2005), and *Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith* (Nahai, 1999). These texts show how the apocalyptic cycle becomes post-apocalyptic in order to incorporate the influence of prophecy and the empty revelation. The texts test the boundaries of the apocalyptic cycle by their use of prophecy, and also provide an opportunity to concentrate on what is revealed, the nature of that revelation, how it affects agency, and how it retrospectively affects the interpretation of the text up to that point. This in turn brings the “truth” of the revelation or prophecy into question. As belief is central to the discussion, there is a stronger focus on focalisation than in other chapters. To establish the role gods play in post-apocalyptic narratives, I analyse *The Oracle* with regard to a postmodern destabilisation of the real and truth in the simulacrum. *The Oracle* engages with the concept of a godhead/divinity on different levels, enabling an analysis of the role that truth and the real can play in the post-apocalyptic text. The power, or lack thereof, of a god has a fundamental influence on the agency of the subject, and as agency is essential to transformation it forms the focus for the first section in this chapter. This is followed by the role of prophecy and its manipulation of time in *The Rat and the Raven* and *Moonlight*, and how this relates to apocalypses in those texts.
Undifferentiated characters, as in the previous texts, continue to be pivotal. They have inherited family curses that set them apart, and they live their lives accordingly. These texts demonstrate how the past, present and future are not stable, clear concepts, bringing the prophesied future into the present. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the specifically post-apocalyptic aspects of the texts, and an examination of the way surviving adolescence through post-apocalyptic transformations requires living through empty revelations.

**What if The Gods Are Real? Agency in the post-apocalyptic**

The question in the above subtitle is important, not only for the reason that many characters in the focus texts believe in God/gods, but also because the belief itself is an integral part of this chapter, and prophecy is meaningless without it. This section pays particular attention to the effect on the agency of the young adult subject of prophecy and the words of divine beings. Although this thesis is essentially secular, the texts in this chapter engage with gods on different levels, which invites an investigation into how the presence of divinity affects the post-apocalyptic. In *The Oracle* the god is an actual character and (occasionally) a focaliser, allowing access to the mind of the source of prophecy by the young adult subject. This section begins by considering agency in the hero and apocalyptic narratives. It then elaborates on the discussion of the simulacrum, followed by the close textual analysis that considers the impact of a god who tells lies.

In the hero narrative, there is a sense of inevitability that often stems from a prophecy, or the word of a divine being, whether a god or other “consciousness.” In the apocalyptic narrative, according to its defining markers (aspects of the story that adhere to the apocalyptic cycle), the undifferentiated play the role of saviour by transforming
the society. By contrast, the post-apocalyptic narrative requires that the undifferentiated do not fulfil their prophecy, but achieve a sense of agency independent of a predetermined outcome. The shift towards post-apocalyptic discourses began over a decade ago when, as Stephens and McCallum suggest, “a small literature” began to “deconstruct and reconstruct versions of the hero paradigm” by challenging accepted notions of prophecy and destiny (Stephens & McCallum, 1998, p. 124). While the apocalyptic differs in subtle but significant ways from the hero story, the dialectic of integration produces a sense of inevitability, or destined outcome for the undifferentiated. This point is made in the first epigraph to this chapter by Sigurd in Bloodsong (Burgess, 2005). Drawing on the belief of his people that the gods acted through him, Sigurd lives his prophesied life with no sense of personal agency or thought that he can escape from his fate. The story conforms to neither the celebratory closure of the hero tale nor to the integration of the apocalyptic narrative, as Sigurd fails to bring about a new (or any) equilibrium and eventually dies a bloody death. In the second epigraph, taken from The Dragon’s Tapestry (Bates, 1992), Marwen’s understanding that her own “tapestry” (destiny) provides guidance rather than removes agency is nevertheless overshadowed by the implicit belief in the telos of her path. Marwen’s story may seem to provide a re-written and agential hero narrative; yet she is bound to her fate in the same way that Sigurd is bound to his. Fate predetermines revelation in the hero story, undermining its apocalyptic nature and producing a dialectical tension between future and present. Teleology pervades these mythical and unconventional hero narratives, and the pull between this sense of telos and the dialectical tensions between future and present inherent in prophecy and fate can be read
through a post-apocalyptic lens in order to illuminate the construction in these texts of new ways of surviving.

To question prophecy is to question the utterance of divine entity. Historically, according to Derrida, truth and “the word” were understood to be inextricably linked, in that a sign “signifies ‘mental experiences’ which themselves reflect or mirror things by natural resemblance” (1974, p. 11, my emphasis). Poststructuralists such as Derrida scrutinise and discredit this idea of “natural resemblance.” The foundation for this resemblance, or relationship, is in the religious metanarrative and logocentrism that places the origin of the sign with God: “the sign and divinity have the same place and time of birth” (Derrida, 1974, p. 14). This common origin implies a natural (and divine) link between signifier and signified which, when deconstructed, destabilises the truth of divine statements. It further implies that signification is an attempt to represent an inherent truth (p. 14). The dialectic between divine and subject rests on the contradiction between the divine as creator of the subject, and the existence of the divine as constructed by the subject. That the prophecy and curse are both believed to be linked to some divine power precedes the utterance of a curse or prophecy, and from this standpoint it wields considerable power over the listener. With respect to prophecy in the focal texts, when the concept of truth is undermined, the power of the prophecy to affect a character’s agential subjectivity could be compromised (as the prophetic source no longer speaks with such authority or power) and the words become a simulacrum that bears a problematic relation to its origin.

Given his notion that the simulacrum is a representation that has become more real than its original, Baudrillard asks with reference to religion, “what if God himself can be simulated, that is to say can be reduced to the signs that constitute faith?” (p. 5).
Divinity often underpins metanarratives, and provides meaning and sense to the believing community. As Stephens explains, the act of stepping outside of one’s own system of knowledge is difficult: “metanarratives both supply the structure for individual narratives and the criteria for perception and appreciation by which sense is made of that structure. This is why ideas about the social world can seem self-evident” (Stephens & McCallum, 1998, p. 6). The protagonist in The Oracle questions the self-evident aspects of her own community, and considers the simulation of a god. The following reading offers a post-apocalyptic analysis of The Oracle.

**The Divine and The Subject**

The Oracle is set in a drought ravaged society resembling that of ancient Egypt. The story follows the journey of Mirany, a young priestess-like figure who secretly does not believe, as she helps the god-on-the-earth, The Archon (akin to a religious figure-head/pharaoh), attain his rightful place despite corruption in the temple. In a society that is based around its collective belief, Mirany is ambivalent about her atheism. Contradictorily, she serves the god as one of “the Nine,” priestess-like girls/women who subsist on the generosity of the people and devote their lives to serving the god. The dialectical tension in Mirany’s situation between the divine and the subject is created by her assistance in constructing the god as an entity, which then defines her role in society. At the beginning of the narrative, Mirany has just been given the role of “The Bearer,” her duty to carry the bronze bowl holding the god, who appears as a live snake or scorpion that has crawled into the bowl at the Oracle (a rock crevice). She is represented as undergoing her own process of questioning what can be read as the humanist ideals of
her community, through self-doubt and the lack of a core belief expected of her as the Bearer.

For much of the text, Mirany is unsure if the god is real: “the god would know anyway, if he was real... I didn’t mean that, she thought, in a shiver of terror” (p. 11). Her ambivalence is apparent as she waits for scorpions to crawl into the bronze bowl, and hastily retracts her scepticism. She is very aware as she carries the bowl that one sting will end her life, and the fear seems to enable her to believe in the god for a time. She says to the last surviving scorpion, “Don’t let me drop you... Let me carry you up” (p. 17).

Although at times she speaks to the god, and seems to believe that the scorpion is the god, she later remarks that everyone “believed in the god. It was her secret, her terrible sin, that she didn’t” (p. 51). Her ambivalence is compounded by her discovery of corruption in the temple. The current Archon tells her the Speaker (the highest ranking of the Nine whose role is to be the voice for the god through the Oracle) is corrupt: “The god is speaking to us but she cannot hear him” (p. 27), this deception acts as a polluting force. The dialectical tensions between the divine and the subject thus destabiles the society. As befitting the ritual required as an accepted coping mechanism, the Archon sacrifices himself to beg the Rain Queen (similar to a sister of the god) for rain. His act of sacrifice fails, however, to re-establish the order of the society and overcome the corruption, and so (as seen the apocalyptic model for analysis) pollution spreads.

The corruption of the Speaker implies that the words of the Oracle are no longer divine, but human in origin. Despite her own ambivalence, Mirany recognises the need for both belief and the faith-inspired coping mechanisms of her community, and begins her quest to find the Archon’s legitimate heir as the god-on-the-earth. The corrupt Speaker and the General of the Army, Argelin, conspire to put a puppet forward as the
Archon, someone who can be easily manipulated. The Archon is mostly a religious figure-head whose exact power is not made explicit in the text; however, to him are attributed the burial and respect of an Egyptian Pharaoh. He lives an isolated life, traditionally not allowed to speak to anyone apart from his servants, and he must sacrifice himself when required. A false Archon would further the pollution by tainting the society’s potential to sacrifice effectively.

Many themes in *The Oracle* are reminiscent of the apocalyptic discourses in the novels discussed in the previous chapter: tainted or failed sacrifices, shifting subjectivities, connections to death. Here the narrative loosely follows the apocalyptic cycle in overlapping story lines. With help from Oblek and Seth (forming a band of unlikely friends), Mirany manages to find Alexos, the new rightful Archon, in a remote village and have him crowned. For her efforts, Mirany is left with the threats of the Speaker (Hermia) and Argelin that she will be poisoned, and she lives every day in fear. The Archon is undifferentiated (as discussed below) and returns from exile in the village to save the community from corruption and establish a new equilibrium. Mirany’s undifferentiation arises later through death experiences, and in overlapping apocalyptic discourses she also plays the role of saviour at different times. The central difference in this narrative, compared to those in chapter 4, is its multiple apocalyptic moments that are then undermined and amplified through the subject’s mistrust of truth and the real.

In *Tales of the Otori* the entity that Takeo senses as the god/divine/Enlightened One is nonetheless considered stable and omniscient. In *The Oracle*, however, the god has many roles, or embodiments: the Archon, the scorpions and snakes, the Oracle, a voice in Mirany’s mind, and even as focaliser, all of which prove unreliable at times. The god seems to inhabit each in turn, though is most often present in the Archon. At the
beginning of each chapter there is a passage in italics narrated by the god from a position that does not correspond to any of its embodiments. In this passage, towards the end of the text, the god talks of his Shadow:

> My brother looks like me, but a reflection in a dim mirror.

> When I look into the water, I see him. Pale, attenuated. With no colour in him.

> A god can’t be expected to love every aspect of the world, can he? Death, darkness, the crevasse in the rock where the scorpion crawls, these I leave to him. (p. 247, emphasis original)

The god’s “shadow” takes the form of Kreon, who lives in the City of the Dead, and never ventures out of the underground tunnels and tombs. Kreon plays a vital role in saving the new Archon, his brother (in a godly sense), and, as indicated in the quotation above, he takes care of all the dark places that the sun god fears. The god (as he is in the passage above) has a direct “speaking” role in the text and his existence is confirmed through this focalisation. He muses on the history of the god, the Archons, and his relationship with the Rain Queen at different times. This narrator seems to be a slightly different “essence” than that which communicates with Mirany. The god is alert and aware of the day-to-day happenings around the City, demonstrating shifting subjective positions that perform differently in different situations. This post-structural fluidity in character represents the god as a shifting subject, rather than as an omniscient presence, thus allowing for his inclusion as undifferentiated.
The apocalypse is dispersed in the post-apocalyptic narrative, providing smaller apocalypses that must be either endured or used for a process of transformation. Mirany tells Oblek and Seth that the god spoke to her, and “neither of them were as astounded by this as she was... She wanted to shout at them, *Didn’t you hear? He’s real. He spoke to me!*” (p. 112). Their lack of incredulity is a mark of their faith, both in the god and in Mirany as his priestess. Mirany, however, constantly questions the validity even of the words in her mind, despite the fact that the small prophecies (which the words in her mind amount to) do change her course of action. The god tells her where he is, where to find the new Archon, “*I am here. I exist. Fetch me Mirany*” (p. 90), and she immediately plans to fetch him. Yet it is only when Oblek and Seth have found the new Archon (and the Archon tells Mirany he is found) that she seems sure that it is the god: “And she realized with a shiver that she had not to go to the Oracle to hear him. This was the Oracle. She was the Oracle” (p. 145). However, as discussed in the next section these apocalypses do not bring any stable foundation to her belief. Mirany chooses to transform her current passive self by acting on the words from the god, rather than endure their presence as a complication in her ambivalent position.

**Bearing the God’s Lies: Presence and absence**

Regardless of the god’s assertions that he exists, his presence is constantly undermined, reflecting the dialectical tension between presence and absence, bearing a direct relation to truth, since being present and being absent as both states of “being” that rely on language to represent each other (Derrida, 1974, p. 158). In the same way, signification relies on language and is caught in the play of signs. Neither language nor being can exist outside of the text: “*il n’y a pas de hors-texte*” (Derrida, 1974, p. 158).
The following discussion considers how the dialectic of presence and absence affects truth in the post-apocalyptic.

Dialectical tensions are evident on two levels – the subjective and the intersubjective – between Mirany and the god. At one point Mirany is holding the bronze bowl full of snakes and the god speaks to her; “This is not me”, he says, meaning that the snakes are not one of his manifestations but, rather, normal snakes drugged, with the intent that they will later kill Mirany (p. 162, original emphasis). The snake and the god are supposed to form a sign, the snake functioning as signifier and the god as signified. With this in mind, his statement “This is not me” has implications of “I am not me.”

The conciseness of his statement, and its emphasis, places the snake as a sign, and the god as signified (and signifiable), in doubt. He is humanised through his inability to reduce his subjectivity to a single sign, and is caught in the flux created by the contradiction of the humanist core self and the poststructural fluid experience of subjectivity. On the intersubjective level, Mirany and the god construct each other through their dialogues. On a social level, the god also comments regarding his ineffectual attempts to change the community he is supposed to guide: “between what I speak and what people hear yawns a vast divide” (p. 318), a statement that again brings the reliability of language and the sign to communicate again into doubt, and further problematises his role as a divine being. By contrast, Mirany is unable to construct her own sense of being around the god, as he cannot provide a stable centre point. Mirany’s own subjectivity remains fluid as a result. The god’s inability to offer a stable metanarrative is perpetuated throughout the text.

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37 This is exacerbated as the god, when in the body of the Archon, refers to himself in the third person. He also states: “If I had a name I have forgotten it” (p. 89), further implying his inability to signify himself through language.
The dialectic of presence and absence intersects with that of life and death, and the ability to absorb contradiction becomes the ability to survive. Alexos (the new Archon) tells Mirany to beware of those trying to harm:

‘They’ve tried once to hurt you.’

‘The god promised me. He said he wouldn’t let me be hurt.’

Alexos dropped a pebble in the circle’s heart. ‘Yes. But what if the god tells lies?’ (p. 237, original emphasis)

The mere concept that a god might lie casts under suspicion the ability of the god to provide a stable metanarrative for the community under suspicion. The act of dropping a pebble into the circle’s “heart” increases the impact of his statement, as if getting to the heart of an issue or dilemma for him. The Oracle is held to be not only the voice of wisdom but also the voice of the god: what happens if the god tells lies? Alexos is only a ten-year-old boy, albeit with a god inside him, and he seems to feel the weight of the burden he has placed on Mirany. To question his truthfulness is to question his right to place her on this dangerous path, and constructs him as going through his own process of becoming, as mentioned earlier.

Furthermore, the concept of a lie relies on the concept of truth. Believed to be truth, a god who is level with the origin of the word (as described above) but who lies becomes epitome of the simulacrum, confirming the signifier’s inability to represent the signified, and the subject’s failure to secure a core self as signified. Mirany’s life depends on the god’s promise that she is safe: this constitutes an equivalent to prophecy, however, through her exchange with the Archon she understands that such a prophecy is possibly a lie and that her life is still in danger. In order to survive she must transform
with this knowledge in mind. The breakdown of order further strengthens the need for both the undifferentiated and their community to transform for survival. The dialectic between presence and absence is further complicated by that between life and death, which forms the focus of the next section.

**(Un)Real Death**

Even when the god is an actual presence, as in this text, there does not appear to be any additional assurance that there is a stable underpinning to the beliefs of the community. “Reality” is undermined in the text, through both Mirany’s ambivalence about the reality of her existence as a priestess, and the presence of a god who tells lies. As in many dystopian texts, Mirany’s internal turmoil is reflected in the social landscape of the text. In this narrative, the proliferation of corruption and bribery penetrates the façade of social order. In what could seem on the surface to be an ordered and religion-orientated society, money is still essential (even to become a priestess) and the Nine priestesses are always aware of this monetary aspect. They are furious when Mirany is promoted to the Bearer, as they all knew her father had “schemed and plotted and bribed to get her in” (p. 24), and she was promoted above her more aristocratic peer who should have been next in line. Her friend Seth also has a darker side to him, as he sells maps of the tombs in exchange for water (albeit for his sick sister). Seth conspires with the Jackal to rob the tombs, which brings the underworld of the City to light. Their dealings show that the respect for the dead (in the City of the Dead) is not universal, and that most tombs have been robbed at some point. The corruption has spread to all levels of the society, and the falseness of the Speaker seems to be the worst betrayal of all: “Hermia was the traitor. Hermia had betrayed the Oracle. But then if there was no god anyway...”
The truth value of the god’s words becomes irrelevant if there is no Oracle to convey his words. The realness of Mirany’s world is constantly under threat. Mirany herself begins to see the absence of a basic reality, reflecting her lack of a core self, and survival becomes a question of transforming her burgeoning sense of self in a way that does not rely on truth and reality. The lack of truth in representation in the City of the Dead is epitomised by the unreliability of death as an end point.

As seen in the previous chapter, an experience of death, or the borderland between life and death, is often a part of the transformative process for the undifferentiated. Death, in many apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic texts, is also an unreliable boundary: here, the god is reincarnated, and Mirany “dies” twice – she is once bitten by a snake, and once locked in the tomb with the Archon for treachery. Mirany asks during one of her death experiences:

‘Am I dead then?’

No, But you are not alive either. He smiled. You used to think I didn’t exist at all.

‘I’m still not sure.’ She rubbed her face; it felt real. (p. 318)

On the borderlands of life and death Mirany is still hesitant in her belief, both about the existence of the god, and the “real” sensation of touch (which felt real, yet couldn’t be). This experience shows a collision of dialectical tensions in the text, between life and death, real and simulated, and time and timelessness. The god redirects his response to Mirany’s question on life and death towards his own existence in her eyes. They intersubjectively construct each other within the space of ambiguity; neither is alive, yet they are conversing. Time is also ambiguous in this space of death: “Time did not exist.
It had stopped” (p. 302). Timelessness removes telos, and death as an end point is undermined. Even in death Mirany relies on her own subjective experience, touching her face rather than depend on the god’s presence to establish a sense of her surroundings. Her conversation with the god, of whom she is still “not sure,” indicates her willingness to challenge her own beliefs and willingness to embrace an unreliable signs.

By embracing the experience of death Mirany reinforces her sense of agency. Upon her return from death, Mirany chooses to bear a bowl of water, rather than the god (as scorpion or snake), back to the living. The water represents rain for her drought-ridden land, and also symbolises the power of the Rain Queen, described by the god as “the one who will choose” (p. 350), and she in turn offers Mirany the choice of taking the bowl. The power to choose – agency – means making the choice of rain and survival for Mirany and her community. Although Mirany already has a strong sense of agency, seen in her ability to choose her course of action in the face of unreliable truths, her experience of death seems fails to dislodge her ambivalence, even though providing her with the power to save her community.

The (un)real experience of death also offers Mirany a clearer vision of how the simulacrum functions within her community. When Mirany instructs an unwilling helper, the Jackal, to do as the god has asked, he retorts: “You people always think you know what the god wants. It may well be what you want.” Mirany replies, “Do it anyway” (p. 335), implying that the “real” source of her request is not relevant, just as the simulacrum functions without the referent. Furthermore, Kreon (the shadow of the god) also inhabits this space of the unreal; his secret chamber deep in the pyramid is furnished with paper copies of the tomb decorations: “All copies. Shadows of the real ... or is it the other way round?” (pp. 271, 337). As Kreon dwells amongst the tombs, that
represent the underworld of the dead, his comments imply that the dead and the living participate in a dialectic exchange. The two examples here show the difficulty in determining the real over the copy. The ultimate signified is unobtainable and survival requires that Mirany learns to use this knowledge to her advantage.

Mirany questions not only the assumptions of her society (for example, that there is a god), but also questions the way she makes sense of this metanarrative. She disbelieves what seems to be self-evident to others in her community, and her transformative capability depends on her ambivalent and fluid experience of selfhood, rather than any attempt to resolve the contradictions surrounding her. The power of prophecy (and in the case of this text, small prophecies made by the god when speaking to Mirany) proves to be held by Mirany’s choice to act, rather than held in a divine being. For Mirany the revelation that the god is real changes very little. The shift in Mirany’s perception throughout the text occurs through her own vision of what will happen. Mirany understands the function of the Archon as the centre of her community that overrides the actual existence of a centre, and this function is absolutely “indispensable” (Derrida, 1978/1990, p. 297). However, the moment the god does seem real (when Mirany realises she is the Oracle) does not provide dependability for long, as it is soon revealed that pursuing the “realness” of the god is a futile exercise due to the irresolvable dialectic between the divine and the subject.

This section has established the postmodern foundations to surviving the post-apocalyptic use of prophecy by closely examining the dialectical tensions between the divine and the subject, truth and the real, simulacrum and referent. The Oracle is distinct from the other texts in this chapter in two ways: it does not hinge on a single curse; and its central character, Mirany, has self-awareness of her ambivalent belief about the god,
despite the fact that she chooses to act as if the god’s words are true. Mirany’s moments of agency are unchanged by her belief, and by embracing her multiple experiences of self she survives her death experiences and the corruption surrounding her. She survives her post-apocalyptic existence by embracing contradiction. The god also remains in a state of flux, reflecting the unstable metanarrative that religion provides in the text, and that Mirany questions throughout. The characters in *The Rat and the Raven* and *Moonlight* do not possess Mirany’s unerring scepticism, and their lives are drastically changed through empty prophecy. The following section shows how (lack of) belief and a sense of agency in some post-apocalyptic YA fictions are altered only when the prophecies are proved to be untrue.

**Moonlit Revelations: Time and prophecy and the displaced apocalypse**

Concepts of doom, prophecy and curse are intertwined with concepts of time. While the apocalyptic cycle is chronological and follows a traditional sense of time, the post-apocalyptic opens up for investigation a new understanding of time. As Bull explains, when horizontal or linear time becomes vertical (or timeless) time, it creates the possibility of the simultaneity of the future, the past, and the present: “everything is turned from the horizontal to the vertical: not only are progress and catastrophe present in each and every moment of time, so too is the possibility of redemption from both” (Bull, 1999, p. 161). Once an end is foretold there exists knowledge of that event. Whether it is seen as firmly set or changeable depends on the subject’s belief (or disbelief) in prophecy. The foreseen end of the world, of the self, or of history all become present. The prophesied end is made present through the displaced apocalypse,
creating a tension that seeps into all areas of life. This section considers how the texts construct a cursed character, and the role that prophecy plays in her or his life.

**The Cursed Ones: The Rat and the Raven**

*The Rat and the Raven* is a tale of young people trying to find direction in a post-disaster landscape, and they find it in a crusade to free Rattown. The narrative is told through variable (and at times multiple) focalisers (mostly Scathe, Bran and Dismas). Scathe, an empathic androgyne, is the first character to be introduced into the narrative, and is the Mouth of the Oracle in a post-disaster Australian city that has adopted a medieval way of life. Scathe tells prophecies to those who seek them by reading a form of Braille on leaves that Jocasta (the Oracle, an old woman who enlisted him when he was eight and his mother had died) has sent into the air outside their cave. Scathe reads that there are changes coming and the “Raven will feast on the Rat” (p. 68). While the narrative follows the action of Bran (known as the Raven) as he deposes the ruling tyrant (known as the Rat), this is always secondary to Scathe’s personal journey from being “cursed” to being accepted into the Raven’s gang. Bran and his crew of followers (Dismas the thief, Thel and Flae the archer twins, Mill “the hill,” and Swart the aristocrat) travel across the countryside to free the Rat’s enslaved people and save some of their own people whom the Rat has imprisoned. They join up with Matt, a local boy, and, eventually, also with Scathe, who guides them. Not only is Scathe accepted by Bran as a team member, but also the two fall in love with each other.

Living after revelation, a post-apocalyptic existence, has so far been considered in terms of a heroic revelation of purpose or agency. Curse (as apocalypse) determines a post-apocalyptic existence that is overshadowed by doom rather than by purpose. In *The
Rat and the Raven, “Jocasta had told [Scathe] that he could not be touched at all by any human” (p. 42), and that his life will be forever damned to loneliness. After he kills intruders to his home in a fury, Scathe believes anyone he touches will die. However, a boy (Matt) describes Scathe’s talent to Bran as a “transmitting empath” able to project his emotions onto others, rendering the victim mindless (pp. 61, 64). Nonetheless, Scathe believes he is literally untouchable, a belief which is reinforced by Jocasta and so he avoids people and wearing gloves and dwells only in the vicinity of the Oracle’s cave, never touching prophecy seekers, though he lives off their gifts. His belief in the immutable nature of prophecy only feeds this belief. His undifferentiation arises from embodying the dialectic of life and death, through his deathly touch and doomed existence. His post-apocalyptic existence overlaps with his role in the apocalyptic cycle. The apocalypse is shifted to the beginning of the narrative. At the same time, Scathe lives through the process of being shunned (he is taboo) and then is re-integrated to bring about a new equilibrium over the course of the story. This requires the “double reading” outlined in chapter 3, utilised here to push further the boundaries of the possibilities for surviving through transformation.

Accordingly, the undifferentiated is pivotal to both the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic readings. Scathe is undifferentiated through his physical appearance and psychic talents: "His breasts swelled softly. His genitalia were male. Scathe the Androgyne. Scathe the freak" (p. 66). He is seen by onlookers as “beautiful and perilous” (p. 67) and his beauty is remarked upon by many characters in the text.38 To persuade Scathe of the truth of his cursed and undifferentiated existence, Jocasta reveals

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38 This is reminiscent of the treatment Kaede receives for being both beautiful and cursed, in Tale of the Otori (Hearn, 2002-2004), a focal text in chapter 4.
to him that his mother is a child of incest, and calls him a child of incest too. Unknown to Scathe until this moment, Jocasta is his grandmother. Living out the Oedipal myth, Jocasta’s son kills his father and sleeps with her to produce Scathe’s mother (though neither Jocasta nor Scathe’s father know he is her son until later). Jocasta threatens Scathe:

you cannot leave me, Scathe, child of Rose, because you are my grandson. And the God has marked you, for my sin and her sin, so that you will never lie with a woman, never engender children of lust and horror. Forever, Scathe, and for longer, you are mine. (p. 53)

Her attempt to possess him – “you are mine” – metaphorically represents her desire to bind him to her through curse, attempting to “borrow” the influence of her role as the Oracle. Whereas Mirany (in The Oracle) uses her position as an Oracle to save those who believe in the god, Jocasta uses her position to further her own agenda by delivering her own prophecies (as does the Speaker in The Oracle). Her words rely on a belief in truth, and in the idea that a god has supposedly delivered Scathe’s doom. Scathe does believe he is doomed and runs away. He tries to kill himself in the river, “willing the water to hold him under” (p. 54). He enters the borderlands between life and death when he abandons the will to live. He is saved by an escaping prisoner and given a mission, which reinscribes his life with a new purpose while retaining the mark of his foray with death. He marks this moment by slashing his shoulder four times to look like a wound from raven’s claws. At this point he fully embraces his undifferentiated status, strips off his clothes, and marches back into the town naked to confront the Rat and tell him of the prophecies: “The Raven will feast on the Rat. Blood for the Rat. The Raven is coming”
Scathe’s curse, according to Jocasta, harks back two generations, to his grandmother’s incest. To be able to inherit a punishment from previous generations brings the undifferentiated into new realms, where curse can be passed on to children who then become undifferentiated by association.

The Cursed Ones: Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith

Inherited undifferentiation (which here also means a doomed existence to straddle the borders of life and death) also provides a foundation for Moonlight. The women in Moonlight have believed in the “doom” that surrounds a daughter in each generation for the last 1000 years. The text is set in a Jewish Iranian culture in the midst of political upheaval and religious persecution. The narrative focuses on the matrilineal heritage of Lili, a teenage girl, and the role that prophecy has played in her family’s lives. The text foregrounds Lili’s mother (Roxanna) and the events leading to, and following, her disappearance when Lili was still a girl, and how prophecy is a part of those events. The curse on Scathe and Roxanna marks them as undifferentiated, as they live with the end imprinted on their lives. Moonlight creates the sense of inevitability of the curse through layers of narration that span generations while keeping the emotional effect of events vivid.

Truth is multiple and dispersed in Moonlight. The story is the written account of one told by Miriam the Moon (Lili’s aunt) to Lili while Roxanna lies sick in America. The first chapter, essentially a prologue, is told with a mix of first- and third-person narration. After telling briefly of her mother’s story – “Roxanna the Angel was once a young woman” (p. 5) – and her flight from Tehran, Lili then states, “I was five when my mother left me” (p. 6), switching from cultural knowledge of her mother’s flight to her
own point of view. She ends this short prelude with “Miriam the Moon tells me my mother’s story” (p. 6), after which the narrative rarely acknowledges the presence of Lili as a narrator (or any other form of first-person narration) until the end of the text, privileging the view of the young Lili over those of the other narrators. There are many nuances to the narration, short exceptions to every pattern set up, and a flexibility that enables the story to be told with what various characters take as truths. While these truths predominantly confirm the curse on Roxanna, the young adult Lili questions them through her unique ability to transform the heritage offered to her, and through this, to save Roxanna.

The concept of transformation, central to this thesis, takes on new meaning in Moonlight, as Roxanna grows wings in an attempt to escape her mother’s belief in fate. When Roxanna’s curse is revealed to her mother, Shusha, she “gasped as if she had been struck by lightning. Her body shook, only once, but with enough force that Miriam had to pull away from the impact” (Nahai, 1999, p. 10). Roxanna’s family inherit a doom that has surrounded a daughter in each generation for the last millennium. Roxanna does not understand her curse until the apocalyptic moment when Shusha pushes her from a roof-top in a desperate attempt to rid her family of the “bad luck” child (p. 32):

Years later, as she recounted the events of that evening, Miriam the Moon would feel an ancient sense of dread, and tremble with the force of relived emotion: the sky was crowded with stars. Just then something stirred. There was a breeze, like the breath of a Deev or a Jinn. In one instant, the chickens in the yard began to scream and bat their wings, and a flock of pigeons appeared in the sky like a grey cloud, shedding their feathers and blocking out the moon. Shusha pushed Roxanna off the roof.[...]

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Miriam the Moon claimed that Roxanna had grown wings – swan’s wings with silver and white feathers – and had flown north... her story was confirmed by Tala’at, and by some neighbours... Sun the chicken lady did not recall having seen any wings. She said that Roxanna had flown like a ghost... but Shusha insisted that Roxanna had simply been carried off by a strong current of air formed by the sudden and massive flight of doves. (pp. 35-37)

This passage is imbued with the certainty that Roxanna flew off the building from which she was pushed, stemming from a communal understanding of the curse on Roxanna. The presence of an “ancient sense of dread” before the revelation uncovers the fact that it has always been there, hidden, yet the revelation for Roxanna is shattering. The imagery of animals panicking and winds blowing, an archetypal apocalyptic scene, functions as an omen or portent of Roxanna’s doom. However, at the same time, the events reinforce the prophecy of the ultimate end for her family, and of the subjectivities that construct and represent it. Roxanna is saved by flying away like a bird to the Caspian Sea. She returns five hours later, but only as a ghost of her previous self:

“Perhaps she had stared Jebreel, the Angel of Death, in the face” (p. 38).\(^{39}\) The repeated reference to winged creatures and death is taken up in the next section. Roxanna does not embrace her undifferentiation as Scathe does, but instead becomes distant and withdrawn, even after her marriage as a young woman (and the transformations in the passages of the novel that describe her childhood and young adult life).

\(^{39}\) There are parallels to The Rat and Raven, where Scathe attempts to drown himself after his apocalyptic moment, and afterwards is seen as a “jinn.”
Until this point in both narratives, to where they have been analysed so far, there is a strong sense of the apocalyptic markers of revelation, prophecy (as curse) and the undifferentiation of the protagonists Scathe and Roxanna. The revelations have occurred early in the narrative, undoing the chronology of the apocalyptic cycle where such revelations would lead to a new equilibrium. Instead, the undifferentiated are seen to embody the dialectic tensions between life and death, and are abjected from their communities in an attempt to exclude their disturbing presence. The next section discusses the effect of prophecy on characters’ lives once their curse is uncovered: for Scathe, when his incestuous heritage is revealed; and for Roxanna, when she realises her family’s curse was the motivation for her mother’s attempt to murder her. The following section also re-introduces the concepts of truth (as discussed in the analysis earlier of *The Oracle*) and the alternative ways of dealing with destiny, curse and prophecy in a post-apocalyptic existence.

**Messengers From The Other Side: A Post-apocalyptic existence**

As the undifferentiated characters Roxanna and Scathe learn of their family archive, and hence their curse, the texts use different narrative strategies to portray the weight of those histories. *Moonlight* utilises the tale of the Crow to establish the historical and deep rooted nature of the curse on Roxanna. *The Rat and the Raven*, however, does not go further than Jocasta’s revelation, and relies instead on Scathe’s internal anguish to relay the significance of his curse. Both texts contain imagery of the ominous birds of the *corvus genus* (ravens and crows) that are a cross-cultural symbol signifying communication with the dead (Flemming, 1998). The mark of the raven’s claws on Scathe, and Roxanna’s wings and encounter with the Angel of Death bring death back to
the world of the living, creating a sense of unease in those around them. The first two subsections below detail the impact of how these characters live post-apocalyptically (after the revelation of their curse). The third section discusses the characters’ realisation that their curses were meaningless, forming the double discourses of (and opportunity for a double reading through) the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic.

**Ravens**

After Scathe completes his task of telling the Rat the prophecies he read on the leaves when he was the Oracle, he walks away through the town trying to think of a plan of escape rather than succumb to death. In order to stave off the effects of hypothermia after swimming naked in freezing waters, he recites passages he has read in the past, starting with one from the Bible:

And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. (p. 69)

In the context of this narrative, this passage from the Book of Revelation (8: 10-11), and the images of stars and wormwood can be read as metaphorical for Scathe. His onlookers in the village see him as an “afreet or djin” (p. 67), perhaps like the star falling from the sky, and he descends from the citadel just as the wormwood 40 descends from Heaven. He re-enters the world as a bitter presence, and believes he is cursed and can

40 Wormwood, a bitter-tasting plant, used in the making of absinthe; it also refers to a cause of bitterness.
cause the death of others. The quoted passage above is followed with four stanzas that are part of the Sibyl’s Prophecy from the *Eldar Edda* in Norse mythology:

Heimdall blows strongly the great horn aloft,
Odin speaks to Mimir’s head;
The standing ash Yggdrasil trembles,
The old tree shakes and the giant breaks loose.

How fare the Gods? How fare the elves?
All Giantland trembles; the Gods meet
The Dwarves groan at the stone doors;
Guiding the rock wall. What more would you know?...

Hrym drives westward; raising his shield aloft
Earth-Serpent twists in giant mood
The dragon beats the waves, the eagle screams
Yellow baked, rends the dead Nailship breaks loose.

Surt comes northward with burning branches
The sun shines on the sword of battles;
Rocks crash and trolls topple roof-beams tumble
*Down to hell; and the heavens split.* (pp. 69-71)

The Norse passages talk of the Æsir gods Heimdall and Odin, both figures tied to doom and death. Possessed of very acute senses, Heimdall is the god who sounds a horn if
danger approaches. He can see to the end of the world, just as Scathe can see the prophecies and sense others’ emotions. The characters that Scathe is yet to meet are reflected in the Norse gods: Odin is often represented as a raven, like Bran; Surt is the fire god, an attribute which is seen in Swart later in the series; and Odin gives an eye to be able to consult Mimir’s head and gain wisdom, just as Jocasta (whom Scathe already knows) took her eyes out to see the prophecies (and is also seemingly named for Jocasta in the Oedipal myth). This moment in the text is apocalyptic in its revelation of events, or people, to come. To Scathe the phrases are “crying for attention” (p. 70), but his cold-affected mind cannot make sense of them. The last passage he recites is from Nostradamus, and foretells the fire from the sky that brings the world to its knees during the “Three Days” disaster through whose wake they are still living. Having come true in Scathe’s mind, this prophecy lends more weight to the other passages quoted, yet Scathe does not engage with them further in the text.

The length of these passages marks them, in terms of their narrative function, as important. They bring into the present the end that is foretold in so many texts, and there it haunts Scathe and his sense of agential subjectivity. He believes he knows what the end of the world is like (the Three Days) and also death: “Now he was dying and the verses were emptying into his brain as though crying for attention” (p. 70). As he stands ready to die, the verses “empty” into his mind, rather than “fill” his mind, the language constructing Scathe’s mind as a vessel for death as he sacrifices himself to relieve the world of the chaotic society that he believes he embodies. He experiences a moment of revelation that affects his agency, and the way he acts and sees the world; he lives as if the end has come and gone. However, he is rescued by Missis Ryan, a kindly, wise woman and healer of the village. His last words, as he stands in her home, is a short
quotation from Revelation 6:8: “I looked and beheld a pale horse; and his name that sat upon him was Death, and Hell followed with him” (p. 73). This passage perhaps refers to himself as the pale bringer of death. He assumes the prophecies are about his own curse, and his ability to bring death through touch. His failed self-sacrifice perpetuates his perception that his very existence pollutes the social (dis)order. The prophecy determines his subjectivity, dictating his experience of selfhood.

Intertextual references to mythic hero stories pervade the text. Naming, in particular, is a narrative strategy designed to bring further depth to the characters. “Bran” is the name of a Welsh king, Bran the Blessed, and literally means “crow” or “raven”. In the mythology of the Mabinogion (Bowen, 1969), the Welsh king has many of the heroic attributes that are also held here by Bran: awe-inspiring presence, natural leadership, physical size, and a love of peace. Bran’s group set out to save the enslaved people of Rattown, which include some of his own people (from the university he grew up in). Swart’s sister Brangwyn is being held against her will as one of the Rat’s many wives. In the Welsh legend, it is Bran’s sister Branwen who is held as a wife of the Irish king, and is saved by Bran and his army (Bowen, 1969, pp. 35-47). Branwen dies on the journey home from “great sorrow” (p. 46), whereas Brangwyn, despite being rescued, decides to stay on in Rattown as Jocasta’s new Voice of the Oracle. This intertextuality with the Welsh myths operates on varying levels in the text: the overt nature of the quotations; the characters’ names indicating the text’s self-awareness of these links; and the catching up to the characters’ actions in the layered and tangled meanings, without

41 Bran the Blessed is also written as “Bendigeid Vran” (Bowen, 1969, p. 46), or “Bendigeidfran” (Thomas & Crossley-Holland, 1984, p. 30), which translates from Welsh as “Blessed Raven,” or the genus “corvus” (crows and ravens). He was crowned king of what was then “Britain,” but is considered a Welsh figure.
any one holding precedence. Bran plays the role of the traditional hero in a traditional hero story structure and event sequence (as Scathe has prophesied the “Raven” feeding on the “Rat”). The juxtaposition between Bran as the hero and Scathe as the undifferentiated acts to undermine the hero story and draw attention to its rewriting in this post-apocalyptic text. Bran’s “reward” is the love of an androgyne.

The hero story is rewritten into a post-apocalyptic narrative. Bran and Scathe’s relationship is infused with the dialectical tensions between life and death. Scathe is taboo in his society because of his talents and appearance, and to compound (or contribute to) this, he is associated with death throughout the text: in his dreams, for instance, Scathe “dreamed that he was being boiled alive” (p. 81); in times of trouble he comments that one valid option is “one could always die” (p. 101); Jocasta tells Scathe that,

‘Death’s the only kingdom which would accept you.’
‘And it is always there. I know where it is,’ said Scathe. ‘And I know how to get there...’ (p. 52)

Scathe’s love of Bran the Raven could be seen as a love of the borderlands of death itself (as the raven is a symbol of communication with the dead). Scathe has read the Mabinogion, and early in The Rat and the Raven he refers to Bran the Blessed as “the Rescuer” (p. 26), in a prophetic moment of his own. The Welsh king is believed to have been given a cauldron that could bring the slain warrior back to life, “except that he will not be able to speak” (Bowen, 1969, p. 38). Scathe is given a new life, and is literally brought back from his early suicide attempt by Bran, yet he has lost his ability to speak the prophecies of the god (which ostensibly come through Jocasta). Scathe’s existence
between the suicide attempt and his acceptance of Bran’s love (at the end) is akin to that of a spectre, ghost or angel. This passage illustrates his ethereal quality, and the awe that he creates whilst walking naked through Rattown:

... to the guards who fell back from his path and the people who stared out of the windows and doors of the shops he was beautiful and perilous. He passed so close to one woman that she could see the muscles moving in harmony in side and buttock and thigh under the moon-blue skin, shadowed by the drying fall of moon-pale hair. As graceful as a fantasy, she thought, drawing aside; unnatural as a dream, cold as a tombstone angel, terrible as an army, sculptural, awe-inspiring. (p. 67)

Scathe’s appearance, manner and lack of attire all enhance the air about him of the supernatural, and give his renewed life-after-near-death an angelic quality. References to Scathe as an angel, whether in reference to his “angelic beauty” (p. 136) or his description as “an attendant angel,” further support this notion of Scathe as a being returned to existence, but kept slightly apart from the living through the taboo on touch. This is sharply brought to a halt at the end of the novel, when he accepts Bran’s love. Bran metaphorically brings Scathe back to life, but it is only a borderland life until he accepts Bran’s love, and through his relationships with others he begins to accept his own undifferentiation. Scathe becomes part of a new equilibrium as Bran’s partner; although his physical and mental abilities set him apart, these are now seen as on a par with the others’ skills and attributes, and he is no longer ostracised by the gang. Further, he is accepted as part of the generally revered group that saved Rattown, contributing towards a new equilibrium for the community that accepts his undifferentiation. The
following section further explores the archive and its importance for the post-apocalyptic, and cursed, existence in *Moonlight*.

**Crows**

*Moonlight* engages on an intertextual level with an historical text from within the story world, the legend of the Crow. Roxanna seems predestined to follow the Crow, the first cursed woman in Roxanna’s lineage. Due to the Crow’s “shameful” acts, the prophecy is that offspring from the Crow would be doomed to repeat the course of events that led to the curse. The curse becomes effective because the community believe it to be pre-ordained. The Crow, her strictly Jewish Rabbi husband, and her four children moved to Tehran to “educate the Jews in the ways of virtue” (p. 12). The Crow and her daughters are not allowed basic personal freedom, they are never allowed to speak, and their bodies are covered from head to toe in black cloth. One day, on Yom Kippur, the Crow unveils herself, and walks naked through the temple singing her song, with her four daughters following behind entranced; she then disappears (pp. 12-14). This sparks a series of similar escapes by the women in her line. The men of the family, and even some of the women, begin trying to tie the cursed ones down, shackling their feet or locking their doors. This is how Shusha (Roxanna’s mother) was raised, in order to stop her having a daughter and continuing the shame. From the unveiling of the Crow’s body and the delight it engenders among her female lineage, the women descended from her have been forced to live as if the shame has already been inflicted. The crow (bird) itself is considered a bad omen, an intermediary between life and death. Indeed, all names in *Moonlight* are portentous. The Crow is perceived to be the beginning of the end for her lineage. In each generation since the Crow, one woman is the cursed one who escapes,
or runs away, leaving the family in shame.\textsuperscript{42} Through Roxanna the family sense the end (that the curse is about to bring shame again) and they attempt to forestall this through the use of established coping mechanisms.

Rather than working in dialogue with the young adult characters (as seen in the previous chapter with regard to adult characters), BeeBee shows what Bradford et al. describe as a dismissive “abandonment” of an insurmountably doomed future (2008, p. 183): “I am going to keep you childless and, in this way, change our destiny,” she states (p. 15). However, not to marry and bear children would break not only their line, but also the archive, as it would mean the end of their family’s history too. BeeBee succumbs to letting Shusha the Beautiful marry Rahman the Ruler, thus keeping the archive alive.\textsuperscript{43} The possibility of death for the family line is at the same time the possibility of being cast adrift into the infinity of death (yet paradoxically death is always limited by life). Thus, BeeBee chooses to pull back from the boundary and allows Shusha to carry on their line. Roxanna attempts to end the suffering differently by flying away and leaving her daughter behind. In this way, she tries to take on herself the doom and leave the archive. Yet each mother still shows signs of “abandonment.” Each woman (and her society) sees herself as wormwood that poisons by this very existence the lives of their whole community with each failed attempt to end the cursed line.

Roxanna and Scathe try to cope with their undifferentiated existence, symbolised through the ravens and crows that surround them. They do not “return” in a triumphant moment, as seen in the apocalyptic cycle, yet still they find a way to survive in the world

\textsuperscript{42} The escapee does not function as a scapegoat, as seen in the previous chapter, as it is the running away itself that brings shame in this cultural setting, rather than alleviating the threat of undifferentiation.

\textsuperscript{43} For a family, Derrida states the archive is “signature, name, heritage, image, grief” (1984, p. 28) that constitutes that family’s combined utterance to the world, as discussed in chapter 2.
that is, hopefully, more inclusive. How this is achieved is tied to the post-apocalyptic aspects of the texts, and the emptiness of the apocalypses. The next section details the crossings between apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic readings that illuminate how Scathe and Roxanna survive.

**Fallible Fates and The Journey Into The Post-Apocalyptic**

From the moment of utterance a prophecy affects characters’ lives in *The Rat and the Raven*. As the Mouth of the Oracle itself, Scathe is the “utterer” of prophecy. Once he kills intruders as a child, Scathe believes his touch is deadly, which is reinforced by Jocasta when she reveals the details of why it happened. He is living “post” the revelation that his touch kills. A further dimension of his condition is that he is told that, as a child of incest, he is cursed, and will never know love. He lives, therefore, as if he will never find a partner, refusing any contact with Bran. He begins to show doubt when Missis Ryan mentions in regard to another child of incest that there is “no shame to the child if [the child] is… children are conceived all the same” (p. 85). Nevertheless, Scathe continues to tell himself that he is “untouchable” due to the incest taboo (p. 101). Much later, Bran instils further doubt about the curse, stating: “you can’t inherit incest, Scathe” (p. 150). In his post-apocalyptic life up until this point, Scathe has avoided both contact and love. Scathe’s mounting doubt about his cursed existence culminates when Bran challenges both curses by hugging Scathe (through clothing). This gesture may break the taboo on Scathe, but at this point Bran does not go so far as to touch his skin. Bran explains the Three Days disaster brought out many “wild talents” in people, including Scathe’s empathy. Scathe and Bran’s relationship changes the
nature of Scathe’s post-apocalyptic existence and doubt begins to creep into Scathe’s mind about his curse.

To doubt a prophecy or curse is a foreign concept to Scathe. He believes that "humans misunderstood the nature of prophecy. Fate could not be changed by altering the answer. Fate was, unlike love and loyalty, immutable" (p. 100). Yet Bran and Missis Ryan, two people whom Scathe greatly admires, believe that his grandmother’s incest has no bearing on his life or worth. At the end of the text, after Bran has defeated the Rat and the town celebrates, Bran and Scathe touch (as mentioned earlier, when Scathe accepts Bran’s love), and the action results not in death but a transmission of emotion, or projected empathy. They are in love, and the revelation that the curse is based on lies allows them to pursue that love. For Scathe, it means that he could have had human contact during his life, and all that stopped him was his belief in the curse: he lived as if it were true. His belief in the first apocalypse (that his hands killed the intruders) led him to create a (post-apocalyptic) life that actualised the curse that, according to Jocasta, forbade contact, yet the second apocalypse revealed that in fact the revelation was a lie. The truth of the prophecy was created by Scathe’s belief, as it became the metanarrative of his life. His belief in the immutable nature of fate led him to resist any doubt about his curse.

The manner by which Scathe and Bran become partners assists further in the lifting of the curse and taboo on Scathe. After defeating the Rat, Scathe sees Bran wearing the Rat’s robes, and “something inside [him] chilled and then froze. His heart, perhaps” (p. 219). Bran had previously promised that he did not want to govern, and had only honourable intentions for bringing down the Rat’s tyrannical rule. Scathe feels cheated and hurt by what he sees as betrayal. Scathe takes off his gloves ready to kill
Bran, and Bran pleads that he has not betrayed him; “then he took Scathe’s sleeve and guided the terrible hand… to lie flat on his bare chest… he screamed” (p. 221). After the pain, they share a moment of linked minds, and know that they love each other. Scathe brings Bran into death with him, and together they move back into life together. Bran, “cradling his murderer close against his breast” (p. 224) can now see the half-life that Scathe has been living, and they use terms that imply that a murder has taken place: “murderer” and “victim” (pp. 224-225). Yet it seems that their new life is now only one life shared, rather than two separate ones, and they cannot be separated without considerable anguish. Scathe’s survival through a renewed sense of living life has come at the cost of Bran’s (whole) life, and so dialectical tension of living and dead enables both Bran and Scathe to be transformed. Bran the hero becomes Bran the undifferentiated. Rather than merely re-instating the previous social binaries, Bran’s new undifferentiation demonstrates the embracing of contradiction.

Further to this, the second apocalypse or revelation that Scathe can be touched supersedes the first revelation that he cannot. The effect of his touch is controlled by his intentions towards the person; hence, awareness of his ability to kill or show love gives him a new sense of agency. Scathe says to Bran at the end of the narrative, “don’t make me choose your fate” (p. 231), which indicates his desire to relinquish the power of the Oracle (which had involved Scathe intimately in choosing to reveal someone’s fate). His reluctance also indicates that Bran may choose his own fate (rather than accept it as pre-ordained). However, there is still an implied belief by all characters in the prophecies regarding the Rat and the Raven told at the beginning of the text. Jocasta appears to have brought her own prophecies into play amongst those from the (implied) gods, and the fallibility of the Oracle redefines a prophecy as questionable truth, and repositions
agency away from the divine and towards the subject. Without even access to the Oracle for which Scathe previously worked with Jocasta (when they leave Rattown), there are no more prophecies to be told, and the gang are free to continue their lives without prophecy, as demonstrated in the next volumes in the series.

Living a post-apocalyptic existence is similarly problematic for Roxanna in \textit{Moonlight}, before she realises the prophecies are unfounded. Roxanna lives with the knowledge of her mother’s murderous intentions from the moment she believes she is doomed. Thus, she is living post-apocalypse, and her transformations represent the need to escape her doom. The sense of an ending is inescapable and all-consuming, and affects all in contact with Roxanna. From the moment of conception she seems to be cursed, making her mother Shusha suffer “temporary senility” (p. 23) during the pregnancy. The midwife explains the condition: “This happens when the infant’s blood is hostile to its mother’s... Your wife and this baby will never understand each other” (p. 23), thereby laying the foundation for (and prophesying) all the future difficulties with Roxanna.

Shusha begins labour in the eighth month, which is believed to mean the child will be “deformed and retarded” (p. 25). The midwife arrives to help stop the labour, and declares it was a false labour. However, the next morning the sun does not rise over the Tehran ghetto, and when it does appear at seven in the evening, “only Shusha lay awake, holding her newborn infant girl... and from that day on the order of day and night changed forever” (p. 26). This creates the sense that this infant is destined to be a child of moonlight and darkness because she held on to night for an unnatural length of time until her birth. After the birth of Roxanna, Shusha’s estranged mother, Bee-Bee, arrives: “the door burst open with the force of an apocalypse, and BeeBee appeared” (p. 27). She
declares outright “this is the bad-luck one… Give her away if you can. Or else, kill her yourself” (p. 26). This utterance of the prophecy (for this generation) is the apocalyptic moment, after which everything is post-apocalypse.

The adults, as seen in the previous chapter, are unable to transform through the prophecy, and their immutability hinders survival. Roxanna is then seen as the cause of all misfortune, for her family and her village. When a plague spreads, BeeBee says: “It’s her fault… She brought that disease in here” (p. 32). Shusha “lived in constant fear of the ruination that Roxanna was going to bring upon them” (p. 39), and so is also living post-apocalypse, in fear of the prophesied future. As Berger suggests, the event has already occurred from the moment of utterance. The people in Roxanna’s village already know that Roxanna will be the cursed child of Shusha: “they knew it with such certainty… like the existence of God, like the inferiority of women” (p. 27). As a young adult removed from an upbringing within her family, Lili instigates the opportunity to transform life through the knowledge that there is no truth in the curse, and her (and her mother’s) survival relies on this knowledge.

As mentioned earlier, character-naming has prophetic overtones. All the main characters have special names, and it becomes apparent that they are either the names that Lili has given them in order to understand Miriam’s story, or names that Miriam herself has used. The latter’s name, Miriam the Moon, reflects her role in the narrative, as a guide through Lili’s and Roxanna’s darker times. Moonlight can be seen only in the darkness of night, just as an omen is seen as an omen only in the darkness of portentous times. Roxanna’s name, Roxanna the Angel, draws attention to her luminous qualities, and her ability to fly, but also to her role to bring a message (in this case, one of doom)
to her people through her existence. Through the characters’ names it appears that they have no option but to fulfil their own prophecy: Teymur the Heretic is as his name portends; whilst Tala’at the Deceiver is deceitful to her husband at only 36 years of age, yet she has been named as Deceiver since she was a child (p. 27).

This way of naming characters is a narrative technique employed to illustrate how the story is told by Miriam when Lili is eighteen. However, the naming also functions as a temporal device which allows future, present, and past to co-exist: the story is being narrated from a time in the future, which is Lili’s present, with the benefit of hindsight. The narrative, thus, begins after the end. Even when the narrative declares Roxanna is the bad luck child, this fact is already known by the narrators Lili and Miriam as the narration unfolds from the present where they sit in America looking back over Roxanna’s time in Iran. As they know (to some extent) how events will unfold, the characters’ names become portentous, since they have been assigned after the end.

Despite the curse on Roxanna’s life, she survives, as does her daughter. At the end of the novel, they do escape the doom of generations past, as all the revelations eventually show to have revealed nothing. The revelations are merely signifiers with no referents, as they signify events in the future or label events from the past that perhaps happened only because of that act of signification. This dialectic tension between present and future is dissolved as the end has both come and gone (or the characters live as if it had), and cannot have happened (as the narrator is able to narrate). Lili instigates a “dialogue” with her mother when they are reunited in America, rather than continuing the previous generations of “abandonment,” and this establishes the transformative

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44 The significance of angels in the post-apocalyptic are explored further in the next chapter.
possibilities of the post-apocalyptic existence, with the suggestion of a utopian future for their family (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 183).

What seemed at first to be set in stone is undermined by the post-apocalyptic. Tala’at, not Roxanna, is the daughter of Shusha who actually brings ruin to her family by leaving her husband for his nephew. Shusha commits suicide in response to this shameful act (p. 130). Also, during the period when Roxanna is married and living on the Avenue of Faith, Miriam forecasts that the ghosts of Roxanna’s marital home will “wake up and haunt [her] to the grave”: “Miriam the Moon spoke of the robber ghosts of the house on the Avenue of Faith and, by so doing, brought them to life” (p. 141, emphasis added). Miriam’s utterance creates the situation, and the ghosts then purportedly steal things from the house until almost no possessions are left. However, it is later disclosed that it was Roxanna’s mother-in-law who had organised the thefts, and thus the original prophecy did not reveal a truth. The power of the prophecy was in how the characters lived as if it were true and predetermined. They thus made it real.

The end of the archive is threatened in the prophecy, sensed, but not fully known, by the members of Roxanna’s family and community. Each mother takes a different approach to dealing with a post-apocalyptic existence: BeeBee seeks to imprison her daughter, Shusha tries to murder her daughter, and Roxanna abandons her daughter. Each attempt to escape the curse is unsuccessful, as it would also bring about the end of the family’s archival history. This is not an option that they are prepared to take. The two women who had the ultimate choice of ending or not ending the family line completely (BeeBee and Roxanna, who had only one child each), find irresistible the impulse to survive. What Derrida terms “‘survivance’ at the very heart of life” (1984, p. 28) is spurred on by the adolescents Roxanna and then Lili. It is revealed at the end that
they are all living post-apocalypse, or with the prophecy, yet it is an apocalypse that was empty and influential only because of their belief, rather than any divine knowledge of the future. Their fate is not predetermined, and their lives are their own. The reunification of Roxanna and Lili means the continuation of the archive, and a new existence for the family in America (as their new community). The young adult Lili is then able to transform in order to survive, and to ensure the survival of her new community, and consequently also of her family’s archive.

Both The Rat and the Raven and Moonlight show how prophecy and curse can dictate the lives of the characters, that is, up to the point that the characters realised that it is the prophecy itself – the actual utterance – that has been shaping their lives, rather than any inherent truth about the present/future that the prophecy possessed. Scathe and Roxanna both come to this realisation and, as a consequence, for the first time feel able to enjoy a meaningful relationship with those they love. Because of their belief in the curse they lived a half-life, or a life at the border with death, constantly questioning their right to love and to live. The recognition that the curse is merely a signifier for something that they have themselves made reality gives them the power to cease making that signified real (to cease living as cursed people). The texts are apocalyptic in their eventual reintegration of the undifferentiated characters (though on a deeper level than was seen in the previous chapter’s focal texts) and the pivotal nature of the undifferentiated and apocalypses. They become post-apocalyptic when the characters live haunted by the apocalypses, that the prophecies eventually reveal themselves to be worthless. Such prophecies manifest differently in The Oracle, as the unreliability of the source of the prophecies has no effect on Mirany’s agency. She continues to listen to the voice in her head while acting according to her own convictions.
Bull’s notion of vertical time – “everything is turned from the horizontal to the vertical: not only are progress and catastrophe present in each and every moment of time, so too is the possibility of redemption from both” (Bull, 1999, p. 161) – is apparent in the texts. The characters, after the prophecies are uttered, enter into post-apocalyptic time where the effect of the prophecy is held not at some future point, but in the present. Time moves from the horizontal to the vertical, and each moment co-exists. The prophesied end becomes an ending in itself, and as they live after it they exist post-apocalypse. Temporal matters also concern Berger “The events envisioned have already occurred, have as good as occurred. Once the prophecy is uttered, all the rest is post-apocalypse” (1999, p. 6), which to some extent bears out in the analyses presented in this chapter. Yet all the while the characters could be free of the prophecy if they did not believe in it. While Bull allows for redemption, Berger’s pessimism implies a predetermined future, that has “as well as occurred,” without the possibility of transforming within the post-apocalyptic to create a more positive future. Adolescent time and space are more conducive to such transformations, and the fiction here relies on the liminality and uniqueness of the young adult to effect change. The timelessness of the post-apocalyptic dictates that although there is a point where it all becomes clear (the second apocalypse), it was still possible for the subjects of the prophecy to free themselves of the shroud of prophecy at any point in time.

**Conclusion**

In the epigraphs to this chapter, Sigurd’s and Marwen’s decisions to face their destiny rather than have it haunt them may appear conducive to agency, as “Marwen understands that the best way to evade the dragon seeking her is to go towards it”
(Stephens & McCallum, 1998, p. 123); yet there remains a belief in the future’s immutability, and the events inevitably bring about the prophesied end. Regardless of their sense of agency, Sigurd and Marwen are caught in the push towards telos. Conversely, Mirany, Scathe and Roxanna face their destiny (or curse) and destabilise its very origin, and consequently their end. They challenge the metanarratives that construct belief in prophecy, and thus show agency that is not bound by telos but, rather, freed by an open future with possibilities for surviving through transforming their existence.

This chapter has extended the apocalyptic metalanguage by introducing the postmodern concepts of time, prophecy and the simulacrum, which push the apocalyptic into the post-apocalyptic. It has further shown that surviving the post-apocalyptic existence is a complicated and fraught time of undermined futures and destabilised selfhoods. The texts do, however, position readers to accept these aspects of life and liminality. They provide a way forward that embraces the lack of truth and the real, or of mapped-out existence. Further, the texts encourage a sense of agency that hinges on shifting selves and variations of discursive norms, as they encourage a critical response to the teleological underpinnings of those discourses. There is no reliance on “finding” one’s self, and the strength to continue in the face of adversity, as liberal humanism would dictate. Rather, there is support for embracing a multiple self, and the adolescent ability to change and grow without telos. There is further advocacy for escaping a prophesied destiny within family or community, and to work in dialogue with truth and the real as variable concepts, rather than as stable entities, in order to sketch a transformative sense of self that embraces the falsity of apocalyptic revelation. The concept of individual transformation to effect change in a community adheres to transformative utopianism, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. The
transformation required to survive a post-apocalyptic existence is a transformed perception of language and representation. Furthermore, the texts demonstrate a resistance to the hero story, which always maintains a sense of telos. The technique of narrative analysis utilised in this chapter offers a double reading of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic by attending to the dialectical tensions between time and space, and encompassing those between present and future, divine and subject, life and death, and the real and the copy.

The next chapter focuses on the consistent presence of death in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives, and extends the poststructural influences on perceptions of language and signification in post-apocalyptic YA fiction. As this chapter has demonstrated, death experiences contribute to a sense of individual agency. The inclusion of vampires and gothic narrative motifs discussed in chapter 6 broadens the investigation of survival through transformation (both of the self and of the body) and blurs the already tenuous boundaries of life and death in post-apocalyptic YA fiction.
Chapter 6

Grave New Worlds: Surviving death

Rather than looking to the end to stabilize meaning, to draw the division between absence and presence, the real and the simulated, we might look at the end or death as the impossibility of the stabilization of either the referent or the sign, as a “viral agent.” (Heffernan, 1995, p. 180)

In young adult fiction, death is invoked to illustrate the complete failure of the subject to assert their agency and thus fulfil the desire to create an identity – the sense of “I am” and “I am becoming” in a dialectical relationship with others. (Wilson, 2001, p. 30)

The apocalyptic model for analysis, established in chapter 4 converged in chapter 5 with an analytic technique for understanding the post-apocalyptic. The double reading of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic is furthered in this chapter through a focus on the apocalypse of death. Accordingly, this chapter integrates the emerging connections between death and the simulacrum of death, in the fantasy figure of the vampire.

Furthermore, this chapter opens up other interpretations of the reintroduction of the undifferentiated and establishment of a new equilibrium in the post-apocalyptic. As seen in the analysis offered in previous chapters, the selected YA narratives show a desire to create meaningful relationships with death in postmodern worlds (Noys, 2005, p. 3). A post-apocalyptic analysis offers a reading that goes beyond the crisis of subjectivity that Wilson and James refer to (Wilson, 2001, p. 30; James, 2008, p. 21). The texts chosen for this chapter, Thirsty (Anderson, 1997), the Vampire Academy trilogy (Mead, 2007, 2008b, 2008a), and the Twilight series (Meyer, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008), show varying representations of the young adult space, and the role of immortality (or timelessness) in that space. The gothic genre is particularly suited to apocalyptic analysis as it presents transgressions and the transformed body, and often the ability to survive through
transformation, so that “our haunted condition need not render us helpless” (McGillis, 2007, p. 233). The grave new worlds opened up by a post-apocalyptic existence are considered in this chapter to ascertain how the young adult subject survives through transformations that incorporate death into life.

Death in a postmodern world takes place on a mass scale, as my examples in chapters 1 and 2 illustrated. New threats of viral infection and of terrorism have created menacing, nameless, and unidentifiable potential cause of death. In narrative, the vampire manifests these threats in physical form. Vampirism often appears to be transmitted through bodily fluid and presents an insidious threat to humans, as the vampire may appear alive and remain undetected, while working to undermine life. The vampire, essentially, becomes a simulacrum of the person that existed before becoming the living dead. In one of the focal texts, *Thirsty*, vampires are undifferentiated figures of bare life caught in the play of language and the sign and yet devoid of a real identity. The remaining focal texts open up previous narrative accounts of vampirism, and the variety of new “forms” they take creates new avenues for investigation into young adulthood. Analysing the vampire through the lens of the post-apocalyptic enables consideration of how the undifferentiated subject can transform in order to survive the pervasive threat of death, and can also create a new equilibrium for his/her community that incorporates the contradictions inherent in the dialectic of life and death.

The three focal texts central to this chapter offer different transformations arising from a post-apocalyptic existence. The varying subject positions of the protagonists also provide varying representations of the ways the undifferentiated may achieve a form of

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45 Bare life is defined in chapter 2, and seen in the examples of the clone, monster and the mythical-human in chapter 4.
resilience through transformation. This chapter also considers the consequences for characters that do not develop a coping strategy for surviving the world they inhabit, and a less optimistic view of the apocalyptic cycle. Anderson’s *Thirsty* depicts an apocalyptic breakdown of social coping mechanisms, and captures the pessimism with which the post-apocalyptic sense of the end pervades life (Berger, 1999; Heffernan, 2008). The *Vampire Academy* series (*Vampire Academy*, 2007; *Shadow Kiss*, 2008a; and *Frostbite*; 2008b) and the *Twilight* series (*Twilight*, 2005; *New Moon*, 2006; *Eclipse*, 2007; and *Breaking Dawn*, 2008) provide the opportunity to focus on the dialectic of space and time, liminality, and mortality and immortality, as they apply to the young adult protagonists’ experiences. A double reading of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic discourses considers the degree to which an acceptance of death in life is a means of survival for the young adult, and through this, the survival of the community.

**Living in the Borderlands of Life and Death: The dialectic of space and time**

In young adult novels such as *The Last Vampire* (Pike, 1997), *The Awakening* (L. J. Smith, 1999) and *Evertnight* (Grey, 2008) there are over-arching metaphors of vampirism as puberty and emerging sexuality (A. Smith, 2007, p. 142). However, a post-apocalyptic analysis directs attention to other aspects of the text, including the emerging vampire’s existence on the borderlands of life and death, and the socio-cultural coping mechanisms for characters undifferentiated through their vampirism. In previous chapters, undifferentiated characters that have an interaction with death utilise this in order to transform their life. Takeo (in *Tales of the Otori*, chapter 4), and Mirany (in *The Oracle*, chapter 5), transform their sense of how to live their lives through utilising the
dialectical tensions between life and death to their benefit. Death and the image of the vampire can be read as a simulacrum in *Thirsty*. As defined in chapter 3, the simulacrum concerns the surface of things, the ability to copy and (in a postmodern sense) the ability for the original to be erased or absent. The play of the sign, as seen in *The Oracle*, reflects the empty revelation, and questions the possibility of truth if simulacrum is the true existence (Baudrillard, 1994b, p. 1). Death functions as the simulacrum in *Thirsty* by refusing to provide the limit to life that the signifier connotes. The infinity and unknowability of death function to define the finitude of life. The vampire creates a contradiction as death is both finite and infinite within the one body, articulating the embodied dialectical tensions between life and death. This section firstly considers death and the vampire as simulacra, and the social coping mechanisms for dealing with the vampire’s undifferentiated presence. This is followed by a discussion of the contradictions between origin and death in the vampire narrative. The discussion concludes with a return to the dialectic of integration as it pertains to the post-apocalyptic.

**The Simulacrum of Death**

Death through viral infection is a pervasive fear in *Thirsty*. The narrative follows Chris, the young adult protagonist, who discovers he is becoming a vampire when he can no longer see his own reflection and has an insatiable hunger (or thirst) for blood. Although vampires are an accepted scourge on Chris’s community, his personal experience is fraught with uncertainty and guilt, even though he does not feed on a human during the narrative. His life changes from concern with childish and everyday things (such as arguments with his friends over comic book characters) to an
involvement in urgent and extraordinary events when he meets Chet, whom Chris believes is working for the Forces of Light to rid the world of an evil vampire lord. Chet deceives Chris into thinking that he is needed to fight the vampire scourge, and that Chris can be “cured” of his vampirism. By the end of the novel Chet is revealed to be an “un-celestial being” (p. 227) who orchestrated Chris’s infection with the vampire virus when he was a baby as a part of a grand plan to free the incarcerated vampire lord. Chris realises he has helped the Forces of Darkness, and the open ending leaves him still a vampire, ravenously hungry and listening to the sounds of his family’s beating hearts.

A dialectic of time is evident from the contradictory metaphors for seasonal change in *Thirsty*. The prologue locates vampires within the community of Clayton, just as *The House of the Scorpion* begins with a similar framing prologue set in the cloning laboratories. In *Thirsty* vampires share the same seasonal space as “tent caterpillars,” a phenomenon of spring time each year, which normalises their presence, although they are still very much separate from the living or the dead (Anderson, 1997, p. 7). Clayton residents cope with the undifferentiated (the vampires) through sacrifice:

The annual Sad Festival of Vampires is coming up. It is an ancient festival in my hometown of Clayton held to keep Tch’muchgar, the Vampire Lord, locked in another world. It is said that the spirit of Tch’muchgar in prehistoric times ravaged the land with an army of Darkness, and that his dominion extended over the whole expanse of mountain and forest now covered by the 508 and 413 mountain codes. It is said that it was he who then first laid the curse of vampirism on humans and made the vampires live past death and suck the blood of the living.
It was for this that in ancient times the Forces of Light expelled him to a prison in another world and came in the form of shining beings to tell the Pompositticut tribe what rituals should be done each year in special ritual sites to keep Tch’muchgar locked away forever (p. 8)

Vampires are lynched, traditionally. It is too costly to hold them for trial. (p. 17)

This short history of vampires in Clayton and surrounding suburbs reveals how the rituals and sacrifices were an integral part of the community’s attempts at keeping the threat of the undifferentiated away through the ritualistic act of lynching to maintain order. Vampires are deemed to exist outside of any legal system, as they are refused a trial and are instead lynched in public, reinforcing the society’s need to maintain the stability of the binary. The vampires have been excluded by the society for their taboo acts such as drinking blood, and for their undifferentiation as the living dead. The ritual has succeeded in expelling the undifferentiated, and the vampires’ exclusion is reaffirmed each year with the Sad Festival of Vampires, as Chris remarks: “Nobody really believes much in Tch’muchgar anymore, but we still do the festival” (p. 8). The vampires are “in the wind,” (p. 7) and, as noted by McGillis, this phrase references a Biblical passage: “but the Lord was not in the wind” (1 Kings 19:11) when the Lord causes earthly destruction in order to remind the prophet Elijah not to wallow in self-pity. The vampires are in the wind, and like words, they are only effect with no core substance, caught in the play of signs as their bodies act as signifiers for their previous existence. However, they perpetuate the contradictory signification process, through continuing to “speak” to the world as a part of the system of signification despite the
lack of a stable signifier. The wind is purely an effect that has no divine essence through which to assert power through the ultimate signified. The Lord only has to talk in a “small voice” to people to effect the greatest changes because his words are grounded in the ultimate signified and truth. By contrast, the vampires can be read through a poststructural lens as beings (simulacra) that have no connection to truth, and can have meaning only in relation to current discourse; aptly in this case, relativity is cast in a negative light through its embodiment in evil vampires.

The vampire is caught in the process of signification and différance. The sense that the vampire (and therefore death) is a simulation is magnified in this text through its repeated representation on the television. As the vampires infiltrate the town, no longer kept away through rituals, Chris watches their progress on the television: “there are more vampiric murders in the news that week” (Anderson, 1997, p. 65). Even the television is showing signs of a breakdown of communication: “television reception in Clayton and Bradley and all the surrounding towns suddenly fails” (p. 66). During the vampire resurgence, a vampiric mouth comes onto the screen and wails about being trapped, and then the regular television returns temporarily to restore order. The “television effect,” according to Baudrillard, provides the simulacrum of the real and supersedes any need for the real to occur or exist by creating its own event through the media (1994b, p. 55). The only counter to the simulacrum of disaster that creates a permanent and stable sense of the event on television is “real” disaster. In Thirsty the vampiric mouth on the news the television shows an interruption to the simulacrum of vampires taking over the town, and makes it “real,” soon to return to the “order” of television and simulation. Just as the simulacrum is caught in the play of signs and différance, the mouth also “wails about being trapped” in the televisual simulation
device; the vampire as a simulacrum is trapped in its state of un-death as a representation of the cataclysm of death without resolution, effacing its apocalyptic nature. The vampires represent death as the play of signs and the contradictory state of representation in the simulacrum. This contradiction enhances their status as undifferentiated, and the failed attempts to banish the undifferentiated lead to pollution and chaos.

Death as an end point retrospectively creates meaning (as in the opening epigraph from Heffernan). Death is, however, effaced in apocalyptic narratives due to the breakdown of taboo and sacrifice that keep the dead at bay. The failure of the mechanisms of social control can already be identified in the prologue to the novel. Chris notes the original ritual sites have been built over and their significant role forgotten, as they are “now a White Hen Pantry and a Texaco station” (p. 9). The defacement of the ritual banishment site means the vampires “are on the move,” disturbing the peace normally brought by the rituals (p. 9). The threat the vampires pose, like that of all undifferentiated, is the possible breaching of boundaries and rending them fluid. As discussed in chapter 4 with regard to the threat of “slime,” the differentiation between two sides of a binary (or propositions in a contradiction) acts as a polarising force. Slime, like the fluidity of those boundaries of difference, instigates confusion through the dissolution of definition. In Thirsty the threat of this dissolution can be seen at the lynching, when on the sidelines “an old woman is crying, sobbing – ‘My baby! My baby!’ Two police officers are holding the old woman back, and I do not know whether her baby is a victim or the vampire herself” (Anderson, 1997, p. 19). Chris’s indecision about the nature of the relationship between the woman and the baby reflects confusion over the dissolution of simple differences, and creates dialectical tensions
between the concepts of victim and vampire, origin and death. The image of the vampire as associated with death is contradictory with reference to a baby (echoing symbols of spring, caterpillars and hens in the novel): the vampire who is essentially dead becomes imbricated with life and origin. This moment in *Thirsty* is a marker of the “pollution” in the apocalyptic cycle, when cracks appear in the stability created through sacrifice or taboo. As the vampire places death under erasure, and the closure of death that provides “some stable point” from which to produce “meaning in the world” is denied, the very notion of origin is destabilised.

*From Birth to Death (and back again)*

The moment of revelation is pivotal in an apocalyptic narrative: the revelation *is* the apocalypse. It changes the way previous events are viewed, and present/future events are viewed with the apocalypse in mind. Chris experiences his own apocalypse (on the [inter]subjective level) as he realises that he is turning into a vampire. Upon seeing that he has no reflection in the lake, Chris’s suspicions are confirmed, and the revelation of his impending vampirism brings the sense that something is wrong (p. 34). His lack of reflection in the water is a lack of re-presentation, and at that moment he is symbolically abjected from the signification system: he becomes undifferentiated. He enters the realms of the *homo sacer*, described earlier with reference to cloning. The labels of human and vampire are both inaccurate in this transition phase, and so he is transferred outside of the signification system, just as his image is not reflected in the water. His family and friends find it impossible to engage in a relevant and meaningful way with Chris, and he is left stranded outside of these intersubjective relations that had previously contributed to his own subjectivity or sense of his human self. The impact of
this loss on his subjectivity is profound, and even though others do not know what is
happening to him, they nevertheless sense that something is wrong. They are suspicious
of his changes, but reluctant to confront his newly taboo existence, preferring to hide
behind sacrifice (through imprisoning and lynching) and maintain the taboo on
vampires, rather than accept him in his current liminal state (see p. 131).

The apocalyptic narrative described so far becomes post-apocalyptic as Chris
lives after his revealed vampiric destiny. However, he fails to transform his
preconceived notions of how to live. Once Chris realises he is turning into a vampire, he
attempts to cope with the situation as social norms would dictate. By agreeing to step
into the world of Tch’muchgar and drop the Arm of Moriator (a mystical weapon
allowing the daemon to escape his binding), he is in effect sacrificing himself. During
his experience in another “world,” his sensations and internal dialogue are tantamount to
dying. Chet describes the experience as going “to hell and back” (p. 100), and Chris
describes the place as a “murky world” that “spreads out dark and dead into infinity” (p.
108). He feels that he is in “embalming fluid” (p. 108), which re-enforces imagery of a
body eternally preserved in death. However, Chris’s embalming is incorrect, as he still
lives, which in turn represents another failed ritual: “like being buried alive – buried
alive in a coffin…” (p. 112). He senses that Tch’muchgar is all around him, perhaps
indicating that death and the Dark Lord are one and the same thing, so that to be a
vampire is to be death. Thus, he has just sacrificed himself to “death”, yet
contradictorily, is also the un-dead. However, Agamben’s theory would argue that Chris
has now been accepted by the gods of the underworld (or this case, the Dark Lord), and
thus excluded from further sacrifice or acceptance by the Forces of Light. Chris
comments, “there is defeat so deep” (p. 111), and (referring to Tch’muchgar) “I can
hardly move for the destiny of him” (p. 110). Chris appears to be surrendering to death, defeated by it. However, it is not death that Tch’muchgar represents, but the dialectic of being (life and death). Accordingly, Chris is “destined” to represent a contradiction as the living dead.

The dialectic of life and death is infused with the tensions and contradictions that run through language and representation. This point has been made throughout the textual analyses conducted in this thesis. The use of short phrases and statements further intensifies the experience, and Chris’s ability to signify what is happening becomes difficult. As death is the limit of our signification system, where words fail, his borderland existence is necessarily caught in the slippages of signification. His words become lost, for example in this passage:

God I hate it. God I hate.

There is defeat so deep.

I hate. Damn you. All. (pp. 110-111)

His initial statement, “God I hate it,” is the initial, perhaps human, articulation, showing revulsion from the evil place (“it” being the place he is in). This is quickly followed by “God I hate,” where the removal of one word, “it,” is crucial, turning the focus of the hate inwards, while also implying the grammatical inversion “I hate God”. Chris is now identifying himself as a hateful person, and the focus is on the act of hating, rather than on the object of hatred. Because he does not focus his hatred on Tch’muchgar or the vampires (as the rest of his society does throughout the text), in this one statement Chris gains a more vampiric or demonic subjectivity through his lack of allegiance and his focus on feelings of hate. His previous intersubjective self, formed through the
relationships of his human life, is now fully interrelated, and intersubjective, with Tch’muchgar, who signifies the border of death itself. This interaction now pulls his subjectivity into the vampiric “hate,” acknowledged by Chris: “There is defeat so deep.” The line following this, “I hate,” even refuses the god that he often calls to in the novel, and he is now alone in his hate. Initially, his words, “Damn you,” are ambiguous; he could be either damning himself, his vampiric or human self, or damning Tch’muchgar for the shift indicated in his previous words. The last and powerful sentence, “All,” turns the damnation outwards to the community (even the human community), fully accusing them for his pain and inability to master the vampire within. A few lines later he says again: “Hate it. Hate it. Hate” (p. 111), which reaffirms his shift from feeling hate to being hate, and being the vampire who is incapable of love. From these short few sentences, constructed in such a way as to draw attention to the importance of their content, it is possible to identify the inner struggle Chris is undergoing in his borderland experience, and the dialectical tensions within language that correspond to the simulacrum of death.

Re-Birthing and The Dialectic of Integration

Just as death and origin are problematic in Thirsty, Chris’s rebirth furthers the tensions between life and death. His return to the world, falling on his knees, is tantamount to his re-birth as an unblooded vampire, rather than as a hybrid – half-human, half-vampire. The embalming fluid mentioned above is also described as “plasma,” and is contained within a set of images that can be read as womb-like: “there is no life to stir the water, the plasma all around me is starting to move and eddy. The sound is approaching me, too. Getting louder. I am in the midst of something.
Everything is thickening” (p. 110). The womb and birthing imagery is tainted by his acknowledgement that there is “no life” (p. 110). The moment of birth, when Chet brings him back into the real world, again reinforces the birthing metaphor: “I feel the red glow of the portal all around me... draws me out” (p. 112). Before his attempted sacrifice, he states, “I can’t be a vampire. I’m not dead” (p. 39), but after his birth/death experience he doesn’t cling to this, and is told in no uncertain terms by the Forces of Light that he is “not currently of the human race” (p. 138). The inverted temporal sequence of birth taking place after death, and the birth of a living dead creature, serves to highlight the dialectic at play.

The dialectic of time is inscribed on the landscape through contradictory representations of life after death: “once the rains have stopped, the things that were dead start growing”; “dead fish lap at the edges of the reservoir” (p. 123). Spring, as declared in the prologue, is the time of vampires. But life after death, or on the borderlands, is not the same as life before death. Throughout the novel the trees that reflect Chris’s inner turmoil have changed colour – “in the dawn, they are ruby like gore” (p. 166) – and his new existence is contaminated with “ruby” colours that normally belong to sunsets and blood. Chris’s self-sacrifice fails, as he is already tainted with the vampire virus, and his attempt at surviving (by curing his vampirism) has not embraced death but, rather, has sought to deny its presence. In his eyes, his transformation fails to ensure his survival. As seen in the apocalyptic model, the pollution currently causing chaos in the community now continues unchecked.

On the social level the pollution is pronounced and longer lasting, and culminates in chaos, due to the failure of the sacrifice. The rite of keeping the vampire lord bound between life and death does not proceed as usual:
“Place the ancient seal of holding upon those hills and forests, that Darkness may not—“

And then there is a burst of static.

Nonsense voices keening and screaming. The squealing of wind instruments untuned and blown without rhyme or reason.

People screaming in Latin; screaming in Greek; screaming profanity. “...seem to have some static on your line...”

...With a cry that courses through the heavens, knocks stars spinning, wallops leagues of hills – the Dark Lord leaps.

And there is a burst of energy.

A crack of thunder.

The sky turns to day.

The lake smashes with fire.

I scream.

And then he is gone. (pp. 215, 217, speech in original)

This cataclysmic scene draws on traditional, or Biblical, imagery of natural elements (thunder, fire, stars) that seems to announce the impending event (Tch’muchgar’s escape). The situation is exacerbated by a chaos of technology in the white noise created by static, and the mix of languages being screamed. This imagery indicates that it is the culmination of disorder in the text.

The scene described above is most obviously a prelude to the revelation of the vampire lord, and his death. The society attempts to relieve the pollution through ritual
sacrifice, asking: “… give us the cue, we’ll continue with the ritual as scheduled” (Anderson, 1997, pp. 214-215), clutching at the only coping mechanism they have. Yet the ritual merely assists the invocation and subsequent death of Tch’muchgar, orchestrated by Chet (the un-celestial being). Chet has been paid by the Forces of Darkness to kill Tch’muchgar, and free him from the punishment of eternal torment. Tch’muchgar’s desire for death is indicative of the anguish created by the dialectical tension between life and death: not to be differentiated by either life or death is considered in this narrative to be the worst punishment possible.

According to the dialectic of integration, either Chris’s return to society as a vampire, or the dark lord’s death should provide the society with a new equilibrium. The obstacle to this new equilibrium is deceit. The society does not know that the vampire lord has died, or what caused the confusion, and so the event cannot bring about change as it should. Likewise, Chris still rejects his undifferentiation and cannot bring about change. Without social recognition, the dialectic of integration is unable to operate, as it relies on accepting contradiction, rather than on denying it or attempting to subsume one side of the contradiction into the other.

Bull’s apocalypse theories detail the period of waiting between the apocalypse and the return of the undifferentiated (1999, p. 74). Thirsty can be read as stuck in this waiting period, with no foreseeable return of the undifferentiated to save the community. After the apocalypse and the events following it described above, there is no resolution. In terms of the apocalyptic cycle, there is no return of the undifferentiated to bring about a new equilibrium. This lack of resolution has many ramifications for the narrative: Chris is left on the verge of taking blood (killing a family member), or starving to death and dying. This disruption of the cycle is congruent with the ambiguous ending of the
novel and lack of resolution for Chris. His inability to continue his intersubjective relationships constructs his exclusion as abjection. However, it his own inability to question representation or accept the abject vampires (and his own liminal state) that makes him ineffective in bringing peace to the community. The lack of agency, demonstrated by Chris’s desire to do only as the Forces of Light have asked, has left him open to be subsumed into the good/evil binary already present.

The desire for binaries (such as good and evil, dark and light) is denied by the surviving character, Chet, the un-celestial being. As in chapter 5, survival requires the acceptance of contradiction (of being undifferentiated), and the play of signs. Chet has controlled both during the course of the narrative. Chris’s destiny to help the Forces of Light turns out to be a fabrication by Chet, who was under the employment of the Forces of Darkness. Chris fails to master the play of signs, and reinforces mainstream views of the adolescent as “self-pitying; self-absorbed; self-centred. The perfect teen” (Anderson, 1997, p. 226). Chet tells Chris he is unchangeable: “I can’t change what you are. You are what you are,” (p. 222); and damns him to an immutable and stable core self as supported by liberal humanist values that resists change. Chet survives by choosing his employers without judgement, and looks down on Chris’s inability to transform. Chet thus provides a stark contrast to other adult figures presented in the previous chapters (such as Shigeru in Tales of the Otori, and Europe in Monster Blood Tattoo) who work together with young adults to create a new equilibrium.

*Thirsty* ends ambiguously, not with the repeating cycles of integration, seen in chapter 4, but rather with a society in chaos and lacking any viable coping mechanisms, and with the undifferentiated faced with the choice of murder or starvation. *Thirsty* bears out Berger’s (and Heffernan’s) post-apocalyptic discourses: “What will happen *has*
happened, is happening. But the world is still here, exactly as it was: that is what is intolerable” (Berger, 1999, p. 32). There is, however, the possibility of a resistant reading that sees Chris as a warning to the reader of the danger in believing the liberal humanist discourse and the metanarratives offered in hero narratives (where good slays evil and order is restored); and his society is parodied as the dystopic version of a contemporary society’s inability to incorporate death into life in a meaningful way. Other contemporary young adult vampire fiction, such as the novels discussed in the next section, shows a move away from disregarding the liminal space as enduring and productive, and there is also an emerging sense that the “threat” of immortality is being challenged.

**Conversations With the Other Side: Liminality and the revenant**

The previous section engaged with the dialectic of time and space, as they relate to life and death, in an example of a failed apocalyptic cycle. The liminal space of the young adult doomed Chris to naivety and to ridicule by Chet. This section offers new insights into survival for subject and community through embracing the liminality of the young adult. The dialectical tension between life and death is epitomised in the figure of the vampire whose existence is fraught with the contradiction of taking life for the sake of sustaining its own existence, yet simultaneously capable of giving eternal life. Considering death as a presence manifested in the vampire allows an interaction with death that is embodied (similar to the way the god in *The Oracle* provided an opportunity to converse with the divine). The possibility of interacting with vampire or ghost characters is read here as the “effectivity” of a post-life presence. Revenants are caught in the signification system as a signifier of death with an animate referent. The
appearance of a revenant creates simultaneous dialectical tensions between time and space, and life and death; and Derrida questions here the effect of such a presence:

What is a ghost? What is the *effectivity* or the *presence* of a spectre, that is, of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum? Is there *there*, between the thing itself and its simulacrum, an opposition that holds up?... Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Altogether other. Staging for the end of history. Let us call it *hauntology*... It would harbour within itself, but like circumscribed places or particular effects, eschatology and teleology themselves. (Derrida, 1994, p. 10)

In this excerpt, Derrida is referring to images of after-life, revenants, ghosts and spectres as they appear in fiction (in this case, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*) and how they function as a simulacrum (or revenant) of someone who is now absent: the ghost of a person who is now dead. He also asks why the appearance of a revenant has an effect at all; in other words, whether the spectre can engage intersubjectively when it is a copy held in stasis after life. The ghost is undifferentiated, as it has no clear opposite that clarifies its existence (the binary of life/death is disturbed by the dialectic tension implied in the living dead). The revenants are about both death and the process of reaching death, while *being* death themselves. The function of the spectre in narrative is to warn the living, as in *Hamlet*, and to uncover truths that are seen only by the ghost. The latter’s existence is itself apocalyptic, unveiling both death and truths, and while the characters cannot interact intersubjectively with the spectre, they are irrevocably affected by the spectre’s apocalyptic appearance. The paradoxical existence of the ghost, as the “first time is a last time” in one moment, resists the telos that drives history, and hence
becomes the “stage” for the end of history and engages the dialectic of time and space. The ghosts’ presence is identified by Derrida as both telos and timeless; to be about the drive from life to death, and the sequence of past, future, and present, while at the same time conflating all of those into the one moment of ghostly appearance. The ghost, and (by extrapolation) the vampire, represent a contradiction: the apocalyptic unveiling of death and the latter’s post-apocalyptic transformation into an immortal simulacrum.

A teleological view of adolescence privileges adulthood as the destination point, and reduces the possibility for transformations within the liminal space. The apocalyptic resists this telos through its reliance on the young adult to survive within the liminal space of adolescence (rather than leave it). The post-apocalyptic further resists telos through the dialectical tensions of time and space that destabilise the assumption that end points determine meaning. This section addresses firstly the potential of the liminal space in *Vampire Academy*, followed by the ramifications of playing God on the borderlands of life and death (an idea that develops from the analysis of *Thirsty*). The concluding part of this section considers the struggle to overcome the sense of living after the end, or after unthinkable apocalypses of death.

*Playing God*

Whereas *Thirsty* presents a society that is aware of vampires, the humans in the *Vampire Academy* trilogy are unaware of the elaborate worldwide community of vampires. Rose, the main protagonist, is a “dhampir,” or half-vampire/half-human hybrid. She is sworn to protect her best friend, Lissa, a Moroi, a full vampire, yet living and with a human life span. Dhampir men are sterile, and the women can have children only with Moroi men, although the male children are also sterile. For this reason, most
guardians (dhampirs) are male, while the women have more children to protect the Moroi. The Moroi do not, however, marry or live with their dhampir women, preferring to stay within their own circles, where they create more Moroi children. If a Moroi kills a person while feeding, that person turns into Strigoi: evil, undead-immortal vampires that cannot use magic or go in sunlight. Rose explains, “Moroi were alive; Strigoi were undead. Moroi were mortal; Strigoi were immortal. Moroi were born; Strigoi were made” (2007, p. 58). The emphasis on “made” reinforces the social privileging of natural creatures over unnatural, as seen in Monster Blood Tattoo and The House of the Scorpion. There are many levels of existence – human/dhampir/Moroi/Strigoi – all considered normal or expected in the narrative world. The dominant tensions exist between the living and dead, mortal and immortal. Rose and Lissa embody contradiction by transgressing these binaries.

Immortality threatens the assumed telos, and transition towards death as an end point. The vampires in Thirsty disrupt this end point through immortality. In Vampire Academy, the Moroi are vampires who are mortal, hence they do not disrupt birth and death and maintain the “natural” order of life. For a Moroi to feed off a human (or dhampir) until the latter dies would be to turn that person into Strigoi. The Moroi are punished for such taking of life with a “sentence” of eternity. Strigoi can also, as mentioned above, be made through a traditional bite. In both cases the dialectical tensions between birth and death are engaged. Being “made” takes the power of life from nature, and immortality likewise removes death as an end point. Lissa has the secret power to heal, and to bring the dead back to life, as she does with Rose when they were children and suffered a car crash. The long-reaching effects of this resurrection are realised throughout the series, and indeed, neither Rose nor Lissa understand that Rose
actually had died in the crash until Rose begins seeing ghosts. Lissa’s powers are extremely rare. By high school (in the Vampire Academy) most Moroi specialise in one of the four elements (earth, air, fire, or water) but Lissa does not, and “not specializing was like not going through puberty” (2007, p. 47). Rose and Lissa eventually piece together the unusual powers as “spirit” through the three other characters who possess the same undifferentiation.

Lissa’s use of her healing powers on Rose transgresses her community’s taboo on resurrection, and her encounters with two other spirit users (Mrs Karp and Adrian) highlight the threat of crossing – in reverse – the boundaries of life and death. Lissa’s healing power and Rose’s return from the dead mark them both as transgressors. Lissa is “punished” for transgressing the boundaries of life and death by suffering from depression and “shadows.” Rose absorbs the depression created within Lissa when she uses magic: “you have shadows. You take them from Lissa” (2008a, p. 275), remarks Adrian, who can see auras and also suffers depression from his spirit use. Ms Karp, a teacher who has now disappeared, is remembered as “crazy” and paranoid: she “always felt like someone was following her, like she was being hunted” (2007, p. 53). Ms Karp was secretly a spirit user, and after seeing Lissa heal a raven Ms Karp warns her not to reveal her powers to anyone: “nothing happened... Do you hear me? Nothing. And you can’t tell anyone – anyone – about what you saw... promise you’ll never talk about this again” (2007, p. 134). Ms Karp attempts to reinforce the taboo on unnatural birth (or resurrection) and instil an understanding in Lissa and Rose that their society will reject them for confusing the boundaries of life and death through healing. Ms Karp’s paranoia and self-inflicted scratch marks on her face indicate the deterioration of her mental state, and she eventually turns herself into a Strigoi to remove her magical ability. The raven,
as seen in *The Rat and the Raven* (in chapter 5) symbolises a communication with the dead, and marks Ms Karp and Lissa as manifestations of the dialectical tensions between life and death.

The prohibition on healing as “border crossing” is felt acutely by Lissa. She self-harms herself by cutting herself, to stop her feeling of repressed power, when the depression becomes too much. Her cutting also represents a need to release the powers she has: “it was too much... it was just too much, I had to let it out, you know?” (2007, p. 162). Rose considers Lissa’s cutting in light of her social ranking as a Royal Moroi: “maybe she was wasting it, wasting the secret Dragomir blood that everyone obsessed over” (2007, p. 260). The act of cutting undermines the “power” structures of the society that reveres her royal blood, while also allowing her a sense of “release” that her healing spirit power is denied.

The desire for power over the boundary lines of life and death are brought to the fore at the end of the first text in the series, when Lissa’s Uncle Victor kidnaps her in an attempt to use her powers to heal his degenerative disease. He demonstrates his disregard for taboo by changing his own daughter into Strigoi to prevent Rose from protecting Lissa. He believes Lissa can keep him alive indefinitely using her healing, “like playing God” (2007, p. 297). His desire to cheat death is similar to that of El Patron’s in *The House of the Scorpion*, and both characters’ desires are constructed as unnatural and evil. Uncle Victor is further concerned with conquering death by rising to be king and changing the role of the Moroi in the Battle against Strigoi from that of “victims” to users of “magic as a weapon,” to hunt down the Strigoi and defeat them (2007, p. 299). Killing Strigoi is killing immortality and attempting to re-instate the binary, and yet Victor’s use of the spirit healing is itself a transgression, and he is
imprisoned at the Academy when Lissa is saved. Victor and Ms Karp both provide examples of adults who attempt to incorporate undifferentiation and fail, as seen also in *Monster Blood Tattoo* and the *Tales of the Otori*. Despite their failings, they impart knowledge about spirit using that is not commonly understood in the Academy, including Rose’s destined role in Lissa’s life. Playing God has contradictory ramifications in *Vampire Academy* trilogy. Ms Karp, Victor and Lissa are punished for transgressing death. Rose’s resurrection, however, is not constructed as “evil,” as it allowed her to leave childhood and enter the liminal space of adolescence.

*Don’t Invite Them In: accepting the revenant*

Inviting the dead in, bringing the dead back to life, is punished in the text, and yet accepting the ghost in this novel becomes essential to survival. The taboo on resurrection, created from a fear of the timelessness of immortality in this society, is hinted at as flawed within the novel. Victor tells Rose from inside prison:

> You’ve crossed into Death, into the other side, and returned... You have a greater sense of life and the world... [Lissa] brushed death to bring you back and bound you to her forever. You were actually in its embrace, and some part of you will always remember that, always fight to cling to life and experience all it has... it makes you remarkable. It makes you dangerous. (2007, p. 317)

Rose has absorbed death into life, as opposed to the Strigoi, who have life in death, and yet she is still punished for this by being bound to Lissa through a “bond” that allows Rose to hear Lissa’s thought, enter her mind, and also absorb her shadows. The goal of banishing death, however, becomes untenable, and while death is not fully accepted by the society, Rose begins to understand that accepting death into life is crucial to survival.
She admits it isn’t “easy having your core beliefs challenged” (2008a, p. 21), which parallels Rossamünd’s realisation that not all monsters are evil, and, moreover, that evil is not restricted to the monster (as discussed in chapter 4).

In *Frostbite* (the third in the series) Rose begins to see the cracks in the current system of keeping death at bay, and the dead are “let into the system” (Berger, 1999, p. 217). Physically, the magical wards around Moroi residences are broken. The Strigoi cooperate with humans to capture victims (2008a, p. 19), breaking taboos on “inter-species” relations. After decapitating two Strigoi with a blunt sword, Rose kneels next to her friend Mason, who died in the battle:

> Horror and shock consumed me, so much so that I thought my soul would shrivel, that the world would end right then and there – because surely, surely it couldn’t keep going on after this. No one could keep going on after this. (2008a, p. 302)

Mason’s death is intolerable because Rose remains alive. In post-apocalyptic narratives, the revelation is a form of simulacrum, and discloses only that things are still the same. Regardless of the monumental nature of death, Rose is still alive, and “the world, intolerably, continues” (Berger, 1999, p. 35). As seen in the previous chapter, the empty prophecy is a “secret and continuous implosion” of meaning in the circulation of the sign (Baudrillard, 1994b, p. 55). This leaves the continuance of life as either wallowing in the intolerability of infinity/circularity, or confirming an opportunity for transformation. Rose wallows for a time, with a postmodern sense of incredulity that she is still alive: “that things 'just keep going on' *is* the catastrophe” (Benjamin, 1989, p. 64). Rose expresses similar emotions to Takeo in the *Tales of the Otori*, as she recounts her experience of killing Strigoi: she “existed in an altered state, a state that just barely kept
the terror and grief at bay... I’d couldn’t believe I’d just summoned death” (2008a, p. 307). Similarly, when Takeo brings death to the starving Hidden he acts in a “trance” (Hearn, 2002, p. 204). Both characters “summon” death and enter an “altered state” to conduct merciful killings: “you’d rather die than become a monster like that” (2008b, p. 439). However, after these forays across the borders into death, Rose begins to sense a moral dimension that further pulls at the tensions between life and death as she mourns the death of the Strigoi, since, after all, it is “still technically taking a life. That’s hard to come to terms with” (2008a, p. 324). Rose demonstrates the ability to question the metanarratives of her community, such as the sanctioned killing of Strigoi and the exclusion of the dead, which govern their lives at the Academy.

Derrida asks what the effectivity of the ghost can be. Rose experiences intersubjectivity through her interactions with the ghost of Mason (revenant, copy or repeat performance) and the interactions offer new subjective alignments for her. Mason died in the battle with Strigoi in *Frostbite*, and returns in *Shadow Kiss* (2008b) as a ghost that only Rose can see, and he strengthens her ties to death. Mason offers Rose the transformative possibility of engaging with death that ensures her survival in a community that is struggling with the increasing dialectic tensions between life and death resulting from the inability to quell the Strigoi uprising. Rose asks the priest at the Academy about the existence of ghosts, and he responds: “after death, the spirit separates from the body and may indeed linger in this world... particularly if the person in question died young or violently” (2008b, pp. 120-121). As Mason was young and died violently, Rose eventually understands that he cannot rest (linger) until he has

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46 Roassamind, in *Monster Blood Tattoo* (discussed in chapter 4), also shows remorse for killing monsters in a similar self-defense setting.
warned her that Strigoi are going to attack the Academy. His post-apocalyptic appearance ensures the survival of Rose and the Academy. After surviving the battle she realises that “I see ghosts because I’m shadow kissed. I’m tied to the world of the dead, and the more I kill, the stronger that connection becomes,” and that this is the reason why she can sense when Strigoi are nearby: “They’re tied to that world too” (2008b, p. 431). She has summoned death and begins to bring the world of the undead closer to her life, accepting the empty apocalypse of death (that it reveals no truths about life or death), bridging the gap that divides the dead from life. Rose’s intersubjective relationship with a spectre (Mason’s ghost) provides the opportunity for her to engage with death without dying. She begins to question her society’s life and death binary and engages with the dialectic, rather than simply accept one part over the other. Therefore, her intersubjective experience with the embodiment of the dialectic’s contradiction (the spectre) offers the potential for survival. A further implicit aspect of Rose’s developing intersubjectivity is that she comes to accept (albeit tacitly) a different understanding of time from the traditional view of it as a temporal passage through life to death, to one whereby death. Now she perceives time as including the reinvigoration by death, and of a new beginning and a different temporality (living post-death).

**Resurrecting the Raven: Deepening the dialectical tensions between life and death**

Rather than being seen as marking the beginning of the end times, resurrection is understood here as a manifestation of the dialectical tensions between life and death. Inherited curse, as explored in chapter 5 through *The Rat and the Raven* and *Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith*, is experienced by Lissa’s boyfriend Christian, and offers a
concurrent apocalyptic cycle. His parents “went Strigoi” by choice, and attempted to raise him until he could also be changed. He is outcast in the Academy community, and shunned for the taboo actions of his parents. Treating Christian as cursed implies that he carries death within him (as do Scathe and Roxanna) and reflects the fear that he will follow his parents’ path and choose to go Strigoi:

people treated him like he didn’t exist. Like he was a ghost. They didn’t talk to or about him. They just didn’t notice him. The stigma of his parent’s crime was too strong, casting its shadow onto the entire Ozera family. (2007, p. 61)

The subplot about Christian provides an apocalyptic narrative, as he is rejected by the community, but eventually returns to bring about a new equilibrium. He has broken the taboo on using magic as a weapon and learnt how to fight, using power over fire. He uses his social exclusion as a freedom that allows him to transgress the taboo without fear of rejection (2007, p. 107). In the same way as Mirany questions the metanarrative of religious doctrine in her society in *The Oracle*, Christian also sees the metanarrative of the Academy regarding the use of magic and its normative function in language. He comments here regarding the belief that magic should only be used peacefully: “Only because they say it is. You’re repeating the party line we’ve been fed our whole lives” (2007, p. 111). His undifferentiation is deepened when Lissa brings him back to life after a battle. An interaction with death, through resurrection, results in a new sense of agency within Rose and Christian. They join forces to defeat Strigoi using Christian’s magic and Rose’s strength. The Academy begin to see strength in their methods, creating a new
acceptance of what was previously taboo, and they transform the community in order for it to survive.⁴⁷

Christian also transforms and his survival is inextricably linked to his other qualities. His change from helpless child and Moroi royal to young adult agential innovator ensures his survival in the post-apocalyptic surroundings. Christian’s Strigoi parents bring his origin into question, as well as his future, and their conscious rejection of mortality casts a shadow over his possible choices in how he lives his life. However, he proves himself to be more willing to accept change and challenge the dominant discourses. Drawing on this willingness to change, he survives the battle with Strigoi.

Rose struggles with her post-apocalyptic, post-death existence in a society that punishes violations of the “natural” telos of life towards (permanent) death. In the previous chapter ravens and crows were established as a recurring motif in post-apocalyptic narratives; and this motif is likewise present in the Vampire Academy trilogy. Two years before the current narrated events, Rose and Lissa see a dead raven:

“What is that? Is it a crow?’
‘Too big. It’s a Raven.’
‘Is it dead?’

Lissa cannot resist and heals the bird, effectively bringing the messenger between life and death back to life, deepening the contradictions between the dialectic of time and space. The lines of communication between the living and the dead, the Moroi/dhampirs and the Strigoi, had been symbolically severed through the dead raven. Lissa has opened

⁴⁷ Lissa is also constructed as a future returning-undifferentiated, “a vehicle for change,” (2008b, p. 186). She is marked to take power in the governance of their society, and plans to put Christian’s changes into the wider Moroi community.
the communication up again, just as when she resurrected Rose. While Rose is beginning to understand the magnitude of this, Lissa is unknowingly followed by the raven, which serves as an omen portending a future confrontation between Lissa and the dead. Rose addresses the raven, seeing its importance: “she brought you back. You’re shadow-kissed” (2007, p. 332). While the society punishes such acts of healing, as exemplified by Ms Karp, Rose sees that the dead are pushing into the Academy’s existence and the Academy will eventually need to accept their presence.

While the text seems ambivalent about the acceptance/rejection of death and infinitude, it nevertheless conveys a strong sense of upholding the young adult liminal space through the change in adult perceptions of what the young adults can offer to the community. Dimitri, Rose’s mentor and secret love, engages Rose within the familiar paradigm of a maturation discourse: “Just because your body... well, that doesn’t make you an adult” (2007, p. 313). Yet Adrian (an older outcast spirit user) speaks back to this in a tirade against Dimitri after being caught talking in a bedroom with Lissa and Rose:

Young girls? Young girls? Sure. Young and old at the same time. They’ve barely seen anything in life, yet they’ve already seen too much. One’s marked with life, and one’s marked with death... but they’re the ones you’re worried about? Worry about yourself, dhampir. Worry about you, and worry about me. We’re the ones who are young.” (2008a, p. 203)

Adrian sees that Rose and Lissa are integral to the future survival of their people, with Rose’s powerful relationship with death and Lissa’s power over life, and together their transformative potential leaves the adults seeming “young.” Maturity becomes timeless by resisting telos, and enhancing the current existence so that it enters a new, transformed state that can encompass the particularities of the present. Rose points out
the complicated signification of a chronological age: “it’s not like I’ll magically become an adult on my eighteenth birthday,” where at the same time turning eighteen allows her certain privileges, such as being allowed to leave the Academy (2008a, p. 205). Dimitri eventually realises that Rose is right, and he recognises her ability to conceptualise her own existence while still maintaining her youthfulness: “you act young... because you are young. But you know things, Roza. Things people older than you don’t even know...” (2008a, p. 326).

Where *Thirsty* fails to offer any positive representations of either adolescence or the acceptance of death in life, and its questions over the metanarratives of truth and reality only seem to doom Chris further, *Vampire Academy* begins to pull away from this by offering resilient and changing subjectivities in Rose and Christian. Rose, in the final scene of *Shadow Kissed*, is faced with the task of killing the man she loves, when Dimitri is turned into a Strigoi. However, the text has set up the possibilities that this (and the irrevocably evil nature of the Strigoi) will be challenged by the retention of subjectivity after death and Rose’s increasing acceptance of a borderland existence. She believes in the worth of her own time and space in adolescence, and while she demonstrates a strong sense of agency from the beginning of the text, her interactions with the undead solidify her desire to act independently of her role as Lissa’s guardian. As a demonstration of her agency she seeks the ultimate “showdown” with death by hunting Dimitri.

This section has demonstrated through an analysis of the *Vampire Academy* trilogy that an emerging sense that death cannot be fully excluded from a culture and attempts to do so threaten the survival of the young adults and their community. The liminal time and space of adolescence is eventually accepted as productive, imaginative
and crucial to the ongoing existence of the Academy and the vampires. There is the further implication in the text that attempting to overcome (rather than embrace) the dialectical tensions between time and space are hindering the survival of their community, and Rose’s intersubjective experiences with spectres and the dead attest to this. The next section of this thesis explores the Twilight series to develop further the concepts and dialectical contradictions above, and explore how apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic transformations can ensure the survival of adolescence; it returns to the concept of a new, more inclusive, equilibrium brought about by engaging with the dialectic of mortality and immortality.

**Dying to Live: The dialectic of (im)mortality**

A recurrent aspect of the analyses in this chapter, and the previous two chapters, is the dialectic of time, particularly in relation to life and death, and the inevitable tensions between the finite and the infinite. As first explained in chapter 2, there are contradictions surrounding these concepts: the finite is bound by the infinite, yet it excludes the infinite; the infinite must always exclude the finite in its definition, hence becoming finite. These contradictions can be seen in the example of life and death used throughout this chapter. Life is finite, bound by birth and death. Death is infinite, yet always bound by life. Dialectical tensions arise when these boundaries are crossed, as seen in the post-apocalyptic examples of the monster, the clone and the mythologically resurrected. This section draws out the taboo on immortality seen in the *Vampire Academy*, and considers how immortality and the liminal young adult space intersect in the post-apocalyptic.
Chapter 6: Grave New Worlds

*Living in The Twilight*

Twilight, as a temporal space and time between day and night, also forms a metaphorical space through which to analyse the dialectic between life and death in the novel *Twilight*. In this text, the threat posed by the inherent contradiction of this dialectic is embodied in the vampire and the community’s reaction to it. In *Twilight*, vampires create a strange attraction/repulsion among the citizens of Forkes. The town’s name itself implies bifurcation and dialectical tension. The central vampires of the novel, the Cullens, are “good” vampires who do not eat people, unlike most of their kind, who are remorseless in their consumption of human blood. Bella (the human protagonist) sees the Cullens at school and is mesmerized: “I stared because their faces, so different, so similar, were all devastatingly, inhumanely beautiful” (pp. 16-17). Their undifferentiation status makes them seem both human and non-human. The vampires in the Cullen family have hidden themselves through time by blending in with human society (in Forkes) as much as possible: they are known only to a select few, and their (un)difference is only marginally sensed by the majority of the community.

There are many overlapping apocalyptic cycles in the narrative which emphasise the enduring nature of the dialectic of integration, beginning with Carlisle Cullen, the foster “father” of the group of vampires. At the time when he became a vampire, his own father “led hunts for witches, werewolves... and vampires” (p. 289). Carlisle is rejected by both his society and his father when he is attacked and turned into a vampire. He “knew what his father would do,” because the social coping mechanism was to reject the abject undifferentiated. After the attack, “the bodies would be burned – anything infected by the monster must be destroyed” (p. 290). A similar response occurs with
Matt in *The House of the Scorpion* when his blood-stained sheets are destroyed. Carlisle goes underground and hides until he finds more of his kind. To compound his status as undifferentiated, he becomes one of the “Stregoni Benefici,” vampires that do not kill humans (2005, p. 117). His choice makes him not alive, not dead, and not undead in the commonly understood manner. He is newly undifferentiated, and after a period of exclusion he begins to teach other vampires the possibility of being “good,” and thence initiates a fledgling new community. The Cullens exist in the “twilight” of life and embody both sides of the dialectic of life and death.

In another overlapping apocalyptic cycle, Bella also displays traits of undifferentiation. She is in most respects an average human being, and yet to the vampire Edward Cullen (her eventual boyfriend) she is an enigma, due to her natural shield against his mind-reading talents (2005, p. 157). This sets her apart from the “normal” humans, and attracts Edward to her. Bella’s other peculiar quality is an aptitude for trouble, which results in her being saved on many occasions by Edward. She seems to be “fighting fate” to stay alive (p. 167). Edward’s constant goal is for her to “be safe” as he fights to keep her inevitable death away (p. 218). Their meeting is the apocalypse, the moment her “number was up” (p. 167) and her death is unveiled to the universe, bringing the possibility of death forward where it overshadows present life. Throughout the novel, there is an underlying sense of how difficult it is to keep Bella safe.

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48 There are many references to Bella’s safety in the first novel alone (Meyer, 2005, pp. 164, 165, 352, 360, 365, 390, 427, and 430).
To compound this problem, at the end of the second text (*New Moon*) the powerful, vampire-policing vampires called Volturi discover that Edward is in love with a human, and threaten to kill Bella. The Volturi come to an agreement that either Edward changes Bella into a vampire, or they will. This requires that Bella die to stay alive, so to speak, so that being undead will be safer than being alive. Edward shows a persistent reluctance to change her into a vampire, clinging to human reverence for telos and the “natural” cycle of life on her behalf. For Bella, however, the “transformation from mortal to immortal” (2008, p. 16) is the obvious path for her life. She comes to realise that “it’s just too dangerous to be human” (2006, p. 539). Twilight “is the safest time of day” for vampires (2005, p. 204) and Bella’s fate brings her to the edges of life (with constant exposure to death), despite the efforts to save her life. She realises that resisting death only delays the inevitable, so she chooses to survive by letting infinitude and death into her life, without dying: “it’s not the end, it’s the beginning” (2005, p. 432). Bella’s resilience in the face of (im)mortal threat establishes her desire to survive and her willingness to transform in order to achieve this.

The levels of undifferentiation are multiple, and Bella’s role as the unifying force between warring cultural divides is similar to Takeo’s in the *Tales of the Otori*. The history of Native Americans keeping the vampires at bay through taboo and sacrifice in *Thirsty* (Anderson, 1997) is echoed in *Twilight*. The Native American people in the area of Forkes (the Quileute tribe) are represented through Bella’s best friend Jacob Black. During a camping trip with friends to the “reserve” (the Quileute’s land), Jacob mentions that “the Cullens don’t come here.” Bella notices that “his tone implied something more – that they weren’t allowed; they were prohibited” (2005, p. 105). Jacob explains that his grandfather established a treaty and banned them, rather than kill them,
in order to restrict the possibility of contamination from cohabiting or communicating with the taboo vampires (p. 107). When Jacob tells Bella about the Cullens, the treaty is broken. The Quileute become nervous with the Cullens’ return and warn Bella at the end of the first text, “we’ll be watching” (p. 428). The treaty and taboo broken, chaos is unleashed when the boundaries fail that had previously kept people safe. The appearance of vampires also brings out the werewolf capabilities of the Quileutes. Bella’s role as a unifying force between the various factions in the novel is cemented when Edward leaves her in the second book and she turns to Jacob for solace, and becomes at home with the Quileute werewolves. The werewolves deepen the dialectical tensions between space and time, through their immortality and shape shifting (another form of undifferentiation). Bella is permitted at all three locations in the novels (the Quileute reservation, the human town, and the Cullen home) and resists the demands to choose among them. It is her role, as the undifferentiated main character, to create a new equilibrium that sees the humans, werewolves and vampires co-existing peacefully.

Edward’s absence in New Moon creates a void in Bella’s new way of being, and her attempts to recreate a meaningful exchange with death demonstrate the centrality of death to the establishment of a new equilibrium. After a period of deep depression, Bella begins taking risks, such as riding motorcycles dangerously, challenging evil vampires, and jumping off cliffs, in order to “hear” Edward’s concerned voice in her mind. While this reads, on first glance, as a series of desperate attempts at suicide, when considered alongside Lissa’s self-harm in Vampire Academy, the actions can be understood not as desiring death, but rather as desiring a meaningful interaction with death. Lissa does not attempt suicide when she slices through her arm: “she hadn’t hit her veins when she did this; death hadn’t been her goal” (2007, p. 158). Likewise, Bella clearly states that her
cliff jumping “wasn’t committing suicide” (2006, p. 384), and after her motorcycle accident Jacob asks, “Bella, are you alive?” Bella replies, “I’m great!... Let’s do it again” (2006, p. 188). Lissa and Bella both feel the need to transgress the borders of life (through healing) and death (through loving a vampire), opportunities for which have been taken from them. They respond with acts of agency, against the dominant discursive norms (even though such norms may function to protect them from harm or self-harm), and they jump, cut and crash in an attempt to draw the borderlines closer to them through other means. Whereas Bella decides to cease the dangerous activities upon Edward’s return, Lissa is forced to give up her healing and take anti-depressants, effectively stunting her magic.49 The anti-depressants taint Lissa’s symbolic offering to the gods of the underworld. Tainting is a recurring theme in the apocalyptic (and post-apocalyptic) discourse.

The tainting of the sacrifice in the apocalyptic narrative is often marked by the use of venom or poison, as seen in earlier analyses (chapter 4), and the tainted have a place between life and death. In *Twilight* the poison injected during a bite turns a victim into a vampire. While it is extremely painful, and cannot save anyone from ceasing to exist, it can maintain a victim’s “life” by making him or her undead. Yet the use of the poison in the history of the Cullens is not evil, and it would seem that death (or un-death) is preferable to the life being endured. For example, Alice Cullen was kept in an asylum in the 1920s because of her “visions,” and after an escape attempt she is mortally wounded and changed into a vampire by her warden. James, a vampire that had been stalking Alice before her change, comments that “as soon as [the warden] freed her he

49 As mentioned earlier, *Vampire Academy* seems to undermine the social expulsion of healing and death, and it is implied that Lissa sees the anti-depressants as only a temporary measure.
made her safe” (2005, p. 390). This returns us to the concept of safety, further implying that the poison can save through ending life, and making a person undead. The poison is both good and bad: it kills and gives (un)life. Derrida refers to this contradictory concept with the term (borrowed from Plato) “pharmakon,” which is “alternately or simultaneously – beneficient or maleficient”, as it acts as “both remedy and poison” (1972, p. 75). Whilst the poison of the vampires causes immense pain, it also gives life in death (or un-death), and so it acts to both remedy death and cause death at the same time (1972, p. 107). Poison is a contradiction, enhancing the components of the dialectical tension within the text.

*The Angel of Death*

The dialectic of immortality and mortality presents itself in the text through immortal beings obsessed with the mortal, namely, the angel and the vampire. The image of the vampire in the *Twilight* series inverts the typical image of vampirism as evil, and proposes that perhaps they exist on the borders of some form of heaven rather than hell. There are indicators that the Cullens have angelic attributes, such as when Edward shows Bella that in the sunlight his skin looks, “like thousands of tiny diamonds were embedded in the surface” (2005, p. 228), creating the sense that he could be a “celestial” being. Carlisle, the adoptive father of the Cullens, referred to as the “blond angel” (2006, p. 20), is haunted by his immortality. He works as a doctor who spends every day watching people’s fate as they pass through the hospital, with a sense of his own grim immortality. Edward is described as “beautiful as an angel” (2006, p. 291) and “the angel” (2006, p. 500), and posessing “the voice of an archangel” (2005, p. 272). The vampires as a whole embody contradictions that reflect angelic characteristics,
being seen as the “horrible and the heavenly” (2006, p. 500), and “destroying angel[s]” (2005, p. 56). When Bella is reeling from a vampire bite at the end of Twilight she states, “I heard the sound of an angel calling my name, calling me to the only heaven I wanted,” and she refers to Edward as “the angel” for the next two pages while only semi-aware of her surroundings (2005, p. 394). Furthermore, the Cullen family have attributes that point more to a family of angelic creatures than of vampires. For example: Edward has the role of “guardian angel” (or archangel) when keeping Bella safe; Carlisle has generosity, a guiding role and healing capacities; Alice sees the future and functions much like a messenger; Jasper is the war specialist and emotional barometer; Rosalie has beauty beyond measure; and Emmet has supreme strength. The introduction of the vampire as angelic creates a new dynamic between the living and the dead (and the realms they appear to inhabit) and, just as Lissa and Rose in the Vampire Academy transgress the boundaries of life and death, so too do the vampires in Twilight.

Angels, as discussed in chapter 3, usually imply transcendence, or a life that is more than life, rather than a ghostly connection to immortality through vampirism. They resist a teleological interpretation of transition from life to death, and instead offer a transformation of life into an infinite existence. Berger defines the differences between the angel and the ghost; “angels do not come back from the dead… [they] have been purified by death… they return not to haunt.” Instead, “the angel, unlike the ghost, is beyond history and allows the person who is touched to step outside it too” (1999, p. 53). For Berger the ghost and angel represent America’s need to heal the trauma of history, which is so overwhelming that society’s only options are to “complete the destruction, surrender to the night of the living dead, or to obviate the past and surrender to the belief that only my angel can save me” (p. 56). The texts in this chapter bear out
Berger’s theory to some extent: *Thirsty* completes the destruction by damning Chris to misery; *Vampire Academy* embarks on a mission to expel the living death (Strigoi) from the world; and *Twilight* places its faith in the Cullens to “save” Bella and the town from the evil vampires. There are limits, however, and as mentioned earlier, *Vampire Academy* shows signs of accepting the Strigoi, ghosts and death. Furthermore, the negative connotations Berger places on stepping outside of history deny the opportunities that transformation in *Twilight* brings to the young adult characters.

Through the post-apocalyptic removal of the end (or death) from their lives, Bella and Jacob are free to step outside the dominant discourses of their cultures, and form newly agential subjectivities. The Cullens *do* save Bella from death, as discussed below, but she is not denied agency. She decides to act against the dominant discourses surrounding teen marriage in her life by getting married, and then choosing to give birth in life-threatening circumstances.\(^{50}\) Both choices act against what Bella sees as “normal” life choices for her age group. She is also acting against the dominant discourses in the vampire community by having the child, as the vampires fear immortal children.\(^{51}\) Her refusal to allow the abortion of her child almost brings about her own death, thereby initiating her own transcendence into the state of vampire/angel. Her death/transcendence experience serves only to heighten her sense of agency as she embraces the contradictions surrounding her life, and she transforms in order to survive her post-apocalyptic existence. The angels Berger describes are contemporary and

\(^{50}\) Her friends and parents reject the possibility of marriage, as does Bella for much of the series. Bella’s mother is particularly against marriage, especially for young adults, and her father is also initially against the marriage.

\(^{51}\) Immortal children are created by biting a child, who then stays at that age and maturity level and cannot learn restraint, or how to hide in the human world, thereby threatening the vampire’s secrecy. Renesmee is immortal, but is not created from a human child; nor is she what has been previously understood as an “immortal child” as she can mature to some degree.
popular angels, perhaps akin to the vampires in *Thirsty* that represent a pessimistic view of the simulacrum. The seven Cullen family members seem to represent the seven archangels who are not merely glowing white lights of hope, but fierce warriors, healers and protectors/watchers. Unlike the *homo sacer*, who are given over to the underworld gods, the Cullens embody the borderlands between heaven and hell, and the dialectical tensions between mortality and immortality. Both angels and vampires resist the telos offered by the utopian heaven, and a dystopian hell, as end-points to life. They show an ability to resist both discourses of vampirism and popular (purely “good”) angels, offering agency by capturing the transformational possibilities evident in both the permanent state of liminality and resistance to telos.

*Shape Shifting*

Existing in a liminal state is not constructed as simple, and the tension between Jacob and Edward reflect this. Jacob and Edward are placed in binary opposition: Jacob is a shifting and liminal subject defined literally by his body heat, and Edward is a cold, static and mature subject. Their contrasting natures parallel them to those of the Greek gods Dionysus (Jacob) and Apollo (Edward), in that Edward represents form and knowledge, and Jacob is laughter and formlessness (literally, as he transforms into a werewolf). When Bella is depressed without Edward in the second novel, and Jacob is only just learning how to be a werewolf, he comments: “we’re a pretty messed up pair, aren’t we?... neither one of us can hold our shape together right” (2006, p. 349). They do, however, learn to survive in the tumultuous time of liminality by embracing their transformations. Jacob learns to control his transformative capabilities, while Bella unites the werewolves and vampires through her stubborn refusal to choose a side in
their wars. Rather than upholding Edward’s representation of Apollonian stability and maturity (with age) the text suggests that the future lies in the hands of Dionysian formlessness and mutability: transforming to survive.

Dialectical contradictions are brought to a head in the birth of Edward and Bella’s daughter Renesmee. When Bella becomes pregnant, the unborn baby is instantly rejected by all factions in the text (human, werewolf and vampire) except Bella and Edward’s adoptive sister Rosalie (who has always coveted children). Although pregnancy is killing her, through vastly increased growth rate and foetal strength, Bella plots with Rosalie to protect the unborn child. The latter is the abject, the poison in Bella’s body, and she brings chaos to a blissful marriage and union of Edward and Bella, instigating another apocalyptic cycle. Jacob thwarts the werewolves’ plan to “sacrifice” Bella to kill the child (2008, p. 202). Given an ancient taboo on making children into vampires, the Cullens (apart from Rosalie) similarly abhor the prospect of an immortal child and argue that the child should be killed. Previously, there had been a “plague of immortal children,” who endangered the vampires’ secret existence (2008, p. 33):

However, they could not be taught. They were frozen at whatever level of development they’d achieved before being bitten. Adorable two-year-olds with dimples and lisps that could destroy half a village in one of their tantrums. If they hungered, they fed, and no words of warning could restrain them. Humans saw them, stories circulated, fear spread like fire in a dry brush…” (2008, p. 34)

The threat posed by such a being remaining in a state of childhood is immense, with no possibility for growth and change. The text, here, upholds growth as crucial to survival. Alice Cullen, who can see the future, cannot see the future of the baby, or Bella’s future
while the child carries her, and so she remains an enigma and a threat. The werewolves, in their constant state of change, are also a blind spot for Alice, as the future is never certain in transformation, as opposed to transition. Alice’s lack of vision removes a sense of telos from the birth, while the lack of foreknowledge increases the sense of revelation at the birth.

Conventional interpretations of death experiences in YA fiction, as referred to in chapter 1, are represented as destructive to subjectivity. *Breaking Dawn* (the fourth and last in the series) draws on the fear of lost self. Bella’s final act as a human is to give birth to the child, Renesmee. The birth tears her body apart and death threatens her sense of self. As Jacob looks at Bella on the table, he laments: “that was all that was left of the girl we both loved. This broken, bled-out, mangled corpse. We couldn’t put Bella together again” (2008, p. 355). Jacob’s words evoke the image of Humpty Dumpty as the broken egg of fertility and life at the bottom of the wall. He sees her descent into the twilight of vampirism as the end of the fecundity and newness of Bella’s youthful space. However, Edward successfully changes Bella into a vampire, an excruciating experience for her. Death threatens to obliterate her subjectivity, the blackness, she says, “cover[s] not just my eyes but also my self with a crushing weight” (2008, p. 373). Bella does survive, however, transformed into a vampire, and to her surprise (and contradictorily) she retains her sense of being “Bella” through learning to let go of any essentialist conception of “Bella” at the same time.

The act of transformation and the ability to incorporate contradiction are tied to liminality and a shifting subjectivity. Renesmee is a contradiction: a normal looking

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52 The threat of not existing is the same threat to the archive and removal from the signification system that Roxanna’s family face in *Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith* (Nahai, 1999).
“half-vampire, half-human” with impervious skin and a heartbeat (2008, p. 360, emphasis original). Despite Jacob’s previous hatred towards the foetus, the child “imprints” on him, forging an unbreakable tie between a werewolf and his beloved. He acts as guardian until she comes of age. His experience of accepting contradiction is similar to Bella’s acceptance of her own embodied contradictions. As he is released from his previously torn “self” and becomes attached to Renesmee, the new “centre of the universe,” Jacob states: “everything inside me came undone... all the ties that held me to my life were sliced apart in swift cuts... everything that made me who I was” (2008, p. 360). Rather than reflecting a liberal humanist realised stable self, Jacob attaches himself to undifferentiation, transformation and the infinite dialectic of integration. As Derrida states, there is no lack of a centre: the centre is simply a function – and here the function of Renesmee as the new centre is the upheld belief in survival through post-apocalyptic transformation. Jacob will remain immortal while vampires are near him, and Renesmee’s vampiric “side” certifies the permanence of impermanence, or the assurance that he will always be able to transform into a werewolf. It is further revealed in the text that (unbeknownst to werewolves) the werewolves are in fact “shape-shifters” who merely choose the form of a wolf due to their reverence for the animal. This new knowledge allows the future possibility for them to shift into new shapes, fluid and mutable (2008, p. 706).

Bella, too, undergoes a moment of realisation regarding her own mutable subjectivity. While previous attempts to extend her mental shield (to protect others against mental powers) felt like a rubber band trying to recoil to protect only herself, during the bloodlust of battle Bella is able to set free her shield:
I saw that the backlash I’d felt before was of my own making – I had been clinging to that invisible part of me in self-defence, subconsciously unwilling to let it go. Now I set it free, and my shield exploded a good fifty yards out from me effortlessly. (2008, p. 690)

Just as Jacob releases his desire for a single identity that allies with the vampires, werewolves or humans, Bella releases her “self-defence” of the “invisible” and opens her “self” up simultaneously strengthening her sense of agency as she defends her family against the mental attacks of the Volturi. Through tropes of transformation the text constructs survival as depending on transformation and mutability.

The overlapping apocalyptic cycles and the post-apocalyptic existence of the Cullens are continued by Renesmee. The “angel-faced” child acts as the ultimate uniting force for all beings in the series, at the point when even Bella was beginning to struggle. Bella’s human father, Charlie, becomes accustomed to his vampire daughter and her new family; Jacob and the other werewolves are devoted to her; and even the Volturi have agreed not to harm her (2008, p. 373). The penultimate battle between the Cullens and the Volturi becomes a point of departure from the old vampire regime: “the vampire world was changing, and everyone could feel it” (2008, p. 734). The Volturi have two goals in the battle: to punish the Cullens for making an immortal child; and to capture Edward and Alice for their abilities. That Renesmee is not an “immortal child” (according to their definition in legend) is quickly proven, as she learns and grows at an accelerated rate, and already seems to be an intelligent three-year-old. However, the Volturi claim that her indefinite future still demands her death. This death sentence is quashed when Alice arrives with another half-vampire, Nahuel, from the depths of South
Chapter 6: Grave New Worlds

America. Nahuel, who has not grown past young adulthood in over 150 years (2008, p. 736), epitomises abjection in his self-hatred. In this post-apocalyptic narrative he is able to learn self-acceptance from a transformed community, and although “he’s always thought of himself as an evil creation, a murderer by nature... today, he’s finally begun to forgive himself” (2008, p. 751). Where the “adult” generation, the ancient Volturi, fail fully to incorporate undifferentiation (yet are powerless to sacrifice the half-vampires), the flexible and youthful Cullens successfully integrate newness under the guidance of Renesmee and Bella.

In the Twilight series existence is no longer determined by “living,” so that the dialectic of life and death, mortality and immortality, is embodied in the space where the vampires exist. All binary divisions are constantly undermined by the undifferentiated. For the undead to breed with the living is the epitome of the embodied apocalyptic.

Renesmee is a revelation, taboo and saviour all in one. She also epitomises the possibility of revering young adult space and time. She is immortal, even though she is not an “immortal child,” and once she reaches young adulthood she will remain in adolescence (and so will Bella). Furthermore, Renesmee incorporates an acceptance of death in life through her vampire heritage and lack of fear over infinitude. At the same time, she upholds the young adult space as worthy of residence.

The battle between the telos and disparate moments of transformation – the limited language and limitless différance – is for Derrida irresolvable:

The play of language finds itself recaptured within that play but also because, for the same reason, language itself is menaced in its very life, helpless, adrift in the threat of limitlessness, brought back to its own finitude at the very moment when
its limits seem to disappear, when it ceases to be self assured, contained, and guaranteed by the infinite signified which seemed to exceed it. (1974, p. 6)

And yet this play, or the flux between finitude and infinity, need not result in lack of meaning or substance. The signification system is caught in infinitude of simulacra, a *mise-en-abyme* that can be escaped only through *survivance*, that is, by living after death. Renesmee’s existence consumes the possibilities and toys with them, playing the game of signification and resisting bifurcation, and thus encapsulates the potential for agency. She draws Jacob, now also caught forever as an immortal shifting and changing adolescent, into this game. This apocalyptic discourse set in a post-apocalyptic narrative offers resistance to the destiny of the abject as effacement or expulsion, and offers transformative opportunities.

In this section the dialectic of integration is mutated into a multi-stranded and unclassifiable conglomeration of undifferentiation. The new equilibrium is constantly evolving, incorporating and integrating. The central role of signification, death and shifting subjectivities in the overlapping discourses of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic demonstrates the emerging sense of self as one that can live on after a death experience in the play of signs. The *Twilight* series has turned vampires into angels, questioning the definitions assigned to life and death as less important than transformative possibility. The reader is offered subject positions that can incorporate death into a meaningful life through embracing *survivance* through undifferentiation and contradiction.
Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter demonstrates how apocalyptic discourses can inform a post-apocalyptic analysis of texts and furthers the double reading performed in chapter 5.

This chapter has also considered representations of the post-apocalyptic and how these relate to the simulacrum and adolescence. However, Baudrillard’s assertion that there is “No Future” seems to be a pessimistic interpretation of a world caught helplessly in simulation, and seems incongruous with the texts here that primarily show a willingness to engage the simulacrum to form a new way of being (1989, p. 34). Each text is different in this regard. *Thirsty* “wallow” in the post-apocalyptic life after death experience, without offering any subjective alignment from which to see potential in the space of adolescence. The ironic tone hints at the possibility of a resistant reading that criticises both the ridicule of young adults and the social construction of the liminal space as abject. The *Vampire Academy* series clearly upholds the young adult space as unique and worthy in its own right while resisting the telos of adulthood, and shows the capability to question metanarratives that exclude death. The *Twilight* series advocates the survival of adolescence *and* embraces the flux between mortality and immortality, life and death.

Contrary to Wilson’s assertion that death represents a lack of agency, in the *Vampire Academy* and *Twilight* series (and many of the other texts analysed in the previous analysis chapter) an experience with or of death is crucial to agency. The stronger the experience with death, the stronger the sense of agency becomes. Rather than an attempt to tame the infinitude of death, this shows an acceptance of death in life, and the absence of fear in the face of “forever,” or a lack of telos. Rose is overtly rebellious and agential, becoming more abject through her experiences, rather than
attempting to rise out of abjection. She is open to subjective shifts in her preconceived notions of good and evil. Bella shows a more subtle sense of agency, refusing the norms of her immediate intersubjective environment and finding her own path in the array of undifferentiation surrounding her. Chris, in *Thirsty*, is devoid of agency, succumbing to the directions of Chet, doomed through his destined vampirism without any sense that he can overcome his destiny, unlike the protagonists in chapter 6. While the “viral agent” Heffernan refers to merely infects Chris’s existence, it proves to be an effectual force for transformation in the other focus texts. Surviving death in the “grave new worlds” of young adult gothic vampire fiction seems to pivot on the transformative post-apocalyptic experience of life, liminality and death.
“Prologue”

Cassandra: I am the last pure human. The others... mingled.
[Cassandra looks disgusted]

Cassandra: Oh, they call themselves 'New Humans' and 'Proto-humans' and 'Digi-humans' even 'Human-ish' but you know what I call them?
[She lowers her voice to a whisper]

Cassandra: Mongrels.

Rose Tyler: Right. And you stayed behind.

Cassandra: I kept myself pure.

Rose Tyler: How many operations have you had?

Cassandra: 708. Next week, it's 709, I'm having my blood bleached. Is that why you wanted a word? You could be flatter, Rose. You've got a little bit of a chin poking out.

Rose Tyler: I'd rather die.

Cassandra: Honestly, it doesn't hurt –

Rose Tyler: No, I mean it. I'd rather die. It's better to die than live like you - a bitchy trampoline.

(Dr Who, "The End of the World", Davies, 2005)

Back on the viewing deck, Dr Who and Rose Tyler are waiting for the Earth to explode. Rose meets Cassandra, the last human in this timeline. After hundreds of operations to stay alive, she is reduced to a stretch of skin that must be continually moisturised by her servants. This vision of a “pure” human, as she labels herself, is a poignant reminder of the consequences of not finding a way to accept undifferentiation. The beings Cassandra refers to as “mongrels” are those who have participated in what this study has argued as the dialectic of integration over time, and who continue to thrive. Rose is appalled by Cassandra’s choice to remain “pure,” which she sees as trapping her in stasis. Even more importantly, Rose sees death as preferable to Cassandra’s existence. The new labels
given to the current variants of the human race indicate the inability (in this time line) for the binary of human and non-human to engulf all forms of existence. Adolescent Rose is portrayed as having a clear understanding of the need to transform the boundaries of acceptable forms of life and ways of being, in order to survive. This is set in stark contrast to Cassandra’s ancient self that, despite her lengthy years, has not gained any ability to accept her own existence as a contradiction between living and dying, or to incorporate death into life. At the end of the episode, Cassandra dies. Rose, however, continues on, after the end.
Chapter 7

Is This The End?

*He would be one person, like a tiny splash of dye in a huge vat, but I could see the colour spreading over the years.*

("Takeo" in Hearn, 2004, p. 389)

*The end, even an apocalyptic one, leads to a beginning.*

(McGillis, 2003, p. xii)

This thesis began after the end, after the “Epilogue.” It also began with the end of the world, witnessed, and survived, by a young adult, Rose (*Dr Who*). Just as the apocalyptic is always and already the post-apocalyptic, the end is always and already a beginning. This thesis is the launching pad for future research into the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic in YA fiction, and it is therefore fitting that the concluding chapter is prefaced by a “Prologue” to that research. In response to the question that the title for this chapter asks, this is not the end.

The aim of this thesis was to analyse how discourses surrounding the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic are represented in selected YA fiction published between 1997 and 2009. In order to address this aim I have developed a theoretical framework and a methodology that draw together multiple strands of critical theory tailored to the task of analysing YA fiction. This approach has allowed me to craft a thesis that has particular relevance for contemporary YA fiction and for children’s and young adult literature criticism. Also, it is hoped that the thesis will inform the work of other literary scholars, young adult culture analysts, apocalypse theorists, and educators interested in literature that is marketed and consumed by young people. While this chapter may not be an
“end,” the first section serves to revisit the approach to the study in light of its effectiveness in addressing the aim, followed by the key findings of the analysis chapters. This review then informs a return to the context of the study and how it can speak back to the findings’ relevance for young adult cultures. The recommendations for future directions address how this framework and model of analysis can be used, advanced, and adapted into other related research areas.

As I suggested in chapter 1, the emergence of theories concerning the apocalyptic tone of millennial and post-millennial culture led to the question of how young adults could survive such pervasive rhetoric of the end. To explore this question, surviving adolescence, as the title indicates, has been an overarching theme of this thesis. The survival of the young adult, and the survival of the community through embracing the young adult time and space as a productive influence on communities, have emerged as intricately linked to apocalyptic discourses. One objective of this thesis has been to create a theoretical approach that draws together bodies of research on the apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic with the current scholarship on young adult and children’s fiction. This was developed in chapter 2 where it became clear that the purpose of this approach was not to adhere to either the apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic, or to pit one against the other, but rather to use the contradictions and slippages that exist between the two. With this approach, the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic form a dialectic of their own. This combination offers a framework that is relevant to each contributing field of research by both extending the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic into a double reading, and establishing a new way of theorising apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic young adult fiction.
This study has drawn on current scholarship regarding exclusion and agency, to argue the possibility of a future for the abject, and to posit that agency is possible through death experiences. Furthermore, by building on the notion of transformative utopianism, this study has extended the way in which transformation can occur through exclusion. Thus, the research has identified and filled gaps in current studies with respect to these concepts.

Dropping The Dye: Synthesising the study

This study can be seen as the drop of dye spreading through the huge vat of literature scholarship. It is my hope that the findings will be dispersed and colour the current body of scholarship with an understanding of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic discourses and their function in narrative. Through the teaching of young adult fiction, in universities and schools, the drop of dye offers another tint to the already existing ways of reading texts critically. This tint has unique properties, and to ascertain what these properties are, the key elements of the study are synthesised below.

An Innovative approach

This thesis drew together many strands of current research. Attending to the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic with equal weighting required the use of a wide range of theorists, across diverse disciplines. Sublation is at work in the theoretical perspectives discussed in chapter 2 that simultaneously abolish and preserve each other. The use of theorists such as Hegel, Derrida, Baudrillard and Lyotard has been contemporised through (and sublated by) the theoretical and methodological contributions of Bull, Berger, Stephens, Bradford, Mallan and McCallum. I have used the specific elements of each theoretical perspective to fashion a framework that was
suited to the requirements of this thesis. These theories offered contradictions which Derrida’s concept of a double reading was able to consider in a productive manner. In particular, the double reading drew upon Bull’s idea of apocalyptic cycle and Berger’s cultural view of the post-apocalyptic, placing each side by side rather than in competition with one another.

The framework determined the methodological approach developed in chapter 3. The nuanced and tailored methodology had many requirements to meet in order to achieve the aim of the thesis to make visible the discourses of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic within narrative. It needed to bring the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic into an approach to narrative analysis that was congruent with post-structural perspectives and deconstructive methods. It also needed to incorporate the specificities of young adult fiction with respect to its common themes and narrative structures (such as abjection, and the hero story). The contradictions inherent in apocalypse theory required an understanding of how dialectics could gainfully be used to explore these contradictions.

To avoid using dialectics in a teleological way that is common to utopian end-of-history arguments, this study developed Bull’s post-structural (unending) dialectics into an apocalyptic model for analysis. This model supported the resistance to telos that defines the apocalyptic by considering a dialectic of integration. Dialectics also facilitated a double reading of the apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic, as mentioned above. The new integrated model for analysis offers a layering of its own contradictions, as well of those within the fiction analysed.

The need to accept contradiction as crucial to survival has pervaded this thesis. In its use of critical theories, this study has sought to avoid “squeezing” the object of study to fit with one particular position. Doing so often predetermines the outcome or
result in finding what one set out to find. The double reading conducted throughout the analyses allowed for the incorporation of contradictory representations and, indeed, these contributed to the analysis. The use of texts that did not strictly adhere to the model put forward served to test the usefulness of the analytical approach (for example, texts such as *Monster Blood Tattoo* and *Thirsty*). The analyses offered insights into the narrative worlds of the text, the subject positions offered to the reader, and emerging themes surrounding the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic.

The choice of contemporary and popular texts underpins the relevance of this thesis to the young adult readership to which the fiction is marketed (although I acknowledge, of course, that contemporaneity shifts with time.) The popularity of many of the chosen focal texts suggests that young adults desire narratives that include apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic discourses. Since the beginning of this research, the *Twilight* series has become a global best seller and record breaking film adaptation. The “new vampire” genre evidently resonates with young adult audiences. The *Vampire Academy* series has also shown promising sales figures. Other texts, such as *The House of the Scorpion*, *Tales of the Otori*, *Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith* and *Monster Blood Tattoo* have won numerous literature and children’s literature awards, attesting to the value they are judged to hold as literary texts (as mentioned in chapter 3).

**Key Findings**

In terms of the apocalyptic, the analyses have shown that the narrative model in chapter 3 (Figure 3-1) is represented in young adult fiction to varying degrees. In the clearest examples, *The House of the Scorpion* and *Tales of the Otori* illuminated the metalanguage of the apocalyptic cycle and demonstrated its uses in textual analysis. The
differences from the hero story show that there is the possibility of saving the society without slaying the monster, so to speak. The returning undifferentiated do not aim to maintain the existing binary codes of their community, but instead initiate a transformation of the society. After being abjected, and while experiencing exclusion from the community, the undifferentiated come to terms with their own undifferentiation and accept their liminal and fluid experience of selfhood, revealing a new sense of agency. The space of exclusion (and liminality) for apocalyptic narratives is revelatory, and deepens (rather than resolves) the subjects’ undifferentiation. This process is not depicted as simple, as it requires that the subjects question the metanarratives and social coping mechanisms that have been the foundation of their lives up to this point. The level to which the characters participated in such questioning ranged from Rossamünd’s quiet disbelief that all monsters are evil in Monster Blood Tattoo, to Takeo’s social revolution in Tales of the Otori. In the focal texts, this questioning by the young adult characters was conducted in cooperation with adult characters, and characters of other species (such as monsters of no identifiable age group). There were also adult characters present in many of the focal texts who functioned as examples of the consequences of holding on to a previous (binaried) social structure. The analyses showed that working with the adults of the community in an exchange of ideas produced the most effective means of positive change or transformation. The combination of questioning the metanarratives, collaborating with adults and accepting contradictions was central to the young adult’s survival of adolescence. There was, however, an overarching sense that the young adult was essential to bringing about a new equilibrium, and subsequently also the survival of the community. The overlapping apocalyptic cycles evident in each
text showed that the apocalyptic cycle is not the resolution to all conflict, but is at least one step in that direction.

The introduction of the post-apocalyptic and the dialectic of time and space brought insights into the process of surviving a revelation in the young adult texts analysed. Post-apocalypse theory has previously centred on the traumatic effects of living after revelation, and has often used narrative examples. Theorists have investigated the importance of apocalypses of varying magnitude, from acts of terrorism to the end of the world. Primarily, all have focussed on the function of revelation in narrative. Drawing on this approach, my use of the post-apocalyptic was then tailored to the specificities of young adult narratives by centring on the common apocalypses of adolescence that often manifested in uncommon and fantastical ways in the texts. The revelation that one can act against the dominant discourses (through agency) formed the apocalypse that coincided with the establishment of the apocalyptic cycle in chapter 4, as discussed above.

The two focal apocalypses of chapters 5 and 6, destiny and death, were analysed using a double reading of the post-apocalyptic and the apocalyptic which illustrated that the metanarratives in the texts were being questioned. The texts in chapter 4 “revealed” to their protagonists that they themselves could effect change, and transform their own lives and the lives of those in their community. In chapter 5, the function of the focal texts’ apocalypses was to illuminate the contradiction inherent in the act of representation as both powerful and meaningless at the same time. The foreseen doom that shadowed the “cursed” protagonists’ lives created a life that was lived as if the end had already come, and through an understanding of their own post-apocalyptic existence they felt freed from the curse. The hero tale traditionally involves the triumphant return
of the mature young adult, whereas narratives of abjection either reform the subject into a more acceptable way of being, or doom the subject to erasure or death. These two models are sublated into the post-apocalyptic narrative discourse.

For the abject to return triumphantly to their community they must cease to be abject, yet retain their undifferentiation. In doing this, the textual analysis revealed that their transformed perceptions of language, and therefore of themselves, ensured their own survival. For example, Scathe (in The Rat and the Raven) must doubt the curses laid on him by Jocasta and the community in order to embrace Bran and become a part of the “gang.” In turn, the “gang” embraces his undifferentiation and learn to accept his way of being. Roxanna and Lili (in Moonlight) completely re-write their own archival history as a construction of their superstitious community’s fear of undifferentiation. The analyses demonstrated that the function of the apocalypse could be twofold. On the one hand, it could reveal a cursed existence. On the other hand, the postmodern apocalypse could reveal that language is a play of signs that can be manipulated. Understanding this manipulation is key to surviving the post-apocalyptic existence: Mirany (in The Oracle), Bella (in Twilight), and Takeo (in Tales of the Otori), each shows the ability to comprehend the play of signs and the arbitrary nature of signification. These characters’ subsequent transformation and survival produce this ability as positive and necessary. The reader is offered the opportunity to experience or to see (in the act of reading and subjective alignment) the rewards for achieving resilient agential subjectivities.

It has been maintained throughout the study that death is intricately linked to the apocalyptic. This occurs on two levels. On the first level, death is present on the scale of mass destruction and the possibility of archival erasure (using Derrida’s notion of “the archive” as the collective memory of a people). The nuclear age introduced, for modern
times, the notion that we can destroy ourselves, and that there would be no one left to
mourn the loss. Derrida, Baudrillard and others have addressed the immensity of this
proposition, and young adult literature has responded to such possibilities in narrative
form. The narratives written for young adults explore the capability of human beings to
cope with such disaster. However, the premise of post-disaster fiction is that the disaster
has occurred and relies on the survival of a subject through which to narrate. The
disaster is, therefore, not total. An approach to analysing total disaster is to consider its
echo effect, backwards in time, from the future event. This is the post-apocalyptic: living
after the revelation, prophecy, and conceived future death of humanity and destruction
of the archive.

On the second level, death is linked to the apocalyptic as every person lives with
the knowledge that she or he will die. Death, for one person, does not threaten the
archive, but it does threaten that individual’s utterance to the world. This thesis chose to
address this threat by attending to characters’ experiences with death (that brought them
face to face with death) and through fantastical creatures that live on after actual bodily
death (vampire and revenant). Every text in the analysis demonstrates that an experience
of, or through, death is paramount in the society and the protagonist in the latter’s
coming to terms with undifferentiation. By embracing the contradictions between the
finite and infinite, mortality and immortality, the characters are able to bring that
knowledge to the contradictions that they embody through their undifferentiation. The
exception to this was found in Thirsty, where Chris was unable to live on with a sense of
acceptance after his experience of death. Thirsty is, however, the only text chosen with a
decidedly ironic tone, which implies an attempt to encourage the reader to judge Chris’s
failures, rather than empathise with them.
This study has argued that an acceptance of death in life is paramount to the process of transformation, which then ensures survival in the YA fiction analysed. Each element of this analysis returned to the protagonists’ sense of self as they live an apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic existence. The process of survival unerringly hinges on accepting a fluid subjectivity and rejecting liberal humanist notions of a core self. This study has understood Derrida’s concept of “radical self critique” as an embracing by the young adult of his/her own fluid subjectivity in a constant and unending process. This outcome inherently resists the telos of “finding” one’s self, and, just as the dialectic of integration is unending, the formation of the self is continuous and adaptable.

Into the Vat

The impact of this thesis relies on the role of YA fiction in contemporary societies. I have argued that, as Derrida states, “il n'y a pas de hors-texte”: neither language nor being can exist outside of the text (1974, p. 158). Language and signification are part of the dialectic of being and nothingness. The language of the text is read, and may even be read with resistance, but in either case text enters the resource of language present in young adult worlds. These worlds can be seen as the “vat” of fluid that is constantly shifting and changing in accordance with its varied influences. Young adult fiction, as one influence, is a “persuasive cultural resource” (Lampert, 2007, p. 270) through its underlying discourses and ideologies. I now consider how this thesis has addressed the cultural concerns that gave rise to its aim.

From the Binary vs Relativism, To Transformation

Two underlying foci that guided this research were the impact on contemporary YA fiction of a lack of telos, and the pull between binarism and dialectics. These foci
were based on the turn towards postmodernism in contemporary society, and the return to the binary since 9/11. Regarding the influences of postmodernism, I asked in chapter 1: “What does this non-linearity, and lack of faith in signification, mean for the liminal space of the young adult?” The analyses found that a lack of telos provided a sense of transformative utopianism, and that the undifferentiated subjects relied on the ability to transform both themselves and their communities in a way that supported unending integration. By their facing the end, the end was removed as a threat. Rather than a fear of infinite change, the texts demonstrated a willingness to work with the contradictions of the finite and infinite in life, death, and language. Signification, as argued in chapters 2 and 5, is inherently linked to telos, origin and the end. The belief in a final end point is the belief in the return to an ultimate signified, or “truth.” By resisting telos the texts showed a parallel resistance to a stable concept of signification, and instead engaged with différance, or the play of signs. Characters such as Takeo, Mirany, Europe and Rossamünd, actively participate in the play of signs, and their acceptance of the fluid nature of the signified works to their advantage. Other characters, including Matt, Lili and Roxanna, Scathe, Rose and Bella, demonstrate either a natural tendency to distrust the notion of a stable signified, or discover that différance can free them from their cursed existence. A lack of faith in signification does not necessarily result in a lack of faith in the subject or community. On the contrary, it demonstrates that those who accept a fluid subjectivity are more aptly positioned to face the flux of contemporary society, ensuring survival of the liminal time and space. The simultaneous presence of, and resistance to, binaries shown in all texts supports my proposition in chapter 1 that contemporary society displays a contradictory presence of both transformation and the
return to the binary. The analyses illustrated that new ways of coping with this “bi-focal” view of society is offered to the reader.

*Out of The Text*

The choice to analyse YA fiction does not limit the usefulness of this research to imaginary worlds. Assuming the impact imaginary worlds in fiction can have on readers is placing a faith in the ability of the readers to bring the themes and concepts within the text into their own lives. As Bradford et al. recognise:

the ideal outcome is the awakening of readers in the hope that they will extrapolate from the world of the text to their actual social realities and to grapple with the struggles, tensions, and problems that are inherent to the “real world.” (2008, p. 185)

In the case of the apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic, the “struggles, tensions and problems” are those of exclusion and intolerance that are particularly relevant to young adult audiences. This thesis has offered an alternative reading to those based on psychoanalysis regarding the potential outcomes of abjection. Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic discourses, hopefully, “awaken” readers to the value of liminality, hybridity, undifferentiation and transformation to the survival of both adolescence and the community. The use of this model of analysis in teaching YA fiction can draw attention to the inclusive nature of the dialectic of integration within the narrative, and subsequently provide a launching pad for its applicability to young adult worlds.

Contemporary theories often present representations of death and the end as the epitome of the simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1989; Noys, 2005). The shifting, slipping and
elusive signified of death and the end has been presented in adult fiction as destructive to a sense of self, and indicative of a traumatised culture (Berger, 1997; Heffernan, 2008). The representation of the simulacrum of death and the end in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic YA fiction, however, is freeing and offers moments of agency. This sense of freedom is not, I argue, due to simplification for a younger audience, but rather to the undercurrents of transformative utopianism in children’s and YA fiction (Bradford et al., 2008, p. 185). The analysis chapters showed that apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic discourses are present in YA fiction, and that the subjectivities on offer in these texts are transformative as they demonstrate subjects who can narrate their own futures in a way that challenges their society’s ways of being with death.

**New Tints and Shades: Future directions**

The dye that colours the water also mixes to create new tints and shades. This thesis opens up numerous avenues for further research into the study of YA fiction, young adult cultures, critical theories in literary studies, and also the expansion of these theoretical and methodological frameworks to include other theoretical perspectives.

**Applying the Framework**

The first step in extending the use of the apocalyptic model for analysis, and the post-apocalyptic double reading, is to include realist YA fiction. An example text, *Killing Aurora* (Barnes, 1999), mentioned in chapters 2 and 3, is one such realist text that lends itself to this analytical technique as it overtly engages with concepts of the simulacrum and death in postmodern cultures. Other potential texts are *Vigil* (Wheatley, 2001), which is concerned with suicide and living after a friend’s death, and *Notes from the Teenage Underground* (Howell, 2006), which addresses exclusion as a productive
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space. Analysing the representations of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic in realist texts such as these and others would illuminate possible transformation without fantastical embodiments (such as wings or fangs). Comparative studies between, for instance, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic discourses in YA fiction before and after the turn of the millennium could explore the fin de siècle tensions present during this transitional period (McGillis, 2003). Such a study could map changes over a larger period of time than encompassed by this thesis. The apocalyptic model for analysis could serve to illuminate millennium fears regarding the apocalyptic tone of children’s and YA fiction at “the end” of a century, and (contradictorily) the futures on offer in those fictions in the next century.

Film also offers narratives, both realist and fantasy, that can be analysed by adapting the frameworks set out in this thesis to media and visual mediums. This could occur in two ways: films marketed towards young adults, and films adapted from YA fiction. Analysing adaptations, such the Twilight film (Hardwicke, 2008), and the forthcoming Monster Blood Tattoo and Tales of the Otori adaptations, would serve to highlight the changes from book to screen in terms of the focus on the role of the undifferentiated, and what that would mean for the mass audience, and potential cultural shifts since the book was written. Due to the popularity of the Twilight film, it is plausible that many more YA fiction texts of this genre will be converted to film. Many young adult texts now have an internet presence, such as the web site for Monster Blood Tattoo (Penguin Group, 2009), featuring a “trailer” to the books. Such trailers choose to highlight certain aspects and themes in the text (indicating their expected marketability). For example, the Monster Blood Tattoo trailer begins with the quotation: “Not all monsters look like monsters” (2009). This choice of quotation from the text highlights
the importance on the unreliability of the signifier that this thesis also identified within
the text. An analysis of film and online adaptations would have implications for media
educators, the study of discourses in young adult media, and the change in
representations from book to film, and book to multimedia.

The theoretical framework present in chapter 2 could also be applied to other
forms of media, including video games, and virtual worlds of the young adult. This
would ascertain how the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic discourses are present in these
media, and whether they offer a similar focus on survival through transformation. In
virtual worlds, such as *World of Warcraft II*, the user progresses through a fantastical
world by means of monster slaying, completion of tasks, and gaining of powers.
Ascertaining how this supports or denies transformation through a dialectic of
integration would establish the level to which the act of surviving in such online worlds
relies on cementing binary codes, or moving beyond them into the integration of
undifferentiation. Such a study could be combined with recent research in the area of
video games as they pertain to subject formation in youth cultures, to offer insights into
how the apocalyptic discourse can be read in participatory online and video cultures.

*Advancing The Framework*

This thesis was necessarily restricted in the number of critical theories it could
incorporate in order to maintain a manageable study. However, the focal texts offered
discourses that intersected with the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic including those of
gender, nationhood and the post-colonial, posthumanism, and the environment.
Heffernan has begun to incorporate other theoretical perspectives into the post-
apocalyptic in her chapters, “The ‘Fag End’ Again and the New Woman,” on gender,
and “Unveiling Nations,” on sexuality in and nationhood (2008). Heffernan has also hinted at the possibilities of using posthumanism (as the end or a new beginning for “humans”) with the post-apocalyptic by posing a question over whether “post-apocalyptic thinking gives way to the posthuman as the end of man or whether it interrupts this end” (p. 152). The dialectical tensions present in this question mark it as an advantageous incorporation into the model for analysis of this thesis. Such a study could re-describe “transformation” by giving it new meaning in how it is understood with respect to virtual bodies that are becoming closer to reality in young adult worlds. Hayles notes that the posthuman subject offers the return to “flesh” that the liberal humanist subject excluded (1999, p. 5). As such, the experience of embodying undifferentiation could contribute to theories of the posthuman. Furthermore, bringing this back to the suggestions for using online and virtual worlds as the object of study, these avenues for exploration would add layers of meaning and relevance of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic to contemporary youth cultures.

Theories surrounding gender and sexuality could add to the dialectic of integration by highlighting differences, or similarities, between the coping mechanisms used to suppress female and male undifferentiated subjects. The undifferentiated, as a character, also places a disrupted gender binary within a narrative model, and provides a means to analyse such characters’ positions and roles in their community (as seen with Scathe in chapter 5, who is both male and female). Butler’s concept of “performativity” (Butler, 1990, 1993), which identifies the process of “becoming” as created in performances that adhere to social norms and also the possibility to vary and transgress those norms, provides an opportunity for advancing the theoretical and methodological

53 Heffernan has drawn on similar questions posed by Hayles (1999, p. 281).
frameworks in this thesis. The variance of social norms has, in this thesis, focused on the transgression of stable binary concepts that are often manifested in the body. It could, however, apply only to a performance that constitutes a contradiction: for example, to act against and within discursive norms at the same moment (such as Bella’s choice to marry Edward in Twilight). Theorising subjectivity and agency through the lens of performativity could add insights into the experience of being undifferentiated, and the possibilities for variance for the undifferentiated (or the possibilities that the undifferentiated open up through establishing the new equilibrium).

The dialectic of origin and end that this thesis has explored lends this framework to the addition of post-colonial theory (Said, 1978; Bradford, 2001). Theories of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic could be advanced with the consideration of hybridity as a positive or negative influence on Indigenous people’s cultural heritage. It could also be applied to texts that concern cultural diversity. The notion of a poisoned sacrifice, and poison as “pharmakon” (both beneficial and detrimental, as discussed in chapter 6) could also have implications for the immigrant.

There are also possibilities for using the framework with respect to ecological texts, especially in a way that considers the dialectic of human and “nature”: such a dialectic was drawn on to some extent in chapter 4 in terms of “threwd” in Monster Blood Tattoo. The additions to the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic theoretical perspectives already woven together by this thesis would expand its usefulness, and test its limits in terms of applicability.
Audience and Education

The last area of future direction that is considered here concerns the young adult as participant in the making of meaning. A future study to ascertain how young adult readers have interpreted YA fiction in terms of the overarching themes of survival, or the simulacrum, would be of value. Such a study could examine to what extent young adults see such themes as important. It could also ascertain young adults’ preferences for certain ways of surviving (either by adhering to social norms, challenging them, or developing creative approaches). The study could also ask how young adult readers view the outcomes of the apocalyptic cycle in comparison to hero texts that contain abject characters, and their perceptions of the difference in survival for those characters and their prospective futures.

An investigation into the process of publication and the choice to publish texts with apocalyptic themes would provide insights into the impact the texts are having on the industry. Publishing trends serve to highlight (and create) the current and important themes for young adult readers: any change in trends could be used to ascertain the current appeal in young adult worlds. The vast readership of Twilight is searching for similar narratives. Subsequent publications aimed at this audience could be analysed to ascertain how and which themes are being explored. This knowledge would, in turn, illuminate to what extent an acceptance of death, the upholding of the young adult liminal space, and the adolescent contribution to communities, are carried over.

54 Questions are already being asked regarding the choice of revenants in such popular fiction, and how/why it is appealing to young adult audiences (Rosenberg, 2009).
55 “Phenomenally successful books such as Harry Potter and Twilight have created a taste for incredibly popular series which should keep happening. Children find that all their mates have read them and they might not like the book but everyone else is reading it around them so it becomes a social thing” (Purdon, 2009).
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There is potential for research into the area of teaching literature. This thesis has opened up new possible readings of YA fiction that could form the starting point for investigating current methods of teaching literature at both university and high schools. There is significant scope for researchers and teachers to collaborate on classroom projects which consider innovative approaches to reading texts such as this study has developed. Such a study could encompass the desire to find positive outlooks for young adults in a body of literature that is often criticised for being negative in its depictions of life and youth.56

In this way, this thesis offers the basic elements that can be taken and moved forward into other areas of research. There are also many avenues for applying this model of analysis to other texts that would provide further insight into the representations of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic in young adult worlds.

Conclusion

This thesis has addressed a gap in current scholarship through analysing the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic representations in contemporary YA fantasy fiction. By considering the contradictions and fluidity in narrative worlds, and the young adult subjects who traverse those worlds, this study has argued that there is a current discourse of survival through apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic transformations in both the subject’s understanding of language, and her/his role in society. Importantly, the texts showed that the survival of the community relies on an exchange between young adults and adults, and in some texts, animals and monsters too. Derrida’s notion that life is survival, *la vie est survie*, but also that survival is always concerned (contradictorily)

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56 Such concerns are raised by Niell (2008).
with death, has been relevant to this thesis. In apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic discourses the acceptance of death as a presence in life is crucial to surviving, not merely “adding” survival onto living and dying, but understanding living as surviving after death.

While this thesis may have focussed on fantastical manifestations of undifferentiation, from wings to fangs, there are many other forms and ways of being inclusively excluded that are not limited to narrative worlds. The liminal existence of young adults can be understood in their exclusion from certain legal rights or social position, and inclusion as consumers and media targets. To be excluded even from the liminal time of adolescence, as experienced by a (young adult) abject subject, might seem a great punishment. Alternatively, it could be a transformational and productive space and time for the subject to incorporate the flux of selfhood, and to accept his/her embodiment of irresolvable contradictions.

The move from being excluded to being essential to the community has infinite importance when considering the ways the liminal time and space are represented in the stories written for young adults. Agamben comments, regarding inclusive exclusion, and the relevance of studying such a thing, that it is not only relevant to those experiencing it, but to everyone, as it has become shattered, and disseminated “into every individual body, making it into what is at stake” in surviving contemporary society (1998, p. 124). To bring the undifferentiated young adult subject out of exclusion and into a state of recognition, with the possibility that such an act will be crucial to the survival of society, has ramifications for “every individual body” that is, in some way, undifferentiated.
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