

**The Role of Narrative in  
Post-Apocalyptic Representations of the  
Social Contract**

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## Abstract

The moral decline in today's society has resulted in a resurgence of both apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic thought. With human beings' careless behaviour, of both our physical and moral world, the destruction of humanity has become pertinent once again. As a result, there has been an increase in post-apocalyptic fiction; future imaginings of what the world can possibly be like after an apocalyptic devastation. Post-apocalyptic fiction writers portray future societies with the didactic intention of evoking change in current society. This dissertation considers the role narrative plays in these works of post-apocalyptic fiction; with a specific focus on how narrative influences the rebuilding of society following an apocalyptic cataclysm. The four chosen texts, *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1960) by Walter M. Miller Jr, *Riddley Walker* (1980) by Russell Hoban, *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy, and *The Book of Dave* (2006) by Will Self., are post-apocalyptic works of fiction that explore the role narrative plays in representing the social contract theory. Mark Turner, author of *The Literary Mind* (1998), noted that "narrative imagining - story - is the fundamental instrument of thought. Rational capacities depend upon it. It is our chief means of looking into the future, or predicting, of planning, and of explaining" (Turner 4). It is my argument that narrative is so powerful that it provides the starting point for the reconstruction of humanity following an apocalypse. An apocalyptic event presents humanity with a tabula rasa upon which to rebuild civilization. In order to reconstruct society, there needs to be a basis from which to draw. Narrative provides a site of ethics. Storytelling demonstrates good versus evil and, therefore, is able to represent a moral code. Although narrative has both constructive and destructive potential for humankind, as it can be misinterpreted, it is ultimately up to humanity to use fragments of the past to rebuild society.

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## Introduction

*“Everything has to come to an end, sometime.”*

*- L. Frank Baum, author*

Endings are inevitable. The cycle of beginnings and endings is a part of human life; whether it is historical periods, literary periods, human life, food, seasons, education, or projects. In today’s society global catastrophic risks are rising leading to fear of the ultimate end; the apocalypse of the world as we know it. From environmental, to social, to political, to economic, the issues in today’s society have caused a resurgence in apocalyptic thought. Coupled with this anxiety of final destruction are questions about what will follow the end. Thus, with the apocalypse becoming relevant once again, post-apocalyptic thought has increased. This thought is a response to the current deep-rooted social unrest. By creating the possibility of what the future may hold, post-apocalyptic fiction writers are able to imagine what the potential for starting over implies. My hypothesis is that narrative plays an integral role in the rebuilding of a civilization in post-apocalyptic representations of the social contract by providing a site of ethics from which to draw and guide social order.

To illustrate the importance of narrative, imagine being born into a world that is the barren landscape aftermath of a cataclysmic event. People are brutal and primitive; and society is in dire need of development. Where does one even try to begin? If there were some remnant of the past, of history, although it may not be the foundation of something like a government or a religion, it may provide a starting point from which to draw. Without narrative we have no frame of reference from which to discern between good and evil. Narrative allows people to develop an ethical compass. Whether narrative is in the form of scientific blueprints or a description of an old painting, it holds value. The four texts that will be investigated provide an insight into the role narrative, or storytelling, plays in a post-apocalyptic setting.

Each novel describes a post-apocalyptic wasteland of some sort and how the society begins to reform following the social collapse. The texts are *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1960) by Walter M. Miller Jr, *Riddley Walker* (1980) by Russell Hoban, *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy, and

*The Book of Dave* (2006) by Will Self. These texts are post-apocalyptic works of fiction that explore the role narrative plays in representing the social contract theory. Each novel represents a society that has used some remnant of the past, in narrative form, to try rebuild their civilization. *A Canticle for Leibowitz* spans thousands of years as society tries to re-establish itself following a nuclear cataclysm. The monks of the Albertian Order of Saint Leibowitz dedicate their lives to preserving the last remaining vestiges of humankind in order to oppose the violent backlash against such knowledge following the apocalypse. The scientific blueprints safeguarded by the monks illustrate how remnants of the past have a significant impact on how the future will be rebuilt. Ultimately this scientific knowledge is used to recreate nuclear war; thus, illustrating the destructive potential of misusing knowledge. After nuclear war has devastated the world, a new society is brought into being.

*Riddley Walker* follows the tale of the eponymous narrator as he navigates this post-apocalyptic wasteland of which the entire functioning is based upon the only remnant of the former civilization: a description of a fifteenth-century wall painting of the Legend of Saint Eustace in Canterbury Cathedral. An itinerant puppet show, performed by government officials, uses the myth about this old painting and their mythical figure of Eusa to disseminate political propaganda in order to elicit control over society. Therefore, *Riddley Walker* clearly demonstrates how significant narrative can be in creating a civilization as their socio-political functioning uses a false myth of Saint Eustace as its foundation. Riddley himself acknowledges the power of storytelling by creating his own story to influence society. In an attempt to remedy the ills of his society, he invents his own puppet show with the aim of educating his society and hopefully instilling a sense of morality which Riddley has learnt on his own journey through Cambry.

The father and son traverse a post-nuclear landscape in *The Road* as they make way to the coast where a rumoured community is being rebuilt. This duo are trying to survive in a primitive setting rife with cannibalism. There is little sense of humanity left. Despite this bleak environment, the father tells his son stories in the hope of igniting a metaphorical flame of knowledge, representing hope for the future. The site of morality in *The Road* is maintained through the stories that the father tells his son. Inherent in the father's stories is a moral guide enabling the son to establish a sense of ethics. This concept of ethics will allow the boy to distinguish good from evil and instil

an understanding of morality. There are instances in the book which suggest that the boy has indeed established an ethicality; hence depicting the power of storytelling. Ultimately the novel concludes leaving the reader with a sense of hope that through these stories the young boy has developed a strong moral sense that will aid in the reconstruction of humanity following the apocalyptic devastation.

The apocalyptic devastation in *The Book of Dave* is a catastrophic flood resulting in the post-apocalyptic archipelago of England. This post-apocalyptic world has reconstructed itself based upon the hateful rantings of a mentally ill London cab driver, Dave Rudman. In a delusional rage, Dave compiles a book depicting his bigoted views about women, people of various races and custody rights. This book is excavated centuries later after the inundation ending the former world. It is used as the foundation for the post-apocalyptic civilization's social order. As a result, this post-apocalyptic world adopts a misogynistic, dogmatic, and cruel religion. One that states that men and women must live separately and that children must live half a week with each parent. However, there exists a second book, written by Dave once he had recovered from his temporary insanity. This book rectifies the mad delusions of the first book; encouraging respect, morality, and harmony amongst people. This book symbolizes hope for the recovery of humanity in the post-apocalyptic world. If this book is discovered there may be a chance that humanity can enter into a social contract and become a flourishing civilization. Hence this novel clearly validates the significance of narrative as an entire religion and social functioning is founded upon one story.

Thus, the aim of this research project is to investigate the significant role narrative plays in either recreating or destroying the social contract in post-apocalyptic fiction. These four primary texts investigate this hypothesis. The theoretical framework, consisting of the theory of the apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic, the social contract theory, and the importance of narrative, aids in substantiating why these texts are relevant to the topic as well as providing a foundation for this argument.

Apocalyptic moments terminate social order and coerce society into a position of reconstruction. Post-apocalyptic representations allow us to reflect on the harsh realities of our present. This dissatisfaction with the present has instigated a desire to understand and renew following eras.

Post-apocalyptic thought considers the aftermath of the transition from apocalyptic to post-apocalyptic society and inspects whether the remnants of society regress into primitive decadence or if they will use this revelation as a means of renovation and redemption. The social contract is when society is reverted to this primitive state and goes through the process of progressing from such a state into a social contract. This formation of a society can be referred to as the social contract theory. Claire P. Curtis's *Postapocalyptic Fiction and The Social Contract* asserts that post-apocalyptic fiction writers delve into the "imaginative possibility" that this genre offers (Curtis 3). Post-apocalyptic fiction allows for the "possibility of starting over, with all the potential hope and utopian imaginings that starting over implies" (Curtis 2). Thus, post-apocalyptic fiction writers have the freedom to imagine how society could be following an apocalypse.

This concept of renewal after the end is what this dissertation aims to investigate. The theory of the end makes us question what the end will produce and what happens after the world has fallen. The resurgence of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic thought has led to an avalanche of post-apocalyptic fiction painting a bleak future of the world we live in. The didactic intention of post-apocalyptic fiction is to address the apocalyptic anxiety of current society into a catalyst for change. By representing a world in which there is only the absence of everything we know, we can value what we do actually have today.

Writers use fiction to consider the post-apocalyptic milieu because it provides both the imagining of what might come and how we might begin again. Post-apocalyptic fiction writers wonder what could have been done to prevent the apocalypse; what needs to be done once the apocalypse has occurred in order to rebuild civilization; and finally, what the concepts of apocalypticism and post-apocalypticism teach us about humanity.

An apocalyptic event should completely eradicate the world. In post-apocalyptic fiction there are always remnants of humankind, therefore, it can be assumed that after an apocalypse occurs, fiction writers write with the belief that not all traces of humanity are eradicated. As such, the point of interest lies within the reconstruction of society with the fragments of humanity in a post-apocalyptic environment. For how do the survivors of such a cataclysm begin to reconstruct civilization? There needs to be some sort of starting point from which to draw in order to recreate



a society. Stories provide the key to this reconstruction. This is because “stories are our primary tools of learning and teaching, the repositories of our lore and legends. They bring order into our confusing world. Think about how many times a day you use stories to pass along data, insights, memories or common-sense advice”, to quote writing coach Edward Miller.

Therefore, storytelling is a powerful tool. All four texts depict the significant role narrative plays when re-establishing a social contract following an apocalypse. The writers of post-apocalyptic fiction have written with the didactic intention of warning current society. By criticizing current social order, post-apocalyptic writers are able to illustrate what future worlds may look like. This investigation serves to argue that these future worlds have little or no hope of recovery if there is no narrative foundation upon which to reinstate a social contract. The four novels clearly argue that narrative indeed has the powerful ability of affecting if and how future post-apocalyptic societies will become flourishing civilizations once again.

## **The Apocalyptic and the Aftermath**

The apocalypse is an idea that has preoccupied humanity since the beginning of time. From the Bible to Mayan Prophecy, the idea of the end has endured and, as such, humanity has always feared final destruction and, most likely, always will; hence the notion of an apocalypse is resilient. The date of the apocalypse is hypothetical and has never arrived, yet, its importance has never been discredited. Many predicted apocalyptic dates have passed but the thought and anxiety about an apocalyptic event perseveres. As a means by which to deal with human anxiety of the end, writers have used the apocalypse as a foundation to create their versions of the end and what could possibly follow. Eschatological fictions display the many potential endings of this world. In Frank Kermode's apocalyptic study, *The Sense of an Ending*, the apocalypse is described as an era of transition. What is important about this term is that transition suggests change with no negative or positive connotations. The transition that the apocalypse evokes can bring about a time of revelation and a new beginning or it can induce destruction and disorder. Therefore, eschatological discourses have always been considered by society. The interest in eschatological fictions is increasing in today's culture owing to the heightened perception of moral decline and the hope of restoration.

In order to understand the aftermath of an apocalypse it is imperative to consider the apocalypse itself. The word apocalypse originates from ancient Greek meaning revelation or unveiling. Therefore, an eschatological apocalypse reveals the vision of ultimate destiny in which the immanence of judgement is argued wherein good will be rewarded and evil shall be punished. Historically humankind has attempted to predict and imagine the apocalypse. All mythologies about the end, regardless of the cultural background or religious context from which they hail, all have a common factor: the desire to understand successive human eras and their ending in cataclysmic battle between good and evil.

The date of the apocalypse has repeatedly been prophesized and passed; thus, tensions about the end have ebbed and flowed. For example, directly after the Second World War, anxieties about the apocalypse eased for having survived such an atrocity was almost like surviving an apocalypse itself. James Berger suggests, in his investigation into post-apocalyptic representation in his novel

*After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse*, that post-apocalyptic fiction reveals how representations of apocalyptic endings are indelibly marked by catastrophic histories such as the Second World War. Thus, the idea of the apocalypse has mutated every time that something cataclysmic in history occurs; the trauma of already experiencing such events has resulted in a culture that recycles visions of new endings. For example, modern poets such as William Butler Yeats did not take the apocalypse to mean a literal end of the world but rather associated the apocalypse with war. His association of the end of the world with war came with a sense of hope, a sense of renewal and renovation; “the danger is that there will be no war [...] love war because of its horror, that belief may be changed, civilization renewed” (Kermode 108).

Post-apocalyptic fiction deals with this desire to understand and renew following eras. The post-apocalyptic considers the aftermath of the transition from apocalyptic to post-apocalyptic society and inspects whether the remnants of society regress into primitive decadence or if they will use this revelation as a means of renovation and redemption. *Arguing the Apocalypse* by Stephen O’Leary suggests that post-apocalyptic representations have sprung from a dissatisfaction with the present, together with a fear of the future. *Arguing the Apocalypse* proposes that the purpose of an apocalypse is to orientate the direction of humanity towards renewal. Post-apocalyptic writers write with the assumption that humanity is not completely eradicated after an apocalypse; “there is always some remainder, some post-apocalyptic debris, or the transformation into paradise” (J. Berger 69). It is the last surviving remains of humanity who will lead humankind to either anarchy or order which introduces the theory of the social contract.

The theory of the end makes us question what the end will produce and what happens after the world has fallen. As a result of Yeats’ suggestion of the end as an opportunity for renewal, it becomes apparent that the end can also be considered a time of transition. In Yeats’ poem *The Second Coming* he refers to the “widening gyre” which suggests not necessarily an end but rather a new beginning (Kermode 205). Kermode (2000) goes on to discuss the elements of the apocalyptic paradigm, made up of the terrors, scepticism to the horrors of the end, the conviction of decadence and a prophetic confidence of renovation and how all such elements occur in a moment of crisis. Moments of crises are ends and beginnings; they are times representing change. The argument Yeats provides for his theory of gyres revolves around the idea that such gyres exist

as a result of a co-existence of the past and the future at a time of transition; they interpenetrate (Kermode).

The appeal of apocalyptic prophecy resurged in the later twentieth century, having temporarily subsided after World War II, and apocalyptic discourse increased. Stephen O'Leary discussed in *The End Times Colloquium* held at The University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg that apocalyptic tensions have increased again owing to climate change. The possibility of an end has once again become the forefront of scholarly discussion as today's climate change evokes apocalyptic attitudes much like the war did in history. Today's prophetic voices echo from scientific research urging humanity to live better for the environment or else it will be destroyed.

As a result of the endemic concerns about the apocalypse, a German New Testament scholar, Ernst Käsemann stated that "apocalyptic was the mother of all theology" (O'Leary 7). While this statement is sweeping it is not unwarranted as the apocalypse is an unyielding notion that has unequivocally existed for a long time and still has a powerful influence over human society. Stringent believers in the apocalypse continue to believe that the end will come despite the apocalypse having passed every predicted date. The constant predictions and prophecies about the end all have one common element: the date at which the end shall occur. This illustrates the importance of time when considering the apocalypse.

Time is an important aspect of the apocalypse because the passing of time is inevitable. As a result of society being unable to control the passing of time, people, therefore, use time as a tool with which to measure when the end will occur and how much time we have left. Chronology is a potent concept of apocalyptic thought because of its ability to control social order (O'Leary). The rhetoric of temporality contributes to apocalyptic eschatology through the promulgation of calendrical importance in relation to apocalyptic expectation. The date of the end is malleable which results in an ambiguous relationship between time and apocalyptic expectation. Shifts in authority over the years have resulted in chronology being interpreted in different ways. Chronology of the end was founded by the authorities, such as church, but the fragmentation of authoritarian bodies dissolved finite beliefs about the end; thus, causing the expected apocalyptic date to be in constant flux.

Although the apocalypse has been disconfirmed on numerous occasions the fear of the end is still so powerful that the apocalypse can be manipulated in order to achieve the desired consonance. This makes the nature of the idea of an apocalypse flexible as humanity can change the predicted date of the end for various reasons; such as political, social or moral reasons. The end of the world cannot be calculated arithmetically but, it can be mythologized, as a result of the flexibility of the apocalyptic date (Kermode). It cannot be calculated mathematically because the date of the end has been deferred repeatedly as more arithmetic predictions of the apocalypse have come and passed; however, the idea of the end, and the fear thereof, never came to pass allowing it to become a subject that deserved to be told about in myth or legend. Thus, the power of the apocalypse has never feigned; rather the numerous arithmetic miscalculations and arbitrary divisions of the chronology of the end merely created a “perpetual calendar of human anxiety” (Kermode 11). This fear of the end offered a means for people to bear the weight of human sentiments. The apocalypse provokes a new perspective on human life. When one considers that humanity may come to an end, one realizes the small space in the world that they occupy; what they previously considered significant now seems insignificant once put into this perspective. By looking through an apocalyptic lens, people’s thoughts and feelings can mutate owing to the prospect of change that the apocalypse could potentially provide.

Therefore, the end provides a means to explain human senescence; and so providing an explanation for human behaviour. For if one has the impression that their days are numbered, they can use this as an excuse to live whatever life one chooses. If the end is near, depending on the individual’s perspective of the end, it provides any excuse necessary. For example, humanitarians may devote their lives to charitable acts of goodwill as their time on earth may be short and they want to make a difference; or, alternatively, thieves may devote their lives to stealing for their time on earth may be short so why not steal whatever they want. Thus, the discourse of time in relation to the end becomes a means by which to perceive existing social order.

Time allows for hindsight and foresight which in turn permits people to consider how society once was and how it could be; and, as a result, able to observe and criticize current social order. This is because “time as experienced in the text becomes the vehicle for transforming time as experienced

in the world to which the text refers” as hypothesized by Michael Leff in his studies into textual criticism (O’Leary 13). In other words, Leff is suggesting that time in eschatological discourse has the ability to manipulate the time of the end. This allows mythic forms of eschatology to shape perceptions of societal destiny and political possibility. This hypothesis leads O’Leary to consider apocalyptic texts as a means of “discovering the symbolic resources through which the discursive structuring of public time is accomplished” (O’Leary 13). This is owing to the fact that the apocalypse has the ability to place its audience at the end of a particular epoch. This poses an enduring problem in apocalyptic studies in a way that depicts “the effect of time’s passage on discourse and the effect of discourse on our phenomenal, social, and historical experiences of time” (O’Leary 13). This probes the question, given enough time can we prevent an apocalypse? By being placed at the time of the end our discourse of time and of the apocalypse is affected.

The concept of the apocalypse has endured time because of its transmission through history via narrative. In *Arguing the Apocalypse*, Stephen O’Leary proposes that the discourse of apocalypticism can be viewed as rhetoric; the art of effective writing. O’Leary goes on to suggest that by rhetoric he means not merely the use of ornate speech but rather more formal techniques of composition; rhetoric is a social practice of “public, persuasive, constitutive and socially constituted utterance” (O’Leary 4). Because the classic theory of rhetoric comprises an element of persuasion, rhetoric becomes significantly influential in the social sphere. Thus, the theory of rhetoric depicts an intersection between aesthetics, politics and ethics as it governs communication in society. Therefore, when the impending apocalypse is proposed via rhetoric, an argumentative claim is being offered, designed to gain support of the audience with substantiating proof. Rhetoric can use the fear of the apocalypse as an effective means of persuasion.

In an article about the apocalypse as a rhetorical device Arturo Casadevall, Don Howard and Michael J. Imperiale (1) suggest that “repeatedly invoking the apocalypse can create a sophistry that we call the apocalyptic fallacy, which, when applied in a vacuum of evidence and theory, proposes consequences that are so dire, however low the probability, that this tactic can be employed to quash any new invention, technique, procedures, and/or policy”. The apocalyptic fallacy can be used as an effective rhetorical tool when trying to purport political beliefs. The fear of the end can be used as a motivational force behind political movements. By appealing to

society's fear of the end, political discourse attempts to sway opinion, encourage/discourage particular action or convince people of the value of their claims.

Considering the nature of the relationship between rhetoric theory and the apocalypse, it becomes clear that apocalyptic beliefs are intrinsically linked to political and social commitments, or the withdrawal from thereof. Scholars have suggested that in pre-millennialism the apocalypse has played a passive role owing to fear of the end. However, once the millennium passed without the world's ending, the apocalypse became a means for social activism; thus, leading to the conclusion of Norman Cohn's study of the apocalypse in relation to political revolutionary movements suggesting that apocalyptic movements could very likely be antecedents of political phenomena. Because the apocalypse often occurs "from more particular social and political discomforts and aspirations", this often results in an egalitarian society where new political phenomena can take place (J. Berger 69).

Thus, the apocalypse and politics are closely associated. Politics are relevant when considering the apocalypse because the "apocalypse is an interpretation of politics in the form of coded narrative" as stated in a collection of essays about *Politics and Apocalypse* by Robert Hamerton-Kelly (8). The apocalypse is made up of a union between prophecy and politics. Fear of the end enables political commentary and propaganda to guide the functioning of society. Traditions that created apocalyptic myths were not only founded on conflicting canonical prophecies but grew owing to the demand of apocalyptic audiences for new political realities; audiences seeking renewal or renovation.

The decline of modern humanity has resulted in the desire for renewal. O'Leary uses Hal Lindsey's studies into the apocalypse depicting the end in modern times. Lindsey cites statistics providing evidence of the increase of evils in society. He discusses how anarchy and lawlessness have evoked an increase in the number of crimes which in turn will lead to world crisis such as "pollution, congestion [...] widespread famine, increased illiteracy, unemployment, squalor, and unrest threatening the very foundations of public order in developing countries" (O'Leary 160). The rise of such manifestations of evil will cause a decline in morality, which will be preparation for the end, as well as signify the degeneration of the social contract. Today's society faces many

catastrophic risks globally; technological, sociological, ecological, biological, and physical. Based on observational evidence, the fate of the universe has become a prevalent and valid question.

Current society is permeated with apocalyptic symptoms and post-apocalyptic fiction seeks to remedy this by evoking social change. By imagining a new world and future that the aftermath of an apocalypse would have to offer, “the apocalypse would replace the moral and epistemological murkiness of life as it is with a post-apocalyptic world in which all identities and values are clear” (J. Berger 31). Apocalypticists believe that “every structure of the old world is infected, and only an absolute, purifying cataclysm can make possible an utterly new, perfected world” (J. Berger 30). The criticism of the dehumanizing tendencies of society are so severe that one is led to imagine a society with no social base at all thus, demanding “a complete destruction of existing practices and institutions and then, not surprisingly, are unable to imagine what would come after that ending” (J. Berger 33). Thus, emphasizing the appeal of post-apocalyptic fiction and its ability to imagine a future that can provide society with a blank canvas to recreate and redeem civilization.

For all religiously and politically disparate apocalypticists, “the world is poised to end and is so suffused with moral rotteness and technological, political, and economic chaos and/or regimentation that it should end and must end, and it must end because in some crucial sense it has ended” (J. Berger 30). One of Berger’s ideas is that a catastrophe as devastating as the Holocaust so closely resembles an imagined apocalypse that it was in fact an eschaton; and humanity survived such an atrocity. Therefore, “the apocalypse, then, is The End, or resembles the end, or explains the end. But nearly every apocalyptic text presents the same paradox. The end is never the end. The apocalyptic text announces and describes the end of the world, but then the text does not end, nor does the world represented in the text, and neither does the world itself. In nearly every apocalyptic presentation, something remains after the end” (J. Berger 27-28). Thus, leading to the development and appeal of the post-apocalypse. There are numerous considerations about what can possibly occur after an apocalypse.

Apocalyptic moments “function as definitive historical divides, as ruptures, pivots, fulcrums separating what came before from what came after” (J. Berger 27). Despite this division of before and after both “apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic representations serve varied psychological and



political purposes. Most prevalently, they put forward a total critique of any existing social order” (J. Berger 30). Thus, illustrating the didactic purpose of post-apocalyptic fiction. The apocalypse shatters existing social structures and, as a result, prompts erasures from memory which need to be reconstructed via historical remnants and remaining traces (J. Berger).

The end of the world breaks society down to its most basic state. No more social order exists as there is only the need to survive. Today’s social structures govern current institutions, relations, culture, values and social interactions. This incites the social order laid down by a social contract. When society comes to its demise this social order too comes to an end. Thus, evoking the need to enter into a social contract. An apocalyptic cataclysm would breakdown any moral, political, cultural, and social systems resulting in a primitive state; or, as the social contract thinkers call it, a state of nature. In order to remedy this primitive lifestyle, human beings need to contract with each other in order to establish a community; in doing so new social structures will be created. However, there will be no new social structures evoked by the apocalypse if there is no guiding principle with which to establish them. Therefore, the historical remnants and remaining traces of humanity play a significant role in rebuilding social structures. Vestiges of the past allow for an insight into previous civilization and provide a site of ethics from which to draw. Narrative provides such relics from the past which will incite a new social establishment. Narrative form can vary from stories to historical records. This legacy of knowledge can be utilized to create a new civilization. Therefore, the apocalypse can provoke great social reconstruction for post-apocalyptic imaginings.

The apocalyptic tradition considers community building in which human identities, both individual and collective, are constituted through shared mythic narratives that confront the idea of the end. Mythic narratives that deliberate the apocalypse often depict the flaws of human identities; they depict what contributions to the end man may have had and what man can do to prevent another demise of humankind from recurring. Henry Tudor’s *Political Myth* explains that myths offer a discourse of the establishment of a community. Thus, together with an apocalyptic vision, mythic narratives contemplate how communities could be built on undefined human identities in a post-apocalyptic society where there exists little or no former knowledge of previous human identities. This asks how a community can be built if there is limited mythic narrative available from which

to draw about the past. Such mythic narratives provide “an account of the past and the future in light of which the present can be understood” (Tudor 139).

Thus, the apocalypse can be considered twofold (J. Berger). Firstly it implies a cataclysmic event that destroys previous civilization; and secondly it refers to a revelation. It acts as an exposé to uncover the ills of contemporary society. In doing so it represents a movement towards a primal resolution of the world’s decline; it represents an urge to purify the world. As a result, the apocalyptic event itself “generates new meanings and new historical narratives, as it obliterates old ones. Thus, as etymology suggests, the apocalypse is a revelation, an unveiling” (J. Berger 282). With the threat of the end becoming pertinent in today’s society once again the world is beginning to criticize present society. From environmental damage to government accountability, transparency and corruption, to poverty, and to religious conflicts, Tanza Loudenback of the *Business Insider* has identified some of today’s most critical global problems according to millennials.

As a result of these current concerns, apocalyptic discourse has become relevant once again and the image of the end has become more vivid; thus, enabling the audience to consider the exposition of society’s issues. Modern technology has made the apocalypse a more accessible and recognizable notion (O’Leary). Owing to current society’s access to information via the internet and various forms of media, people are more aware of global concerns. For example, there are cinematic representations of the end which make it more real to its audience and media which can report real-time catastrophes such as the attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001. Such representations of the end cause fear in society. However, O’Leary asks pertinent questions: if not fear then what other emotion can be used to cause drastic change in society? What amount of pathos is needed for a positive outcome to be inevitable? Perhaps fear is indeed the most easily influential emotion. Such emotions need to be manipulated in order to evoke positive change in society. Thus, apocalyptic thought, now part of current social consciousness owing to the threat of possible imminent apocalyptic scenarios, has led to an increase in post-apocalyptic fascination and imaginings.

Post-apocalyptic discourse expends great effort into developing this dissatisfaction with the present and a fear of the future. The best way to be responsible about the apocalypse and its aftermath is through fiction (O'Leary). Fiction can be regarded as responsible as it allows for possible imaginings of the future and is able to predict what may happen in a controlled manner without causing real fear or panic. Rather its role is more didactic and aims at pointing out possible future situations in the hope that this will evoke change in our current situation. Kermode (132) goes on to state that “the world itself is a land of fiction, a divine fiction which is the supreme fiction because absolutely if strangely true; and that contingencies, under pressure of imagination, resolve themselves into beautiful, arbitrary, and totally satisfying images of this benign arrangement”. Thus, fiction can responsibly portray an event such as the apocalypse because it shows images without claiming any truth; rendering fiction physically harmless and instead thought-provoking. Or as Kenneth Burke, a modern scholar in the study of rhetoric, describes ends in fiction as “cathartic discharges” as they provide a liberating means to address the end in a therapeutic manner (O'Leary 202). It is more therapeutic to imagine a fictional end rather than deal with the anxiety of a real apocalypse.

Therefore, post-apocalyptic fiction allows the reader to rehearse the end without having to endure the real horror and anxiety of the end. Katherine Snyder's investigation into the post-apocalyptic trilogy of Margaret Atwood suggests that such fiction allows us to review what the world could possibly be like and witness the aftermath of an end that is essentially unwitnessable. She goes on to note that post-apocalyptic fiction intertwines emotions of relief and fear – relief that the end has not yet come and fear that it will. As such, post-apocalyptic fiction teeters on an unstable brink that blurs the line between what is already present in our deteriorating world and what is yet to come (K. V. Snyder). Thus, resulting in questions about current social order and how this social order will change in a new world.

The following novels will reiterate this notion that post-apocalyptic thought goes beyond merely catharsis for the audience. It does not simply allow for a therapeutic means by which to deal with the end but rather has an ethical effect. Its didactic intention pushes beyond the bounds of assuaging the disarray of contemporary society by seeking to make a meaningful impact on society that encourages ethical action into improving our society. Therefore, this directly affects the

construction of a social contract. With an ethical guide, society can construct a social contract encouraging civilization to flourish.

Thus, once again, suggesting that post-apocalyptic visions induce queries regarding the social contract. The reconstruction of the social contract after an apocalypse is outlined in Claire P. Curtis's *Postapocalyptic Fiction and The Social Contract* in depth. Curtis makes the distinction between apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction. Apocalyptic fiction's common concerns are the event that causes the end of human civilization as we know it itself; the primary focus thereof is surviving the event itself whereas post-apocalyptic accounts consider the apocalyptic event a "causal precursor to starting over" (Curtis 6). Post-apocalyptic fiction writers delve into the "imaginative possibility" that this genre offers (Curtis 3). By considering the aftermath of the apocalypse, one can consider the "possibility of starting over, with all the potential hope and utopian imaginings that starting over implies" (Curtis 2). This brings about the idea that the post-apocalyptic moment can have utopian potential but this means that it has dystopian potential too. Post-apocalyptic writers "focus on the role of individuals in the recreation of community" (Curtis 2). Post-apocalyptic fiction is "how humans start over after the end of life on earth as we understand it. The apocalyptic event or events cause a radical shift in the basic conditions of human life; it does not require the destruction of all humans or even the destruction of all potential conditions of human life. The end may occur through natural or human made causes" (Curtis 5). This clearly elucidates post-apocalyptic fiction's ability to imagine the future and both its utopian and dystopian potential.

Writers use fiction to consider the post-apocalyptic milieu because it provides "both the imagining of what might come and how we might begin again. Fictional post-apocalyptic accounts present the useful falsehood that there is a ground – state of nature – from which we can come together and renegotiate our lives" (Curtis 6). Post-apocalyptic fiction writers consider what could have been done to prevent the apocalypse, what needs to be done once the apocalypse has occurred in order to rebuild civilization and, finally, what the concepts of apocalypticism and post-apocalypticism teach us about humanity.

The post-apocalyptic novel is able to impart knowledge about humanity by taking an apocalyptic text and a pioneer text; and using the social criticism and the utopian impulse of the two respectively to engineer a story of origin. Pioneer texts represent the frontier. Images of the frontier depict a movement from a place of desolation and darkness to the realm of possibility for humanity to recover goodness that was lost to the corruption of depraved civilization. Together with an actual end provided by the apocalypse, pioneer texts can illustrate the potential for starting over. Pioneer texts follow the journey to discover a new world with endless possibilities. While the frontier focused predominantly on the geographical journey to a new world, it encompasses the idea of renewal beyond merely the geographic. A new set of geographical circumstances represents the opportunity for the development of society as a whole. This is evident in the father and son's journey in *The Road*. They are travelling to the coast where it is rumoured that a new community is being developed. This promise of a new community holds the potential for the recovery of humanity. Much like the father and son, early pioneers sought to improve their living conditions; the move to a new world provides the possibility of new resources and the opportunity for social and economic advancement. The concept of the frontier contains all the utopian prospects that post-apocalyptic fiction envisions; and the apocalypse gives the opportunity for this journey to the frontier to take place. Therefore, post-apocalyptic fiction becomes a kind of fictional realism because it illustrates the possibility of a new day to day life; this is easier to visualize than envisaging the disaster of the apocalyptic event itself that would cause destruction on our world as we know it.

However, there exists a paradox in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic writing (J. Berger). For any apocalyptic discourse is able to illustrate "after the end, shows the signs prefiguring the end, the moment of obliteration, and the aftermath. The writer and reader must be both places at once, imagining the post-apocalyptic world and then paradoxically remembering the world as it was, as it is" (J. Berger 28). This point made by Berger raises an important thought. How then do characters in post-apocalyptic fiction view the world if they themselves are not in this paradoxical position? This position is paradoxical because the characters cannot exist in both the past and present simultaneously. For they are not necessarily able to envision the previous world. They may have archives of the past from which to assume what the previous civilization was like, yet, they have no concrete evidence. A common thread in the four novels to be examined is that there is the

misunderstood interpretation that the former world was far more advanced and civilized than their current post-apocalyptic environment; and, as such, there is a desire to regress to the ways of the former civilization. They are unable to consider that the previous society deteriorated to the point that it caused worldwide destruction. Some of the novels, such as *A Canticle for Leibowitz* and *Riddley Walker*, acknowledge that the past has a dark history which led to the apocalyptic cataclysm causing their post-apocalyptic conditions. The fragments the characters from these novels have from the past world, the Saint Eustace painting description and the Leibowitz blueprints, both clearly represent the apocalyptic symptoms of history and the apocalyptic cataclysm that caused their circumstances. But, they still merely repeat history's mistakes and recreate gunpowder and nuclear weaponry which has destructive consequences.

Contemporary societies are rife with apocalyptic symptoms that are "inimical to genuine human development"; thus, "the only form of society that could nurture or create a properly human species must necessarily be radically other than the existing forms" (J. Berger 33). The idea of post-apocalyptic society being extremely different to contemporary society is exemplified in the four novels to be discussed. In *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, *Riddley Walker*, *The Road*, and *The Book of Dave*, society is so radically different from our own that it allows the reader to reflect on our current living conditions and be able to highlight the issues within both our own society as well as the post-apocalyptic setting illustrated in each of the novels. William Carlos Williams wrote in 1932 that "the world is new" for he had, in his mind, destroyed the world and created a new world (J. Berger 323). By doing so, he aimed at creating a new world void of suffering and crimes for the new world would have cured the old world of its ills and, as such, redeemed it. However, he found that the old was transmitted to the new and the apocalypse merely served to highlight the downfalls of the new world. He realized that new possibilities may not necessarily follow. Thus, illustrating dystopian potential afforded by the apocalypse.

All four novels depict the binary potential of post-apocalyptic society. Their post-apocalyptic societies have vestiges of the past, although to different degrees, from which to draw in order to reconstruct civilization; which can result in either a utopian or a dystopian society. Although "previous historical narratives are shattered" the relics of the past need to be used so that "new understandings of the world are generated" (J. Berger 27). The characters inhabiting the post-

apocalyptic societies have to mediate their “historical amnesia” with whatever remnants of the past available to them (J. Berger 48). In a world where “what is gone is now irretrievable and incomprehensible [...] to live after is to inhabit a world of shifting memories and of objects broken off and hurled away from the cataclysm” the result is a fragmentation of history (J. Berger 9). This illustrates the potential of misusing past vestiges; because to the post-apocalyptic people these remnants merely make up fragments of what was once whole making it difficult to interpret them appropriately. If the remains of history are misinterpreted the prospective of renewal and the utopian potential provided by an apocalyptic event can be hindered. In *Riddley Walker*, the only relic of the past that they have is misconstrued. This misinterpretation of information results in the rediscovery of gunpowder which merely provokes the cyclic nature of humanity’s demise by ultimately leading to the creation of nuclear warfare that ended the previous civilization in the novel. Dave’s book in *The Book of Dave* is the only surviving record of the past and without any other point of reference the people of Ingland take this book to be the absolute gospel and are unaware that their social functioning is completely distorted.

In comparison, *The Road* and *A Canticle for Leibowitz* illustrate the hope for humanity following an apocalypse. The father elicits a moral sense in his son through his stories in *The Road*; thus, the boy represents a hope for the recovery of humanity. While *A Canticle for Leibowitz* depicts how humanity lives somewhat peacefully following the apocalypse for several hundred years until the knowledge safeguarded by the monks is perverted by man and used to recreate warfare that contributes to the end of their world. However, the mission to take the knowledge into space and into new worlds suggests that humanity can endure and recover from an apocalyptic event.

Thus, it can be said that post-apocalyptic destruction or renewal depends on the agreement between the “imaginatively recorded past and imaginatively predicted future” (Kermode 8); for without knowledge of the past there is no drawing point from which to predict a future. This leads to the argument that narrative plays a significant role in the renewal or destruction of post-apocalyptic civilization. This is because the above mentioned fiction hosts an array of characters who need to work together with the remnants of history in order to build new social contracts.

Narrative can provide the means with which to recreate civilization and aid in the reformation of the social contract. A study by Paulina Ambroży into language in post-apocalyptic fiction advocates that “text, words and imagination are pushed towards the extreme ends of history and humanity, as they oscillate between presence and absence, memory and forgetfulness, articulateness and silence, impotence and healing power, exteriority and interiority” (Ambroży 63). As a result, post-apocalyptic civilization becomes stuck. It has little or no historical records from which to draw and consequently it becomes a struggle to envisage a future. In considering post-apocalyptic fiction’s representation of the aftermath of the apocalypse, the notion of survival through the medium of storytelling and memory turns out to be increasingly problematic in such a dehumanized and diminished world (Ambroży). The post-apocalyptic society’s capability or incapability to preserve human values and hope is called into question. Thus, the archives of the past and the storytelling or narrative thereof provides the only hope to preserve some degree of humanity.

Apocalyptic discourse has mutated over time and has produced contrasting images between destruction and salvation. O’Leary suggests that perhaps ends have always been with us and, therefore, will always have meaning because of interpretive fallacy of circularity. If there is no end is eschatology a fallacy? Perhaps there is no final vantage point from which truth can be revealed. However, “the apocalypse as eschaton is just as importantly the vehicle for clearing away the world as it is and making possible the post-apocalyptic paradise or wasteland” (J. Berger 28). Thus, post-apocalyptic discourse can provide fiction writers with a means by which to consider both utopian and dystopian imaginings for starting over. Post-apocalyptic fiction satisfies both the voyeuristic human desire for violence as well as the hunger for renewal (Curtis). The following chapters will discuss how post-apocalyptic fiction provides an insight into the social contract and how civilization after an apocalyptic cataclysm can be rebuilt or destroyed once again. The most prominent feature of the potential redemption of society after an apocalypse hinges on the role narrative plays in the post-apocalyptic climate. Thus, it is clear that apocalyptic visions lead to post-apocalyptic imaginings which bring about the assertion that the “end is an opportunity for a new beginning” wherein narrative plays an integral role (O’Leary 224).



## The Social Contract

Apocalyptic moments terminate social order and coerce society into a position of reconstruction. The social contract is when society is reverted to its primitive state and goes through the process of moving from such a state into a civilized society. This formation of a society is referred to as the social contract theory. Claire P. Curtis's *Postapocalyptic Fiction and The Social Contract* discusses the social contract theory following an apocalypse in depth; it provides a foundation for arguing that the role of narrative, when trying to rebuild society in a post-apocalyptic world, is fundamental. Post-apocalyptic fiction writers delve into the "imaginative possibility" that this genre offers (Curtis 3). Post-apocalyptic fiction allows for the "possibility of starting over, with all the potential hope and utopian imaginings that starting over implies" (Curtis 2). Thus, post-apocalyptic fiction writers have the freedom to imagine how society could be after a catastrophic event.

The social contract theory probes the question of how our current society moved from a state of nature into a social contract. For our society too had to begin somehow, somewhere. It seems pertinent to consider ancient civilizations and their origins to better understand how future civilizations may come about. For example Ancient Egypt. In an article about the "Origins of Hierarchy" in Ancient Egypt Stephanie Pappas investigates how Pharaohs rose to power. Ancient Egypt was made up of small autonomous villages. Schism began to emerge from this egalitarian society as a result of power dynamics. Pappas uses the example of agriculture in Ancient Egypt. The more food one was able to produce meant more power over their fellow villagers (Pappas). This pattern eventually spirals into a dynasty where one Pharaoh ruled the whole of Ancient Egypt. Throughout history the entry into a social contract, as defined by having an authority figure, has mutated throughout human existence; from basic systems of self-governance to monarchies to complex democratic and totalitarian systems. Attempting to understand how and why human beings decided to join a social contract in the first place requires a thinker to evaluate various aspects of human nature. The social contract theory can help us to understand the importance of the state today and how the world would be without one should an apocalyptic cataclysm devastate humankind.

An apocalyptic event should completely eradicate the world. In post-apocalyptic fiction there are always remnants of humankind, therefore, it can be assumed that after an apocalypse occurs, fiction writers write with the belief that not all traces of humanity are eradicated. Post-apocalyptic writers “focus on the role of individuals in the recreation of community” (Curtis 2). As such, the point of interest lies within the reconstruction of society with the fragments of humanity in a post-apocalyptic environment. In order to recreate society in a post-apocalyptic milieu there needs to be a shift from “the state of nature” to a “social contract” (Curtis 12).

Following an apocalypse, all surviving human beings live in the state of nature, which can be described plainly as reverting to the beginning of time where no laws, no government, and no culture exist. In a state of nature all people are just trying to survive and will do whatever it takes to do so. This commonly results in primitivism. The assumption in post-apocalyptic fiction is that the pre-apocalyptic society was indeed the civilization that we know today and that, after an apocalypse has devastated the reality of contemporary civilization, people revert to the state of nature. As a result, violence becomes rife and there is no indication that society will survive unless the survivors of the apocalypse work together and enter into a social contract in order to rebuild a new, civilized society. A social contract involves appointing a governmental body to establish rules and regulations, and more importantly, a moral code, in order to inaugurate the organization of a new society. This leads to the inference that the idea of a government is a manmade concept developed by humankind established by the desire to leave the primitive situation and evoke a sense of order and regulation. The concept of governance comes from Plato’s metaphorical use of the Greek word “kubernáo” meaning to steer (Shin). Thus, a governing body is created by man for just that purpose, the idea of steering society in a certain direction, therefore, creating some sense of guidance and order. By electing a governing body to orientate the development of a society, there is a logical progression from a state of mere existence to that of complex culture; enabling an easier living standard.

Contemporary society is reliant upon a current infrastructure that includes a government regulating law and order; medical institutions that have the ability to heal the ill and wounded; a social model of employment in which all members of society have a profession that contributes to the functioning thereof; as well as a consistent food and water supply. The tradition of the social

contract interrogates the individual's role in society as well as the nature and limits of the society in order to examine how people can begin to enter into a social contract to form a civilization (Curtis). Such as the above infrastructure, these contributing factors are necessary for the individual in the modern social contract. We only know society as it currently is and how we function in it right now. The idea of starting over is intriguing and post-apocalyptic writers are using this idea as a point of inquiry into how does one even begin to recreate civilization after an apocalyptic catastrophe has destroyed modern society. Hence post-apocalyptic literature reflects the political and philosophical deliberation over the social conditions under which we currently live versus how we could possibly live. Post-apocalyptic accounts have grown in popularity owing to this very reason; the investigation into current social conditions illustrating the desirability of the opportunity allowed by an apocalyptic moment to change social conditions.

The aspect of post-apocalyptic fiction that makes it increasingly attractive to today's readers is that it grounds itself in the daily life of the human being by directly addressing both our deepest fears (the destruction of the world as we know it as a result of the faults of humankind), which has the dual purpose of both cathartic relief of that fear and didactic forewarning to evoke preventative measures. It also surrenders to fantasies of new beginnings. Largely, the attractiveness of the post-apocalyptic is produced by providing a means with which to criticize society by reconfiguring the living conditions of human beings in order to revise the premises that we currently follow in order to live together peacefully. Post-apocalyptic fiction allows us to imagine how today's world can be improved upon. For political philosophy, post-apocalyptic fiction peers through the window of starting over and discovers that the foundation for peaceful communal living and the prospect of successful entry into a social contract is dependent on human effort (Curtis).

Post-apocalyptic fiction provides an understanding of the social contract by using the violence and destruction of an apocalyptic event to create a state of nature for: "all hierarchies, laws and systems for organizing people have been destroyed. People are seen stripped of the restraints society has imposed upon them and these novels reveal arguments about the potential for human savagery. Yet, in the chaos of the end comes the opportunity for a new beginning. This new beginning provides a space for exploration and examination of all that we have previously taken for granted: political arrangements, gender norms, and social practices" (Curtis 7). So, post-apocalyptic fiction

allows for an investigation into the hypothetical conditions of what the lives of people might look like after contemporary civilization has been eradicated and if or how a civilized society makes its way into existence. The primitivism and violence apparent in the state of nature is lost to the development of a social contract.

The typical post-apocalyptic fiction plot follows a group of survivors banding together in order to find other like-minded communities in order to push them together into a more self-consciously organized system from which humanity will rise again (Curtis). However, there are many challenges that disrupt the seemingly simple move from the primitive state of nature into a civilized society. Such accounts fictionalize the musings of political philosophers “on the social contract and the human invention of government” (Curtis 9). Without the developed Freudian ego human beings are merely shells governed by their id: the aggressive, sexual unconscious and primitive part of our psyche which possesses no ethical compass nor common sense. Civilized human beings have the ego and the superego, “that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world” (Freud 25). Thus, when the only external influence is one of a primitive nature, the ego and superego develop accordingly and too become primitive.

Modern political philosophers constructed the idea of the state of nature to emphasize that the authority of the state depends on the consensus of the governed (Curtis). Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Rawls are the key philosophers in the social contract theory. Ancient philosophers such as Aristotle believed the state to be a natural system. The social contract theory developed from the questioning of the origins of society and the legitimacy of the authority of the state over the individual; the only means to do so was to envision a place and a time where no governing authority existed thus, leading to the idea of a state of nature.

The social contract provides a structure as to how people and the government interact. It occurs when an organized society is brought into being and invested with the right to secure mutual protection and welfare or to regulate the relations among its members. At the most basic level a social contract refers to an agreement between an individual and the community as a whole. The social contract theory states that a person’s moral and or political obligations are dependent upon a contract or agreement among them to form the society in which they live. Most social contract

theorists argue that people benefit from living together. However societies are the result of compromise and putting together a governing body means allocating rules and laws to regulate society. Social contracts provide the framework for how governments and societies interact. With the social contract the state was created to assure rights, liberties and equalities; in doing so individuals may have to give up certain freedoms, such as committing crimes, in order to create a stable and happy society. Social contract thinkers sought to challenge political and moral elements in society.

The novels I have chosen depict the imaginings of starting over and investigate what it really is that a social contract ought to produce. Human nature and the basic motivations of human behaviour and desires are on display in the post-apocalyptic genre (Curtis). Starting over evokes the “forward looking imagination of what might be” which can have both utopian and dystopian potential (Curtis 4). Curtis looks to these four key philosophers in the production of the social contract theory which provides the foundation for the modern political philosophy: “a legitimate government is one based on the consent of the governed” (Curtis 4). These philosophers founded this theory on an investigation into the state of nature; and it is post-apocalyptic fiction that embodies the representation of the theoretical envisions of the state of nature. For the philosophers can only hypothesize what the state of nature must have been like whilst post-apocalyptic fiction can actually immerse itself into the daily life of those living in a state of nature.

The first philosopher, Thomas Hobbes’, view of human nature was fairly dark by purporting that human beings would do anything necessary for survival. Even if people lived together they were still likely to fight; thus, eliciting fear and selfishness. Therefore, a contract is necessary. He describes the state of nature: “In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force, no knowledge of the face of the earth, no account of time, no arts, no letters, no society, and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger and violent death. And the life of the man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” (Hobbes 56). This clearly illustrates the violence and disorganization of the state of nature and why it is important to enter into a social contract. For example, the barbaric sacrifices in *Riddley Walker* and *The Book*

of *Dave*, the roving hordes of vicious simpletons in *A Canticle for Leibowitz* and the inhumane cannibals in *The Road* depict the primitivism of the state of nature.

Hobbes outlines a few suggestions as to why men cannot live harmoniously in comparison to other creatures, such as animals. Firstly, men compete for honour and dignity and, as a result, envy and hatred tear mankind apart. Secondly, private good and common good are one in the same to such creatures whereas mankind relish in private benefit for he is always comparing himself to other men. Thirdly, mankind has the ability to criticize and reason hence they consequently “think themselves wiser, and abler to govern the public” (Hobbes 80). The constant striving to be better will inevitably evoke war (as is evident in both *Riddley Walker* and *A Canticle for Leibowitz* – the search to progress technology leads to the discovery and creation of nuclear warfare); whereas these creatures see no fault in the administration of common business due to their lack of ability to reason. Creatures can communicate desires and affection but cannot form the words which represent “that which is good in the likeness of evil; and evil, in the likeness of good; and argument or diminish the apparent greatness of good and evil; discontenting men, and troubling their peace at their pleasure” (Hobbes 80). Finally, the agreement between creatures is natural whereas men’s is by covenant which is artificial; “therefore it is no wonder if there be somewhat else required (besides covenant) to make their agreement constant and lasting; which is a common power, to keep them in awe, and to direct their actions to the common benefit” (Hobbes 80). Thus, the governmental body was created by mankind by conferring their power upon one man or an assembly of men.

In such living conditions “nothing can be unjust” because “the notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law; where no law, no injustice. Force and fraud are in war the two cardinal virtues. Justice and injustice are none of the faculties of the body, nor mind” (Hobbes 57). The desire for peace in such a society is governed by the “fear of death” (Hobbes 57). This desire of a peaceful society is “necessary for commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them” (Hobbes 57). Thus, to enter into a peaceful society, a governmental body needs to be assigned in order to establish rules and standards for civilization. Hobbes asserts that people consent to abdicate their rights in favour of an absolute authority. According to Hobbes man has a natural desire for order and security,

therefore, voluntarily surrenders his rights to the authority. This is to protect the lives and property of people so that there is no more need to live in fear.

A state of nature refers to a time “out of civil states” in which “men live without a common power” as living in “that condition which is called war” (Hobbes 56). These describe the living conditions of a post-apocalyptic society where there is no organized civil system. He goes on to describe war as consisting “not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto” (Hobbes 56). Therefore, Hobbes is suggesting that there does not have to be a physical war as there is a constant battle occurring within individuals in a state of nature about how society is and how it can or should be. For example, in *The Book of Dave* characters like Carl and Antonë’s feelings towards “Changeover” depict this inner war (Self, *The Book of Dave* 14). For being torn away from a parent to live with another weekly goes against every natural fibre of their being.

Natural desires “carry us to partiality, pride, revenge, and the like” are contrary to the laws governing a social contract (Hobbes 79). Without direction and guidance, our primitive and natural desires will govern society. Some organization of laws need to be put in place to direct humankind’s natural passions in an organized, conservative way. If men could consent to common laws such as justice there would be no need for civil government; however, man cannot agree on a common wealth and, as a result, governmental bodies are created. If there was a common sense of justice there would be no need for a government but people are different and need a common leader to guide them. However, if the governing body of the society has unethical laws regulating society then society will not run to its full potential and it will be tainted. By acknowledging that a government can be corrupt, Hobbes is illustrating the dystopian potential when entering into a social contract.

Another philosopher centrally concerned with the social contract, John Locke, describes a state of nature as the natural state of men wherein they have “perfect freedom to order actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending on the will of any other man. A state also of equality, wherein all power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another” (Locke 3-4). Locke’s conception of a state of nature depicts a situation wherein people have complete liberty to conduct one’s life

as they see fit. The state of society is communal and equal and all members of society work for the equality within society. Therefore, when men live together with no rules they are living in a similar manner to “that of beasts [...] so lay[ing] a foundation for perpetual disorder, and mischief, tumult, sedition and rebellion” (Locke 2-3). Quite simply, Locke is arguing that people deserve life, liberty and property. Therefore, governments need to be created in order to protect the lives of individuals, ensure they are free to prosper and enforce a system of laws that reward efforts to improve society.

There are various considerations about the result of an apocalyptic cataclysm but one version of the apocalypse results in anarchy for the remnants of humanity. A warlike state occurs in which every man fears for his life and will stop at nothing to survive (Locke). Therefore, it makes sense that “it being reasonable and just, I [man] should have the right to destroy that which threatens me [him] with destruction: for, by the fundamental law of nature, man being to be preserved as much as possible [...] and one may destroy a man who makes war upon him [...] because such men are not under the ties of commonlaw reason, have no other rule, but that of force and violence, and so may be treated as beasts of prey” (Locke 9). Locke’s description of the state of nature is evident in *The Road*. The man has no other law to govern him except the will to protect his son and, as such, becomes akin to the lawless cannibals in his society by committing murder and theft.

A state of nature refers to “men living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth, with authority to judge between them, is properly the state of nature” (Locke 9). In such a natural state no one man has authority over another and “every man has a property in his own person” meaning that whatever labour one man undertakes in his own property for it is his own body that laboured for it (Locke 12). Thus, it becomes clear that Locke’s argument about the state of nature is that it is a “place where rational and free individuals can attain property though the labour of their bodies, but it is also an inconvenient place given the existence of the lazy and irrational few who steal the fruits of your labour” (Curtis 9). Therefore, a social contract is entered in order for men to maintain and preserve order and enforce the law of nature. Locke points out that the reversion to the state of nature will always result in those who take advantage of diligent members of society.



The first record of human entities on earth are Adam and Eve from the Bible. Locke suggests that “Adam was created a perfect man, his body and mind in full possession of their strength and reason, and so was capable, from the first instant of his being to provide for his own support and preservation, and govern his actions according to the dictates of the law of reason which God had implanted upon him. From him the world is peopled with his descendents, who are all born infants, weak and helpless, without knowledge or understanding” (Locke 21). Therefore, after an apocalypse has eradicated contemporary society, what is left are akin to the infants Locke describes as Adam’s descendents. They are “ignorant and without the use of reason” (Locke 21). Man needs to enter into a social contract to relieve this ignorance and narrative can aid in remedying this ignorance by providing a site of ethics and history from which to draw.

Men in a state of nature can develop into a civilization if they have a “composition and agreement amongst themselves, by ordaining some kind of government public, and by yielding themselves subject thereunto, that unto whom they granted authority to rule and govern, by them the peace, tranquillity, and happy estate of the rest might be procured” (Locke 34). Therefore, Locke emphasizes that “civil government is the proper remedy for the inconveniences of the state of nature” (Locke 7). However, it is not just a formal agreement of sorts that puts an end to the state of nature but the “agreeing together mutually to enter into one community, and make one body politic” (Locke 7).

When one man was put into the authoritarian position, his subjects soon found this to be problematic because the “thing which they had devised for a remedy, did indeed but increase the sore which it should have cured. They saw, that to live by one man’s will, became the cause of all men’s misery” (Locke 42). It cannot be assumed that “absolute power purifies men’s blood, and corrects the baseness of human nature” and it must be acknowledged that a person in power has a destructive potential and history shows this (Locke 34).

The purpose of a government is to uphold and protect the natural rights of men. The government has a fiduciary power to act towards one end, that being the common good of society. If government acts in opposition to this end, the relationship of trust between them and the governed

can be forfeited and the authority devolved back into society. This will then replace the authority into the hands of whomever they believe will uphold the supreme condition for entering into a social contract initially: the common good of society; “thus the community may be said in this respect to be always the supreme power, but not considered under any form of government” (Locke 57).

Therefore, there is a complex relationship between a state of nature and the social contract theory as outlined in Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government*. For laws limit freedom, yet, without laws people may use their freedom unethically and, as such, need laws to guide them. This is portrayed in *The Road* – the father and son are free to live as they please and survive according to the fruits of their own labour; but there are “bad guys” in the novel who use their freedom unethically and so laws need to be put in place to protect the greater community such as the father and son (McCarthy 7).

The father and son in *The Road* reflect an aspect of Jean Jacques Rousseau’s theory regarding the social contract. Rousseau describes his idea of the first and most natural example of structure in society. He suggests that the family structure should provide a starting point from which to draw when trying to recreate a social structure. The father and mother are the governing body to their children as the children remain connected to their family by a necessity for preservation. This need soon ceases as the children reach their independence provided by adulthood. They can either remain in the family structure, by choice, or they can move away from the family structure and by their own discretion create their own new family structure.

Rousseau’s deliberation about the social contract theory concerns how to combine individual freedom with political authority: “the problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each will associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before” (Rousseau 8). Rousseau advocates that because all men observe the same conditions then all men should be able to enjoy the same rights; therefore, as a people they choose a governing body to make the law but this does not hold the governing body superior for the law they make needs to be applicable to all. Laws are the conditions of a social contract and the people who are subject to

such laws are the “author” (Rousseau 24). Rousseau formulates a concept called “general will” (Rousseau 10). This concept advocates the common good for the state as a whole. In practising general will people are correctly valuing the collective good of all over their own personal good. To Rousseau, the laws should reflect the general will ensuring that individual freedom is upheld while acting in the interests of the whole society.

The state of nature as defined by Rousseau refers to a hypothetical, prehistoric time uncorrupted by society and is not as dark as described by Hobbes. Rather Rousseau reveres the state of nature for the freedom it grants people unencumbered by the political authority of the state. Rousseau claims that “man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains” (Rousseau 1). This illustrates how Rousseau believes that a governing body acts restrictively in the same way chains do. Man is born physically free without the constraints of a repressive state and the domination of other men. Man is born free to rely on in his own beliefs. However, Rousseau also acknowledges that in such a state of nature there is little moral guidance and, therefore, there is a need to move from this state of nature to a social contract.

It is not possible to stay in a state of nature (Rousseau). The primitive condition cannot be maintained. For example, cannibalism cannot be maintained or else the remnants of humanity will perish. Therefore, Rousseau (8) affirms that there needs to be a move into some sort of civilization: “I suppose men to have reached the point at which the obstacles in the way of their preservation in the state of nature show their power of resistance to be greater than the resources at the disposal of each individual for his maintenance in that state. That primitive condition can then subsist no longer; and the human race would perish unless it changed its manner of existence”. Therefore, the theory of the social contract provides a solution to the state of nature by creating an association that unites men, by both defending and protecting the community of people, as well as their property, and allowing men to behave as directed by the law while they still remain free to obey themselves (Rousseau).

In describing government, Rousseau (37) proposes that “every free action is produced by the concurrence of two causes; one moral, i.e., the will which determines the act; the other physical, i.e., the power which executes it”. He then goes on to suggest that it is the place of the government

and the people to come to an agreement about laws and concurrently the government must perpetuate the laws and the people must abide by them. If this particular concurrence of causes does not occur then disorder will replace stability (Rousseau). If the government does not preside according to the greater interests of society then it is the people's right to overthrow said government and re-elect one that will serve to benefit society.

The natural propensity of the government is contraction because the "body politic, as well as the human body, begins to die as soon as it is born, and carries in itself the causes of destruction" (Rousseau 60). Constitutions inevitably terminate (the history of Rome and Sparta have demonstrated as such) and some persevere more than others; but certainly something unforeseen will bring about the collapse of any constitution. In *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, they enter into a social contract for a few thousand years before the governing body initiates a war and ultimately causes the second demise of humankind.

The clauses of the social contract, although never formally laid down, are everywhere the same and tacitly accepted as convention. Upon the violation of the social contract, man would willingly renounce his conventional liberty for his natural liberty. This notion is problematic in the case of *The Book of Dave* for what is conventional to them is a distorted, broken familial model and what is natural is today's conservative family model where parents live together and raise their children together, not separately. This demonstrates the power of narrative for their family model is based upon a severely broken family arrangement.

Rousseau affirms that by entering into a social contract it is not for fear of safety, as Hobbes and Locke suggest, but rather for the fulfilment of civil freedom. For if all individuals in society "together with all his rights, to the whole community; for in the first place, as each gives himself absolutely, the conditions are the same for all; and this being so no one has any interest in making them burdensome to others" (Rousseau 9). If all individuals behaved according to their rights, there would be no need for a superior judge because a moral, collective body would share a common will, identity and life. Rousseau (9) describes this process of entering into the social contract as a "mutual undertaking" as it not only involves an association between the public and the individual but also with the individual themselves. This is why the social contract allows for

civil freedom; once united into one body, “it is impossible to offend against one of the members without attacking the body, and still more to offend against the body without the members resenting it. As a result, duty and interest equally oblige the two contracting parties to give each other help; and the same men should seek to combine, in their double capacity, all the advantages dependent upon that capacity” (Rousseau 10). Therefore, Rousseau is stating that an individual must choose to live according to their rights; but this is problematic when considering that in a post-apocalyptic milieu, they have no idea what basic human rights may be; thus, making it more difficult to enter a social contract.

The course man takes from the state of nature to a civil state evokes noteworthy changes in man “by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct and giving his actions the morality they had formerly lacked” (Rousseau 12). As a result, man cannot act on his physical impulses alone for he has to take into account the consequences of his actions for the greater community. He is forced to use reasoning to inhibit his primitive instincts and he transforms from an “unimaginative animal [...] [Into] an intelligent being and a man” (Rousseau 12). He may lose his natural liberty but gains civil liberty and proprietorship over all his possessions (Rousseau). In relinquishing some of the advantages prescribed by the state of nature men will gain other advantages in entering a social contract.

Such advantages include a sense of morality. The “immovable keystone” of forming a constitution is morality for it “forms the real constitution of the state, takes on every day new powers, when other laws decay or die out, restores them or takes their place, keeps a people in the ways in which it was meant to go, and insensibly replaces authority by the force of habit” (Rousseau 38). Narrative provides the “immovable keystone” of morality by representing an ethical code (Rousseau 38).

The final approach to the social contract theory is that of John Rawls. Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* provides a political and ethical philosophy of the social contract theory. In a collection of essays regarding the social contract theory edited by Paul Kelly and David Boucher, it is suggested that Rawls’ ideas about the social contract theory restate and expand on those of early social contract theory philosopher Immanuel Kant. Both philosophers build on the idea that morality is superior

to politics; thus, reinforcing the concept of social justice. John Rawls uses an experimental technique in *A Theory of Justice* to consider the social contract: “imagine yourself not knowing anything particular about yourself, your attributes, your talents, your position in society, and then imagine yourself choosing principles of justice” (Curtis 120). Rawls used the social contract to better understand the concept of social justice and the nature thereof: “the primary subject of justice is the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation” (Rawls 6). Rawls does not believe that the original concept of the social contract is merely entry into a government organized society but rather a society as guided by principles of justice as the foundation of the society. By choosing principles of justice the movement from a state of nature into a social contract takes place because such justice principles will become the foundation for the creation of a political community. Rawls’ largest concern when considering principles of justice is fairness. He asserts that “the principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance” (Rawls 11).

Rawls’s notion of ignorance refers to the individuals in society not knowing their position in society, their social status, the wealth of their natural assets, the abilities such as their intelligence or even their psychological propensities. If society is structured in this way then “no one is in a position to tailor principles to his advantage” (Rawls 121). This is evident in various characters in each of the four novels such as the simpletons in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, the motos in *The Book of Dave*, the Hamsters in *Riddley Walker*, and the cannibals in *The Road*. By not being aware of themselves and their own capabilities, these characters are unable to make themselves superior to others. Rather, they consider people equally. By not knowing such details about oneself, the likelihood of making one class better than the other is slim. As such, society becomes completely equal and, as a result, is able to objectively decide upon a set of justice principles that will aid in the entering of the social contract. The constraints resulting from ignorance make individuals unable to choose principles that advantage them at the expense of other people as they are unable to value themselves above anyone else (Kelly and Boucher). Therefore, Rawls believes that this egalitarian state deems the initial choice fair, resulting in the implementation of fair principles for social co-operation (Kelly and Boucher). Thus, reaffirming the idea that justice or morality ought to be impartial.

*A Theory of Justice* has marked a rebirth of normative political theory owing to Rawls' use of the metaphor of society as a "fair agreement" (Kelly and Boucher 8). Rawls does not use the social contract theory to describe the origin of political authority but rather to portray a form of political association – by describing a just society as an ideal society. The principles of justice ought to be chosen on fair terms in which there is social co-operation and whereby no one individual will benefit from such terms over another. In a study on Rawlsian Philosophy, Samuel Freeman proposes that by appealing to the social contract tradition Rawls derives a concept of justice that is compatible with the ideals and values of a democratic society. Freeman advocates his opinion that Rawls' preoccupation with the principles of justice is because Rawls' believes justice to be within reach of and compatible with human nature. Rawls also indicates that justice and fairness is an intrinsic aspect of human good (Freeman). Therefore, if people are able to instil principles of justice, they are able to enter into a social contract that will endorse human good.

The primary condition of entering into a Rawlsian social contract is electing fair people to instil a sense of justice. Only once principles of justice are defined may a constitution with laws and legislature be founded in accordance with the chosen principles of justice. Rawls asserts that by entering into a social contract based purely on choosing a governmental body is just an act of putting oneself under the control of another; therefore, the individual has no rights of their own but the rights of those whom they have elected to govern their society. Hence, there is a need for a social model of justice so that society is not merely under the control of a government but each individual has their own moral attributes, thus, resulting in a social contract. Rawls' social contract theory demonstrates the practical necessity of impartiality.

Although the four philosophers have various theories about the social contract their underlying premise is the same: that society, without some sort of functional moral code, will remain in a primitive state of nature. Some movement into a social contract needs to take place in order to become a civilization by drawing from a structure; be it familial, governmental or by reasoning with oneself to inhibit natural primitive desires for the greater good of the community. The social contract theory proves that it is difficult to become a flourishing civilization.

Immanuel Kant's study into the social contract theory illustrates why social contracts are so difficult to achieve, even in today's society. People are so vastly different, with different needs and different goals; thus, creating a government and society remains a problematic challenge. This is why narrative becomes important when trying to enter a social contract. Theories regarding the social contract encompass ideas of social responsibility and social justice. Narrative can provide a site of ethics from which to draw when entering a social contract in order to enact such a social conscience. In the remnants of a destroyed world narrative becomes a powerful tool in dictating what type of society may emerge.

The theory behind the social contract is important because the social contract deals with how a society becomes a civilization. This research aims to investigate the role narrative plays in this process of moving from a savage, primitive state of living into a civilized one. The concept of a civilization relates the idea of a complex, advanced society like we have today but also alludes to great ancient civilizations that flourished centuries ago such as Ancient Greece or Rome. These civilizations have left us with a legacy from which we have progressed socially, economically, technologically, culturally and politically. The knowledge and information about such ancient civilizations has led to the creation of the advanced society in which we live today. The records of the past provide a drawing point from which contemporary society has developed. This clearly illustrates the importance of narrative. In saying this, it is important to note that narrative can be misused and, therefore, can be both reconstructive and destructive. It provides the foundation for orchestrating the move from a state of nature into a social contract owing to its ability to provide a site of ethics and a historical guide.

There are many aspects of society that differentiate between a primitive and a civilized society. Characteristics such as political organization, settlement patterns, social hierarchy, economic patterns, religion and literacy. The way in which these characteristics function in society can make a great distinction between primitive and civilized societies. For example, a primitive society may use the simple bartering and trading system as an economic model while in civilized societies the production and distribution of resources is far more complex. What may guide a primitive society in how aspects like these function in society is narrative. For example, the social hierarchy in *The Book of Dave* exists in formalized social strata owing to the discovery of Dave's ludicrous book.



Dave's messy divorce and his custody battle give lawyers authority, thus, suggesting that lawyers are powerful. Therefore, in the post-apocalyptic society lawyers are high in the social hierarchy. There are varying degrees of social status. The opulence of the lawyer and other aristocratic workers, such as the taxman and the armed retainers of the lawyers, is contrasted with the poor in New London. This social status exists as a result of Dave's book. This clearly illustrates the significant role that narrative has over how a society behaves in post-apocalyptic society. With no other guiding principles, narrative may be the only example of prior life that post-apocalyptic society has. Thus, rendering narrative an important and influential tool with both utopian and dystopian potential.

All four novels depict ways in which narrative can be both reconstructive and deconstructive when entering into a social contract. *A Canticle for Leibowitz* depicts the positive role narrative plays in the technological progression of society after an apocalypse. However, it also depicts the destructive role that such knowledge can play if misused. *The Road* portrays how stories are able to instill a sense of humanity and an ethical compass in a devastated post-apocalyptic wasteland. *Riddley Walker* and *The Book of Dave* illustrates how knowledge, if misinterpreted, can hinder the progress to enter a social contract having created a society based upon a perverted religion.

Therefore, it is clear that after an apocalypse it is imperative for people to enter into a social contract; if not, society will remain in a primitive state of nature. Post-apocalyptic fiction provides a means for writers to imagine how society would be following an apocalyptic cataclysm and how, or if, they will recover. With narrative as a guide, post-apocalyptic society may have a chance at entering into a social contract but there is also the possibility that narrative can lead to another demise of humankind. It is also evident that the kind of social contract that a post-apocalyptic society is reliant on knowledge about the past.

In conclusion, the theories about the social contract illustrate the varying ways in which a society, having been given an opportunity to begin again, owing to an apocalypse, can rebuild civilization. Curtis (4) suggests that the post-apocalypse allows for "utopian imagining" as an apocalypse provides an opportunity for "starting over". It is also clear that narrative plays a significant role in how and why a social contract comes into existence. It can be done so successfully if narrative is

used as a tool from which to learn; however, there is also a possibility that narrative can be used for evil's desire to overcome the vestiges of good. Therefore, it is important that narrative is present when trying to progress from a state of nature into a social contract in which there is an opportunity for renewal and reconstruction in society.

## **The Importance of Narrative**

Narrative is of the utmost significance to humanity. The role narrative plays in the four novels suggests that storytelling has the power to reconstruct a civilized society or it can be destructive to civilization. Narrative has the ability to restructure a coherent, functional social order but narrative can be misinterpreted and perverted, which portrays a darker, more threatening side of narrative. Narrative is important because it provides a history and a context of the world from which survivors of an apocalypse may draw when trying to reconstruct civilization. For survivors of an apocalypse will have no such knowledge of the prior world, and, as a result, the fragments of history that remain can provide a basis upon which to rebuild society. Narrative, for the purposes of this dissertation, can be defined as storytelling in the broadest sense; meaning that fictional or non-fictional storytelling, archives of history in the form of stories, blueprints, historical records, or any form of written work, regardless of its subject matter, is considered to be part of the term narrative. Ultimately, narrative tells a story; and, as Miller Mair so eloquently puts it in a study of the relationship between narrative and psychology, “stories are the womb of personhood. Stories make and break us. Stories sustain us in times of trouble and encourage us towards an end we would not otherwise envision” (Mair 2). Thus, narrative, in this dissertation, considers a broad scope of textuality that gives meaning to the world. The role narrative plays is significant for it represents a site of ethics and hope. An apocalyptic moment leads to a disillusionment of social structures and narrative can provide the remedy for these structures by purporting the moral imagination inherent in narrative.

Therefore, narrative is an important aspect of culture. Stories are of ancient origin, existing in ancient cultures and their myths. Stories are a ubiquitous component of human communication and a means with which to transfer information and knowledge from one generation to another. Narrative has many forms. The broadest being fiction and non-fiction, yet, it branches out further into literature, poetry, myths, legends, and in other forms of human creativity and art such as theatre, music, paintings and sculptures. Various forms of narrative can be used to guide humanity’s values, ethics, cultural norms and differences, communal identity, and cultural history. Owen Flanagan, a consciousness researcher, writes that, "evidence strongly suggests that humans

in all cultures come to cast their own identity in some sort of narrative form. We are inveterate storytellers” (Flanagan 198).

Historically, storytelling has been both a habit and tradition of the human species. Past generations have handed down lessons in order to leave a legacy of knowledge which descendants may utilize; thus, narrative functions as a tool to distribute knowledge in a social context. Narrative predates writing. The earliest forms of narrative were either oral or were pictorially recorded on anything from cave walls to pottery and stone. One of the roles of storytelling is to explain creation and from there cultural values, norms and ethics grew; therefore, deeming stories significant in conveying social philosophies such as justice, rights, and social obligations. Storytellers were associated with teaching, healing, guiding, and leading. As such, stories embody hope and can be used to transmit cultural values; therefore, aiding in the development of complex reasoning. Today narrative has extended beyond the traditional forms, such as folktales and mythology, but now represents history, personal narrative, political commentary, and evolving cultural norms.

The ability to pass down information aids in the creation of communal knowledge which facilitates in the transfer of knowledge and information, as Carpenter’s essay entitled, *The Importance of Storytelling*, states. As a result, the transference of knowledge has become one of the most important traditions that human nature possesses. Its importance lays in the fact that each narrative passed down from one generation to the next contains a lesson which can instruct the audience. Stories have the ability to bridge divides, whether they are cultural, age, gender, or linguistic divisions. Human knowledge is based upon narrative as stories mirror human thought. Narrative is multi-layered and, as such, there is underlying knowledge inherent in narrative. Stories transmit lessons such as love, hope, forgiveness, justice, and aspiration in order to transmit and preserve cultural values; thus, narrative functions as a reflection of the world and, as such, is able to encompass the distinction between goodness and evil. Carpenter asserts that narrative represents an example of what it is that can be done to improve society, what it means to be human, as well as how to make morally correct choices.

In the past, storytelling was mainly done via an oral medium, thus, exposing stories to change depending on the storyteller, which allows for the story to be ever-changing and evolving

(Carpenter). Carpenter affirms that “this fluidity of identity gives storytelling its importance as a tradition and as a tool for teaching”. This is owing to the fact that every version of a single story told differently with every recounting has an infinite number of lessons that can be taught (Carpenter). Therefore, narrative’s ability to teach anything in an endless number of ways means that narrative can be tailored to any audience making it a highly influential, traditional aspect of society (Carpenter).

Therefore, narrative has an important cultural function, as is also emphasized by John Stephens and Robyn McCallum in their book exploring the retelling of stories. In *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature*, Stephens and McCallum suggest that beyond the guise of being merely a story, narrative offers “aspects of social heritage, transmitting many of a culture’s central values and assumptions and a body of shared allusions and experiences. The existential concerns of a society find concrete images and symbolic forms in traditional stories of many kinds, offering a cultural inheritance subject to social conditioning and modification through the interaction of various retellings” (Stephens and McCallum 3). As such, literature acts as a “crucial repository of humanist ideology” as it attempts “to cultivate ethical and cultural values which would function as a replacement for or surrogate of older forms of socially inscribed transcendent meaning, especially religion” (Stephens and McCallum 15).

Thus, it can be said that narrative is at the root of all transformation and the centrality of human experience. Peter Ludwig Berger, a sociologist known for his work in the sociology of knowledge, proposes that human life is narratively rooted because human beings construct their lives and shape their world in terms of these groundings and memories as provided by narrative (Berger and Luckmann). *Narrative and Stories in Adult Teaching and Learning* by Marsha Rossiter emphasizes that narrative enables its audience to imagine new perspectives, therefore, inviting both a transformative and an empathetic experience. This results in community building and the reinforcement of the bonds of shared experience according to Amy E. Spaulding’s *The Art of Storytelling: Telling Truths Through Telling Stories*.

However, there are problematic concerns about the truthfulness of narrative despite its significant role in community building. The theoretical framework surrounding the importance of narrative is

largely centred on the debate of whether or not narrative is a meaningful representation of reality. David Carr's *Time, Narrative and History* (1991) and *Narrative and the Real World: An Argument for Continuity* (2001) argues that narrative has the ability to portray reality in a meaningful manner while various other theorists oppose this notion. This dissertation aims to argue that the truthfulness of narrative is irrelevant. Narrative, whether truthfully representing the past realistically or not, represents a moral code and it is a moral code that provides a basis on which to build a civilization.

Jean-Paul Sartre's *La Nausée*, a canonical work in existentialism, displays "the crisis between fiction and reality, the tension or dissonance between paradigmatic form and contingent reality" (Kermode 133). Sartre discusses the "falsities imposed upon him by the fictive power of words". Upon reading a novel which falsified reality, Sartre states that he "nearly renounced literature" (Kermode 134). Thus, Kermode asks the question, "how can novels, by telling lies, convert existence into being?" (Kermode 134). This probes the debate of the significance of narrative as to how one uses "the relation between fictions [...] in our existential crises, and fictions as we construct them in books" (Kermode 135). For, as Sartre states, "novels are not life, but they owe our power upon us [...] to the fact that they are somehow like life" (Kermode 135).

In accordance with Sartre's concern that fiction may produce a falsified version of reality, Louis O. Mink, Paul Ricoeur and Roland Barthes, whose fields of research deal with the truthfulness of narrative, are too all generally of the opinion that narratives are "fictional stories [that] do not represent reality because what they portray [...] never happened" (Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* 13). Inevitably, when researching the role narrative plays in people's lives, the truthfulness thereof becomes an issue. For example, in *The Book of Dave*, the people of England base their society on an unrealistic representation of the previous civilization as outlined in Dave's book. To certain characters, such as Michelle and the psychiatrists and psychologists that treat Dave's deliria, this representation would be untruthful. However, it can be argued that at the time of its inception this was Dave's truth. At the time he wrote these mad rantings he believed every word he wrote and considered it the truth. This clearly illustrates the obfuscation of the notion of truth and how it is perceived.

As a result of this difficulty for fiction to portray truthfulness, Mink clearly describes his belief that narrative is incapable of representing history because narrative is a “product of imaginative construction which cannot defend its claim to truth by any accepted procedure of argument or authentication” (Mink, *Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument* 145). He goes on to assert that “stories are not lived but told” (Mink, *History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension* 557); therefore, stories can be misinterpreted and can produce a false version of reality. To Mink, an actual lived experience cannot be misinterpreted whereas a tale told can be.

In his study of interpretation and his contribution to the field of hermeneutics, Paul Ricoeur, believes that fictional and historical narratives “enlarge reality, expanding our notion of ourselves and of what is possible” (Carr, *Narrative and The Real World: An Argument for Continuity* 146). As an implication of this enlargement of reality, narrative becomes a manipulated version of the truth. He regards both fictive and historical narratives as works of the creative imagination as opposed to imitations of reality. Narrative should recover and restore meaning and he questions fiction’s ability to do so if it is not a truthful representation of human life.

Therefore, “art knows no static” and, as a result, cannot truthfully represent reality as suggested by Barthes in his introduction to the structural analysis of narrative (Carr, *Narrative and The Real World: An Argument for Continuity* 145). Thus, he too is not convinced that narrative is able to represent reality. The reason for these theorists’ convictions is that narrative, and particularly fictive narrative, has a stable plot and structure with which they are written. These characteristics give narratives a certain sense of stability; once written they are unalterable. Reality is ever-changing and lacks stability. Narratives are also subjective and may not portray events factually and objectively. Thus, these theorists question the relation between “art” and “life,” and they all agree that “the one is constitutionally incapable of representing the other” (Carr, *Narrative and The Real World: An Argument for Continuity* 145).

In opposition to the notion that fiction cannot adequately and truthfully represent reality, David Carr questions the use of the word “reality” in these arguments. He suggests that reality is not simply the physical reality of the world but “the very activity of ‘humanizing’ physical events, which is portrayed in stories and histories” (Carr, *Narrative and The Real World: An Argument for*

*Continuity* 146). It is this process of humanization that occurs in narrative that is significant because narrative affects one's view of reality; if the narratives, from which post-apocalyptic societies draw conclusions about how the world once was and how it should be, are in a way representative of a moral code it is irrelevant whether or not they are truthful for the purpose of this dissertation. Carr suggests that Mink is untrue when he said that "stories are not lived but told" (557) for "they are told in being lived and lived in being told" (Carr, *Narrative and The Real World: An Argument for Continuity* 150). More simply, Carr is suggesting that stories cannot just be told. In order for a story to enter into the imagination, it has to be based on some kind of experience. To have experiences, one needs to live, and, by living, stories develop. Carr (*Narrative and The Real World: An Argument for Continuity* 150) explains this as "the actions and sufferings of life can be viewed as a process of telling ourselves stories, listening to those stories, acting them out, or living them through". It is through living human experiences that a moral code develops in these stories. Carr goes on to suggest that when telling stories the details and events may change owing to retrospective thought but this does not prove Mink's premise that stories cannot be lived. For retrospect does not falsify reality but rather allows for "an extension and refinement of a viewpoint inherent in action itself" which permits afterthought and insight into an action or event and this does not make a story untrue (Carr, *Narrative and The Real World: An Argument for Continuity* 150).

Therefore, the opposing theorists are correct in suggesting that narrative does not reflect reality; for narrative does far more than mere imitation. It imbues meaning onto events and humanizes them. This does not, however, affect their credibility. Rather, this characteristic makes narrative more powerful as it provides meaning and has the ability to make an impact. As Carr (*Narrative and The Real World: An Argument for Continuity* 155) so skilfully concludes, the power in stories lies in "envisaging new content, new ways of telling and living stories, and new kinds of stories, that history and fiction can be both truthful and creative in the best sense". Thus, the truthfulness of a narrative becomes irrelevant; rather, narrative needs to be purposeful in order to play a meaningful role in the reconstruction of society.

It is these arguments of narrative's ability to portray reality that is central to the argument in this dissertation; for if narrative can portray the reality before the apocalypse, then narrative can play



a significant role in either recreating or destroying a post-apocalyptic social contract. To play a positive role in reconstructing a social contract, the portrayal of reality before the apocalypse should be used didactically in order for the post-apocalyptic society to learn from the errors of their predecessors. The truthfulness of narratives is irrelevant because it is the moral code inherent in the narratives that is pivotal to portraying some ethical foundation for post-apocalyptic societies for rebuilding their future.

Narrative allows for the practice of imagining. In imagining via narrative post-apocalyptic society may be able to envision a future which would aid in the creation of a civilization; “it is too often forgotten that man is impossible without imagination, without the capacity to invent for himself a conception of life, to ‘ideate’ what character he is going to be” (Kermode 126). Therefore, fiction allows men to imagine and create a life from which to draw when trying to enter into a social contract. In this dissertation it is evident that narrative survives even apocalyptic cataclysms and lives on into post-apocalyptic society; and, not only does it survive an apocalypse, but is necessary in the post-apocalyptic society for some sort of resurrection of civilization.

In order for society to be resurrected after an apocalyptic cataclysm, there needs to be a means by which to move from the primitive state of nature into a civilized social contract. William Graham Sumner’s research into folkways has shown that anthropological and ethnographical studies have shown that the priority for primitive societies is to try survive the harsh environment of a state of nature (Sumner). In order to live, certain necessities are essential for survival. In a post-apocalyptic climate, the only way in which to discover such necessities is via trial and error. Post-apocalyptic societies have to endure alternate weather conditions to understand that shelter is a necessity; they have to starve to understand that hunting and eating are a necessity. Along such a course of discovering the necessities of survival, skills, habits, and routine developed; consequently becoming customs (Sumner). Customs become instinct and, as post-apocalyptic societies grow, these initial customs become tradition as the young learn them via imitation and, thus, folkways arise (Sumner). Such folkways provide for the necessities of living; they are “uniform, universal in the group, imperative and invariable” and as time progresses they become “more arbitrary, positive and imperative” which is why the ways of primitive societies depend on ancestry as a reason for their behaviour (Sumner 70).

A post-apocalyptic environment produces customs based on the common desire of the remnants of humanity to live and survival; thus, producing “habit in the individual and custom in the group” which is considered the highest form of originality and primitivism (Sumner 70). The common interest to survive and thrive among such uncivilized human beings exerts a societal force on every individual to adhere to such customs even though they may be expedient.

It can be assumed that after an apocalyptic moment has brought about destruction of the world, those who remain will have little or no archives of the past. As such, they are uncivilized and have to recreate society. Recurrent needs sculpt habit and custom. Narrative of the pre-apocalyptic world, in any form, can provide a source from which to draw. Narrative can aid in the development of the mental capacity of post-apocalyptic society and, as such, can assist with the progression from an uncivilized, brutish society into a social contract. Narrative can encourage the development of mental capacities through its capacity to evoke emotion. Studies into the *Narrative Form and the Construction of Psychological Science*, by Kenneth J. and Mary M. Gergen, state that although different forms of narrative vary in their capacity to arouse or compel people they are still able to make a significant impact (Gergen and Gergen). This is because narrative is assumed to involve mental and emotional processes; thus, playing a role in people’s behaviour. The role narrative plays in moral edification allows storytelling to facilitate in ethical inquiries. Narrative is valuable for it shapes the perception of norms and values, therefore, helping the cultivation of the mental capacities, and the resultant behaviour, of humanity.

Therefore, it can be said that a story represents a symbolic “account of actions of human beings... central to the plot structure are human predicaments and attempted resolutions” (Sarbin 3). A psychologist focusing on the subject of narrative psychology, Theodore R. Sarbin, used the importance of stories as a means by which to understand human behaviour. His book, featuring various essays on narrative psychology entitled *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct*, proposes that human psychology has a narrative structure. He coins the term “narratory principle” which he describes as the idea that human beings think, perceive, imagine, interact, and make moral choices according to narrative structures (Sarbin 12). Therefore, stories reflect human sentiments, goals, purposes, valuations and judgements. Stories represent many

aspects of human life, from hopes and dreams to memories and rites of passage, such as marriages. These facets of the human experience are guided by narrative plots and are structured to tell people's stories. As such, storytelling is a "pervasive activity" and is still an "extant practice of guiding moral behaviour" (Sarbin 14). Stories are used to both enlighten and entertain.

Stories comprise information that is able to educate humanity. Alasdair's study on virtues describes the narrator experience: "It is through hearing stories about wicked stepmothers, lost children, good but misguided kings, wolves that suckle twin boys, youngest sons who receive no inheritance but must make their own way in the world and eldest sons who waste their inheritance on riotous living and go into exile to live with the swine, that children learn or mislearn both what a child and what a parent is, what the cast of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are. Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words. Hence there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources. Mythology, in its original sense, is at the heart of things" (MacIntyre 251). Thus, stories elicit a sense of good versus evil; infusing children with a guiding moral principle.

From this, one may draw conclusions about behaviours and values. Sumner asserts that habitual behaviour is not consciously acknowledged as habit or custom for an extended period of time until which it can be recognized as conventional behaviour. He goes on to suggest that a higher level of mental capacity is only developed as time passes; and, only when such a mental capacity is reached, would a post-apocalyptic society be able to distinguish what has become the norm of their society and, from there, be able to deduce rules and establish some sort of order. This claim suggests that customs and habits created to produce a civilization "are like products of natural forces which men consciously set in operation" (Sumner 71). Thus, the life of human beings is controlled by the folkways imparted from one generation to the next from the earliest existence of race; if the initial folkways of a race can influence the entire development of a society (Sumner). This portrays the need for guidance and narrative provides a site of ethical and educational direction.

As powerful as narrative is in terms of recreating a society it also has the opposite potential: the potential to destroy a society. The misinterpretation leads to bad application. By misunderstanding narrative, conflict and uncertainty can arise. Misunderstanding or the misuse of narrative leads to a lack of organizational structure or a distorted organizational structure. Information and knowledge is the foundation upon which people and societies base their decisions, behaviour and formulate their worldviews; therefore, it is evident that the misinterpretation of narrative leads to negative consequences which is clear in Craig Silverman's article on misinterpreting the media (Silverman). The misuse of narrative may create erroneous belief systems that are counter to the society's best interests. This can cause ethical issues which can lead to the moral deterioration of society.

In the following novels, the destructive potential of narrative is illustrated. In *The Book of Dave*, the society is based upon a madman's rantings that create a distorted social structure. In *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, the scientific knowledge inherent in the memorabilia is used to recreate nuclear war. In *Riddley Walker* the misinterpreted knowledge of an old painting uses narrative as a political praxis. As knowledge, being passed down from one generation to the next, it would seem that society would be able to learn from their predecessors, yet, it is clear that such knowledge can be misinterpreted and misused damagingly.

Inherent in narrative is power, authority, knowledge, ideology and identity which allows for narrative to be used destructively as is outlined by Kirsten Langellier in her journal article on *Personal Narratives* (Langellier). Particular narratives can serve destructive interests that do not necessarily benefit the community and the greater good thereof. The ethical duty of storytelling includes empathy and representation which aids in the understanding of stories. There are negative consequences of violating the representation of storytelling rights which affects not only the individual but also social order. Narrative is a powerful tool for advocacy and agency and, thus, has the power to "legitimizes and dominates or resists and empowers" (Langellier 266).

If knowledge is misused by man the effects are lasting; particularly in a post-apocalyptic society when information is limited. The reason for this is because society tends to make casual inferences based on whatever available information. For example, in *The Book of Dave* the only information

available in their society is the book of the delusional Dave. As a result of this being the only information available, society bases their organizational structure on that of Dave's book leading to a distorted societal order; thus, illustrating the destructive potential of storytelling. The reliance on whatever information is available affects beliefs and attitudes and will continue to do so unless an alternative causal explanation is discovered; such as the second book of Dave, which appears to be just a rumour rectifying the mad rantings of the first book. The people of Dave's society do not call into question the credibility of their source of knowledge for it is the only remnant of the prior civilization from which to draw. Conflict arises with the organizational structure of society as it opposes natural human instinct. It is natural human instinct for a husband and wife to live together and raise a child together; but, because this society is founded upon a distorted family model, a conflict occurs and, thus, trust within their founder erodes and societal norms are called into question. This can lead to a possible revolution as is evident in Carl, Symun and Antonë who represent the "Antidave" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 195). Their dissenting beliefs, based on the rumoured second book of Dave, is a threat to their current social structure. If they were to implement the teachings of the second book there could be a possible positive change in the society of England.

Much like Dave's book in *The Book of Dave*, *Riddley Walker's* society only has one vestige of the past available to them from which to make inferences about prior civilization. With no other vestige of history, except for the description of a fifteenth-century wall painting of Canterbury Cathedral, this society founds themselves based upon misinterpreted stories of the war and the Old Catholic Saint Eustace which supplies the narrative context for the Eusa puppet show. The Eusa show retells the nuclear annihilation of much of the world and aims at acculturating and entertaining the people of Cambry. The underlying knowledge of the Eusa show purports the recipe for gunpowder which is eventually discovered and used for political agendas; it ultimately has harmful consequences for Riddley's society. Goodparley and Orfing use the Eusa show as a means to manipulate society for political advancement. This has a damaging effect on society and the source of information becomes corrupted. As the Eusa show is the foundation of this society, it is the instrument that informs the people's daily lives and their belief system. Being the only pool of knowledge in this society, the show should provide a moral and ethical guide for society but the information within it is being misused and so it has negative consequences on society.

In comparison, *A Canticle for Leibowitz* depicts how information is not misinterpreted but rather misused. In a time of illiteracy, the monks who preserve the memorabilia are unaware of the contents of what they are preserving, yet, they recognize the importance of knowledge. The scientific knowledge as preserved in the memorabilia is used by man to recreate nuclear war. Rather than using the information to learn about the previous civilization and how it came to its demise, man recreates the weaponry that caused the apocalyptic destruction of former humankind. Men misuse the narrative they have available to them resulting in severely negative ramifications; ultimately causing mankind to perish once again. However, the novel ends with the memorabilia being sent into space with the hope that man will be able to once again rebuild humanity even if not on planet earth.

While *A Canticle for Leibowitz* depicts a hope for post-apocalyptic humanity, so does Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. In *The Road* it is the father's stories that he tells his son which provide the narrative that will ultimately aid in the recreation of civilization. Illiteracy is becoming prevalent in this society and oral knowledge is the main medium of information that survived the apocalypse. The father tells stories of an ethical and moral substance. These stories represent the boy and the man's connection to the past civilization; the boy's last remaining link to humanity. The father's stories provide the only hope for both the boy and humanity. The stories the father tells his son have vestiges of the past and remain a site of ethics for the boy. It is through this narrative that the boy understands the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. The father often refers to the "fire" that they are carrying (McCarthy 128). This fire refers to the metaphorical flame that the father's stories ignite in the son. The son will one day use this flame of knowledge to aid in humanity's reconstruction. The father's stories elicit a claim made by a creative writing instructor, Robert McKee, stating in his book that "stories are the creative conversion of life itself into a more powerful, clearer, more meaningful experience. They are the currency of human contact" (McKee 82). The boy is able to make life a more meaningful experience through the knowledge of his father's stories and is able to cultivate a compassionate sense of humanity. By imparting this knowledge before his death the father is able to teach the son how to make meaningful human contact; this provides the hope that humanity will one day recover from the devastation of humankind.

Therefore, according to the four novels above, it is evident that narrative stimulates an ethical reflection in the sense that narrative evokes notions of ethical problems, social justice, social responsibility, and moral consequences. All four novels depict ways in which narrative's role plays a significant part in the reconstructive and destructive potential of societies in post-apocalyptic settings. *A Canticle for Leibowitz* depicts the positive role narrative plays in the technological progression of society after an apocalypse. However, it also depicts the destructive role that such knowledge can play if misused. *The Road* portrays how stories are able to instill a sense of humanity and ethicality in a devastated post-apocalyptic wasteland. *Riddley Walker* and *The Book of Dave* illustrate how knowledge, if misinterpreted, can hinder the progress to enter a social contract having created a society based upon a perverted religion. By providing a post-apocalyptic society with a historical record or vestiges of the past, narrative can provide a drawing point for future civilizations to begin to enter a social contract.

In an article on storytelling for *The Guardian*, Aleks Krotoski claims that “stories are memory aids, instruction manuals and moral compasses”. Stories help people make sense of their world. In a post-apocalyptic environment, stories will help society form various social systems that will aid in the renewal of civilization. Krotoski goes on to affirm that when stories are “enlisted by charismatic leaders and turned into manifestos, dogmas and social policy, they've been the foundations for religions and political systems”. This is clear in all four novels. The fragments of history are used as a basis for social structures in building a community.

Thus, it is evident that storytelling is able to play a role in the establishment of a community. Martha Nussbaum's inquiry into the role of narrative imagination, with regards to ethical questions, explores the role that the arts play in society and establishing a citizenship. She proposes that the arts allow humanity to cultivate “sympathetic imagination” which enables us to “comprehend the motives and choices of people different from ourselves”; thus, allowing us to accept differences of gender, ethnicity, religion, class and race (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* 85). She goes on to state that art, in all its forms, be it literature, music, dance, painting, sculpture and even architecture, is able to encourage “capacities of judgement and sensitivity” (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense*

of Reform in Liberal Education 86). Thus, art provides the key to understanding humanity. This understanding allows us to see how circumstances shape society and how such circumstances effect decision making within society; this in turn affects the formation of a community. As a result, narrative becomes essential for “moral interaction” (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* 90). Nussbaum’s main point of argument is that literature is able to cultivate compassion and it is compassion that allows one to view the world in a particularly moral manner. That is why exposing children to narrative aids in the development of society, for it creates compassionate beings which is “essential for civic participation and awareness” (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* 97). Thus, narrative is imperative for guiding society morally.

While some forms of art challenge conventional norms of society and do not evoke compassion, these forms of art are important too in encompassing moral lessons. Literature is able to “sustain us when we’re weak, deepen our understanding of history, expand our sense of what it’s possible to think and feel” (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* 106). Literature stimulates critical thinking about society, enhances scrutiny of our moral self-concept, and it can “wrest from our frequently obtuse and blunted imaginations an acknowledgment of those who are other than ourselves, both in concrete circumstance and even in thought and emotion” (Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* 111-112).

Therefore, it is important to acknowledge storytelling’s ability to evoke social change. An article about *The Importance of Storytelling for Social Change* by Simon Hodges claims that it is evident that narrative is able to connect with people’s deepest motivations and promote more radical action. Stories engage people at every level – not just in their minds but in their emotions, values and imaginations, which are the drivers of real change” (Hodges). Therefore, by engaging with humanity on so many levels narrative is able to lay the foundation for social transformation.

David Carr (*Time, Narrative and History* 65) states that “narrative is [...] a primary act of mind” and the form of narrative “is not a dress which covers something else but the structure inherent in human experience and action”. Narrative is inherent to daily life and in everything we do. If



narrative is misused, the consequences in a post-apocalyptic society can be destructive, but if used constructively, it can successfully bring about the reconstruction of the social contract; thus, allowing for the opportunity for the flourishing of civilization.

It is clear that narrative is a great source of knowledge and power. And despite apocalyptic moments that can eradicate humanity, stories will always endure. Author Margaret Atwood says of the resilience of narrative that “you’re never going to kill storytelling, because it’s built into the human plan. We come with it” (Atwood, *50 Best Quotes for Storytelling*). Therefore, narrative is ingrained in human nature. It is part of human identity and, therefore, necessary when trying to create a new social identity.

Narrative is described by Thomas Hobbes as “a profitable invention for continuing the memory of time past, and the conjunction of mankind, dispersed into so many, and distant regions of the Earth” (Hobbes 8). It is clear that narrative is the tool used to tell stories about the past and, as such, it is significant in a post-apocalyptic environment because it represents a site of ethics for the generations to come. Hopefully, through stories of the past, humanity can rekindle its moral compass and rebuild itself into a civilization. Without narrative in any form, there may be no hope at all for humanity. As Thomas Hobbes puts it, “there are few things that are incapable of being represented by fiction” (Hobbes 76). Thus, making narrative a significantly powerful tool; particularly when building a civilization.

## *A Canticle for Leibowitz* by Walter M. Miller Jr

*A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1960) is a post-apocalyptic work of fiction set about six hundred years after twentieth century civilization has been devastated by a global nuclear war, branded the “Flame Deluge”. The inception of the novel came about as Walter M. Miller Jr’s response to his own experience of the bombing of a monastery in Monte Cassino in the Second World War. Survivors of the flame deluge responded in a hostile manner to the culture of advanced knowledge and technology that led to the creation of nuclear weapons that brought about the war. During this violent backlash against intellectualism, which is known as the “Simplification” in the novel, anyone who invested their time in acquiring knowledge by reading was likely to be murdered by fierce hordes of illiterate “Simpletons” to prevent the threat of another war (Miller Jr. 63, 64). Books and scholarly institutions were burned for defending intellectualism and knowledge. Illiteracy became standard in this post-apocalyptic world save the monastic “Albertian Order of Leibowitz” where “for twelve centuries, a small flame of knowledge had been kept smouldering in the monasteries” (Miller Jr. 145).

Walter Miller’s novel portrays the horrors of a post-nuclear holocaust society which acts as a vehicle for the speculation about post-apocalyptic futures, as suggested in Thomas P. Dunn’s work “To Play the Phoenix: Medieval Images and Cycles of Rebuilding in Walter Miller’s *A Canticle For Leibowitz*”. Following the flame deluge, this society was plunged into a barbaric and primitive state of nature (Dunn). The novel distinctly illustrates how society rebuilds itself over a number of years following an apocalypse. In a three-part format the novel depicts a society of up to eighteen centuries in the future.

Isaac Edward Leibowitz, an electrical engineer, survived the war and dedicated his life to preserving knowledge by hiding books and smuggling them to safety. Once hidden safely in the Order’s abbey in the south-western American desert, the books were memorized and copied; they became known as the “memorabilia” (Miller Jr. 24). Although Leibowitz was ultimately martyred, the Leibowitzian Order later beatifies and canonizes him. The novel does not follow the story of Leibowitz himself but narrates the preservation, copying, and memorization of the books in the hope that, by protecting these texts, future generations will be able to reclaim forgotten science.

The memorabilia, safeguarded at the abbey, is referred to as “ancient sorcery” where “it is said that writings [...] of great power are hoarded at one of their abodes” (Miller Jr. 163). The monks’ unwavering faith in the memorabilia depicts how powerful the memorabilia is.

The story is structured in three parts titled: "Fiat Homo", "Fiat Lux", and "Fiat Voluntas Tua". The parts are separated by periods of six centuries each. Each section recalls the vicissitudes experienced by the Albertian Order, thus, developing a picture of human history over nearly two millennia as based around this particular monastery and its relationship with the world (Dunn). The monks do not always understand the validity of the documents and books which they copy and, by not giving privilege to a certain genre or subject, the monks have managed to preserve a vast and varied bank of knowledge; from the grocery list to the blueprints found by Brother Francis in “Fiat Homo”. Much of this first section is spent studying, copying, and preserving ancient texts in order to beatify Leibowitz. As observed by Thomas Reed Whissen, in his novel about *Classic Cult Fiction*, there seems to be a need for a mythical hero figure in this first part as the world has devalued meaning. The figure of Leibowitz becomes such a figure as they respect his duty of preserving texts in the “cause for human dignity and the sanctity of the soul” (Whissen 43). As such, the abbey labours to preserve all relics of the past world and even the Pope in the novel acknowledges that “without your [the abbey’s] work, the world’s amnesia might well be total. As the Church Mysticum Christi Corpus, a Body, so has your Order served as an organ of memory in that Body. We owe much to your Holy Patron and Founder” (Miller Jr. 111).

The second part, “Fiat Lux”, commences with a resurgence of intellectualism in a sort of Renaissance movement. Scholars such as Thon Taddeo, a mathematician and theoretical physicist, use the memorabilia to rediscover and reinvent material and technological civilization (Dunn). This results in the discovery of scientific knowledge which ultimately leads to the final section of the novel, “Fiat Voluntas Tua”. The final section illustrates how this scientific knowledge has once again resulted in a nuclear catastrophe. In a final attempt to continue their duty of preserving the memorabilia, the monks of the abbey of Saint Leibowitz participate in a mission, “Quo peregrinatur grex” (Miller Jr. 267), that sends a spaceship containing the memorabilia into the Centaurus star system which, by this time, has been partially colonized (Dunn).

Therefore, it is evident that the novel is concerned with the preservation of knowledge. This chapter explores how the safeguarding of the memorabilia represents the significance of narrative when rebuilding human civilization after the first nuclear war. The novel depicts how powerful knowledge is and the destructive or redemptive potential thereof depending on how such knowledge is used. Therefore, no matter what is maintained by the monks, R. C. Miessler, in his consideration of the role of libraries and memory in the novel, asserts that “in the deep recesses of the stacks lies a book, covered in dust, that may contain knowledge that could be used in decades or centuries to come, that will be part of the memory of our society” (Miessler 12).

Part of this knowledge preserved by the monks recalls the memory of the initial social collapse. The social collapse, having taken place centuries before the first part of the novel, is told via stories. Owing to the fact that there are no primary survivors of the war left, there are few first-hand accounts of what truly occurred to cause the social collapse. Thon Taddeo and abbot Dom Paulo discuss what appears to be a reading taken from an excerpt of the tale of the flame deluge from a biblical source. The abbot explains to Thon Taddeo that this is one of many versions with minor differences about the apocalypse. Taddeo refers to this as a “legend” (Miller Jr. 188). Thus, the apocalypse becomes a mythical story of which they are unsure. Despite the various mythological accounts of the apocalypse, it is clear that the destruction of humanity occurred as a result of a flame deluge caused by nuclear war. The nuclear holocaust destroyed the earth and even those who survived the flames “were sickened by the poisoned air, so that, while some escaped death, none was lefty untouched; and many died even in those lands where the weapons had not struck, because of the poisoned air” (Miller Jr. 63).

The demise of the former civilization in the novel occurred “within weeks – some said days – it was ended, after the first unleashing of hell-fire. Cities had become puddles of glass, surrounded by vast acreages of broken stone” (Miller Jr. 63). There are few built up structures left and all that remains is “ruins” and “rubble” (Miller Jr. 7, 16). In *The World Without Us*, Alan Weisman considers what would happen to both the natural and built environment if humanity ceased to exist. He outlines how cities and other built up structures, such as houses, would deteriorate, how long man-made artefacts would last, and how any remaining lifeforms would survive and evolve. He concludes that within five hundred years things such as plastic, metal, ceramics, artworks, and

radioactive waste will be among the only remnants of human presence on earth. He considers the Mayan civilization and how quickly nature compromised human structures and concealed evidence of a human presence there. He uses New York City as an example to outline how “the fleeting materials of modern construction decompose” (Weisman 100). Sewers would clog, soil would erode leading roads to collapse and burst water mains would flood subways. Houses would fall apart owing to wood erosion, rusty nails which would compromise the structural support of homes, and water pipes deteriorating, thus, causing flooding. The only fragments in a household after five hundred years would be “aluminium dishwasher parts and stainless steel cookware. Their plastic handles splitting but still solid” (Weisman 18). Much like Weisman asserts that “stone buildings will be among the last to disappear when we’re gone”, in *A Canticle for Leibowitz* it is clear that this seems true (Weisman 100). There seems to be a reversion to the Stone Age in this first part of the book, where there are few built structures following the apocalypse, with stone buildings being some of the only built structures.

This illustrates how modern construction deteriorates and there is little evidence of past civilizations. While this novel takes place some hundred years following the apocalypse, the deterioration of the built environment is clear. Even in *The Road*, which takes place shortly after the apocalypse, it is evident how nature begins to overwhelm manmade construction as buildings are overgrown and the road itself is beginning to erode. One of the surviving manmade structures in the novel only exists underground. Brother Francis comes across the Leibowitz documents in an underground bunker. The documents are locked in a “rusty box” (Miller Jr. 25). This metal has endured much like the metal plates inscribed with Dave’s book in *The Book of Dave*.

It is evident that the built environment will not survive an apocalypse. Thus, storytelling becomes significant. For it is not a material human artefact that will deteriorate. Margaret Atwood says of storytelling that “you’re never going to kill storytelling, because it’s built into the human plan. We come with it” (Atwood, *Margaret Atwood on Serial Fiction and the Future of the Book*). Storytelling will endure and survive a social collapse.

The social collapse in the novel can be seen as occurring not once but twice in the novel. The first section of the novel considers the aftermath of the first social collapse; which happens again almost

two thousand years after the initial collapse in “Fiat Voluntas Tua”. This insinuates the cyclic nature of humankind. Humankind is so ardent in their endeavour to progress that they disregard the didacticism of the initial apocalyptic cataclysm resulting in, yet, another apocalyptic event

Although the apocalypse ended the previous civilization, the consequences of the nuclear war lived on and continued to affect humanity long after the apocalyptic catastrophe. Following the first social collapse, the decline in humanity in *A Canticle for Leibowitz* results in an angry, violent backlash of knowledge and literacy. This, in turn, results in what society refers to as simpletons or the pope’s children. Illiterate and angry survivors, and their descendants, of the nuclear war that brought about this post-apocalyptic milieu. They are referred to as simpletons because their fury towards the knowledge that created nuclear weaponry instigated a mass opposition to knowledge and its destructive potential. As a result of this mindset, survivors collected and vowed to destroy those who brought about the destruction and to “make a great simplification, and then the world shall begin again” (Miller Jr. 63).

People believed that in order to simplify the world they would keep society illiterate and try destroy and withhold any knowledge of the prior world so that scientific knowledge could not be used to recreate the nuclear devastation endured already: “nothing had been so hateful in the sight of these mobs as the man of learning” (Miller Jr. 64). These mobs became known as “simpleton packs” that hunted and killed the learned until there were no scholarly people left; and their offspring were taught to hate the remaining literate people. The simpletons would purge monasteries of any narrative remnants of the past: “monasteries were invaded, records and sacred books were burned, refugees were seized” (Miller Jr. 64).

This presence of book burning resonates with Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* in which characters “seek comfort and revenge by destroying all texts and individuals connected with learning, escaping into a simple agrarian lifestyle” (Bradbury 134). That is why the texts preserved by the monks are so important; not for their content but for the symbolism thereof: the knowledge, ethics and learning inherent in narrative.

The power of narrative is understood as an invaluable resource, so, in an attempt to avoid recreating weaponry to destroy civilization once again, the solution was ignorance. However, keeping the society ignorant kept society in a primitive state which does not allow for society to evolve. This illustrates the state of nature and how keeping people illiterate is merely propagandistic. This concept of keeping the masses ignorant echoes George Orwell's *1984* where Big Brother seeks to yield such control over society that they abuse knowledge such as changing historical records. The simplification depicts the dangers of ignorance as ignorance leads to barbarianism and violence which is evident in the pope's children, the violent primitives who murder Brother Francis. The mobs of simpletons were fuelled by hatred "and the hate said: Let us stone and disembowel and burn the ones who did this thing. Let us make a holocaust of those who wrought this crime, together with their hirelings and their wise men; burning, let them perish, and all their works, their names, and even their memories. Let us destroy them all, and teach our children that the world is new, that they may know nothing of the deeds that went before" (Miller Jr. 63).

While the simpletons do represent the violent regression of society, most of the society "were, for the most part, not savages, but simple clanfolk loosely organized into small communities here and there, who lived by hunting, gathering and primitive agriculture" (Miller Jr. 56). This represents a state of nature described by John Locke. In such a natural state no one man has authority over another and "every man has a property in his own person" meaning that whatever labour one man undertakes is his own property for it is his own body that laboured for it (Locke 12). Thus, it becomes clear that Locke's argument about the state of nature is that it is a "place where rational and free individuals can attain property through the labour of their bodies, but it is also an inconvenient place given the existence of the lazy and irrational few who steal the fruits of your labour" (Curtis 9). Therefore, there is no established organization of society and, except for the few violent simpletons, people in this society are mainly primitive in the sense of the hunter-gatherers whose sole purpose of life is subsistence. Such social formations have weak leadership so there are few economic or political distinctions between people. They depend on the land for their livelihood. This kind of society is primitive for it lacks cultural, technological, social or economic sophistication. For example, they lack a written language or an appointed leader.

This state of nature in the novel is also reminiscent of John Rawls' approach to social contract theory. He suggests that people living in such a state are unaware of their intelligence or abilities. Thus, they do not know how they can benefit from society. They are under "a veil of ignorance" (Rawls 11). Rawls's suggests that it is under this kind of ignorance that fair and just principles of society can be yielded; because when one is unaware of such personal attributes, one is unable to tailor principles according to one's own individual advantages. Thus, such principles should form the basis of a social contract. It seems that this is evident in the first part of the novel where society seemingly enters a social contract in which there is a sense of leadership but there is not yet any organized political or social structure. However, in the second part of the novel, although there seems to be a more stable political structure, the threat of warfare suggests that there are no principles of justice. Without a sense of justice and ethics, there is a heightened sense of primitive impulses that will lead to war. There is a desire to advance society technologically despite the potential destruction thereof.

This complicates the understanding of the social contract theory. This is owing to the fact that society is divided in their beliefs of how a society functions. For example, the monks have an ethical understanding that murder is immoral. Whilst the simpletons believe that their murder of literate people could potentially save their society. Thus, the lines between right and wrong are blurred. Both parties consider their actions ethically superior to the others'; and, in both cases, they each have their own ethical thought driving their actions. Thus, have they not entered into their own social contracts respectively? Both groups of people have their own structures to which they adhere. Therefore, are the simpletons really savages without an ethical code? They are merely doing what they think is right in preventing another nuclear devastation. And while the monks do not violently murder as the simpletons do, they are indeed harbouring the knowledge that can (and ultimately does) create mass destruction once again. Therefore, the idea of the social contract becomes far more complicated than simply having a social, political or moral structure in place. Both groups, the monks and the simpletons, are following a code they each believe to be morally just and right. Therefore, it becomes a question not of whether or not they have a moral structure in place (as both have their relative belief systems) but rather how can they improve as a whole society as rather than becoming fragments of civilisation at odds.



Another result of the social collapse are the descendants of people affected by nuclear radiation, thus, disfiguring them, and allowing current society to “see the progeny of a once-mighty civilization” (Miller Jr. 129). The novel is set centuries after the cataclysm destroyed the world and, as a result, there are no survivors in the novel that were part of the flame deluge itself but rather descendants of such survivors. The horrors of the war still lurk as those affected by radiation, who are considered “fiends of hell” owing to their deformities, have passed down these deformities genetically to their descendants (Miller Jr. 23). The deformed genetics passed down from apocalyptic survivors to their descendants is rife in the novel. The most prominent character being Mrs. Grales with a small head named Rachel growing from her shoulder.

Therefore, it is clear that the social collapse resulted in a decline of humanity; which led to a mass appeal against any knowledge. This made it difficult for the society to enter into a social contract completely owing to the primitive simpletons preventing man from becoming a civilized society. However, society does manage to recover from this resultant decline in humanity owing to the monks and their endeavour to protect knowledge. This complicates our understanding of the social contract theory and demonstrates how complex such a theory is. For society has partially entered into a social contract yet the inability to follow one ethical code hinders the progress into a completely civilised society.

The dynamic of the recovery following the apocalypse in *A Canticle for Leibowitz* is complex. The recovery is mainly owed to the duty of the monks’ preservation of texts. It is through these texts that a site of ethical behaviour is developed. In the first two parts of the novel, it seems that the world recovers from the apocalypse. Although the illiterate violent simpletons display the decline in humanity, for the most part, humanity is seemingly civilized. Towards the end of the second part and the third part of the novel, it becomes clear that humanity has merely circled back to war that will once again devastate humankind. The dynamic of recovery in this post-apocalyptic society is largely centred on the debate of science versus religion. This is depicted in the title. For a canticle is a hymn or song with a biblical context used in church services. However, the canticle is dedicated to a scientist, thus, illustrating the irony of the memorabilia; it contains scientific knowledge, yet, is being conserved by a religious sect. It is also ironic that “the knowledge that the monks faithfully preserved ultimately contributes to the obliteration of the world... [Thus,]

self-destruction is an immutable part of the human condition”, as observed by Jon Michaud in his study into classic science fiction (Michaud).

Humankind has the innate desire to advance itself. As a result, the human species is constantly looking for a means by which to better their social circumstances. However, this need for improvement often results in self-destruction. For example, the Industrial Revolution depicts the desire to advance society by developing machinery and chemical manufacturing, resulting in the increase of steam power and the rise of industrial factories. This has had severe consequences on the environment. Such consequences threaten the destruction of the world as climate change is getting progressively worse. Another example is the nuclear arms race. In the race to have political and social power, a need for nuclear supremacy arose. As a result of this competition, the most dangerous nuclear weaponry was brought into being in order for one country to exert their power over another; and nuclear warfare has the potential to destroy human civilization. Therefore, it is evident that the need to progress is built into the human psyche and, because this need to advance tends to yield harmful results, self-destruction has become part of the human condition. Miller leaves the memorabilia in the hands of the church in an attempt to break away from this self-destructive cycle.

The church provides a site of ethics for the scientific content of the memorabilia. Religion is used as a tool to try guide scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge alone is not enough if there is not moral foundation upon which to base such knowledge. The lack of ethical guidance for scientific knowledge will aid in the heightening of embryonic instincts which will most likely lead to war; such as in *Riddley Walker* in which there is no ethical foundation to guide the scientific development of gunpowder and, as a result, it is used destructively.

Religion and science are used to counter primitiveness in the novel. However, they do not succeed. Religion does not allow the monks to understand the content of memorabilia while science does not allow scholars like Thon Taddeo to look at moral implications of using science to develop nuclear technology. Scientists end up using it for political means. Therefore, science and religion need to assimilate the moral teachings of the church and scientific knowledge of the scholars in

order to interrupt the cyclic nature as seen in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. Perhaps a second nuclear devastation can be avoided by understanding the moral implications of technological progress.

History suggests that there has always been a conflict between the church and state. This is a conflict which survives the flame deluge and, as a result, the role of the church changes in the three parts of the novel. It starts out as a very powerful institution in “Fiat Homo” as they are the sole holder of scientific knowledge; but the church gradually loses its power and in “Fiat Voluntas Tua” the state has surpassed the power of the church as they control the scientific knowledge once preserved by only the monks. This power dynamic between the two institutions further complicates the understanding of the social contract theory. For there is a government, thus, there exists a political structure. There exists a church suggesting that there is some sort of social and cultural direction. However, their inability to unify their ethicality prohibits society from being considered a complete representation of a social contract. If the church and the state were to unite their beliefs about the scientific content, perhaps they could come to a compromise about how to use the scientific knowledge to advance technology for the better of humankind; rather than being at odds with one another which results in the scientific knowledge being used as the weapon which causes humankind’s demise.

The purpose of the church is to provide a moral foundation for society. Miller specifically gave the responsibility of preserving the memorabilia to the church in the novel because, although they could not grasp the content, they hopefully would provide an ethical basis from which to study the memorabilia. If religion and science could be merged and used together, they could possibly create a force that could oppose the violent aspects of humanity – using knowledge responsibly and perhaps avoiding another social collapse. Narrative is a powerful tool but has the dual capacity to both destroy and rebuild civilization.

In “Fiat Lux”, it is evident that the scientific knowledge within the memorabilia can be used to advance society. For instance, Brother Kornhoer recreates an electric lamp, depicting the benign, positive uses of the scientific knowledge. Brother Armbruster, a Luddite, refers to the invention as “devil’s work” (Miller Jr. 150). The monks have a lengthy debate on where to hang the lamp and where Thon Taddeo should study. For he cannot study too far away from the rare volumes which

are chained up for safety. The ideal place is a small alcove adorned with a crucifix. Brother Kornhoer suggests taking down the crucifix temporarily for the lamp to hang there. Brother Armbruster is furious at the idea of desecrating a symbol of God. This argument denotes the everlasting debate of religion versus science. Brother Armbruster believes this to be a means by which to put religion aside for the sake of technological progress. Brother Kornhoer and Brother Armbruster's arguing over the lamps placement is a representation of the metaphor for the battle between religion and science; about which is more important and should be illuminated.

And so begins the final part of the novel, "Fiat Voluntas Tua", the year 3781 in which the world has rediscovered nuclear energy and an ongoing nuclear war threatens the earth. This section of the novel opens describing spaceships in this century suggesting that technology did advance and progress significantly once Thon Taddeo found the scientific blueprints hidden in the memorabilia.

Brother Joshua stands on a rooftop examining air samples. He is referred to as a monk and it seems that this world considers the fields of religion and science to overlap. Brother Joshua is working in a glass and aluminium building on the opposite side of the highway to the abbey. He reflects on how in the two buildings he is two different men. The scientist in one and the monk in the other. The highway represents the schism between the two fields but also the ease with which one can travel from one to the other, demonstrating the overlap between the two.

It becomes clear that nuclear war is rife and people are suffering from critical exposure to radiation with over two million dead. A law has been passed called the "Radiation Disaster Act" which allows state approved euthanasia for those severely affected by radiation (Miller Jr. 294). This is an ethical debate. On the one hand, doctors feel like they are doing victims a service as they are relinquishing them of their suffering. On the other hand, it is not moral in the eyes of the church to allow for assisted suicide. Dom Zerchi proclaims that the state, by passing the "Radiation Disaster Act" the governments are "fully aware of the consequences of another war, but instead of trying to make the crime impossible, they tried to provide in advance for the consequences of the crime" (Miller Jr. 295). Rather than learning from past mistakes that caused the first apocalypse, the state is trying to control the consequences of a war as opposed to avoiding a war altogether. This has an irony. For the church disagrees with the Radiation Act as well as the criminal act of

war, yet, they are the ones who provided the knowledge and information necessary to recreate nuclear technology via their preservation of the memorabilia; once again reiterating that it is not the knowledge itself that is destructive but rather the misuse of it.

However, there is once again hope for the recovery of humankind after the second social collapse takes place. In the last few pages of the novel where Rachel, the growth on what was perceived to be a deformed elderly woman, Mrs. Grales, is born. Dom Zerchi is caught in the church when a missile hits and obliterates it. As Zerchi lies there dying, contemplating his faith and the history of the abbey that now physically engulfs him, he hears a soft, gentle voice emanating from the newly born Rachel. In his belief that she had just been reborn, he baptizes her. She is at first passive but then picks up the Hoist and offers a wafer to Zerchi. In awe, Zerchi realizes that she is the embodiment of Christ. He lays there and considers the “primal innocence in those eyes, and a promise of resurrection” (Miller Jr. 336). And although he does not understand why God chose “to raise up a creature of primal innocence from the shoulder of Mrs. Grales”, he does understand that this act of resurrection suggests hope for the future of mankind (Miller Jr. 336). Rachel’s rebirth represents theodicy and a chance for renewal; signifying the possibility of a break in the cycle. She has no prior memory of the world and is not plagued by original sin so there is an opportunity for mankind to recreate civilization on earth.

As Zerchi lays in the rubble of the demolished church, he excavates a skull with an arrow through it, the skull of Brother Francis Gerard. The image of the skull bookends the novel as Brother Francis found a skull in the beginning of the novel in Leibowitz’ crypt. The imagery of the skull represents memento mori, a reminder that all human beings will die eventually and, ultimately, this proves to be true as civilization has once again fallen to its second demise. The imagery of the skulls also alludes to the cyclic pattern of human nature. The novel illustrates the gyre that Yeats refers to in *The Second Coming*. The novel begins following a cataclysm and, by the final section, another cataclysm will take place as a monster after “twenty centuries of stony sleep... slouches toward Bethlehem to be born” (Yeats 30).

Ultimately, humanity recovers and is once again destroyed in the novel. Over the period of the novel, humanity manages to recover from the flame deluge; by establishing a governing body,

laws that regulate society and technological advancement for the improvement of society. However, the technological and scientific progress recreate what the simpletons fought to avoid and eventually results in the repetition of history's mistakes. Therefore, their recovery is complex owing to the role of narrative and its use thereof.

A significant allusion to the importance of narrative is evident in the old tramp that wanders the desert. Children call him "Lazar, same one 'ut the Lord Hesus raise up" (Miller Jr. 258). It would seem that literature and narrative have survived this long in a world trying to excommunicate it, for the story of Lazarus and Jesus is still known even among the poverty-stricken. In referring to such long gone stories, "Miller noted that the stories shared a nostalgia for things that have been lost" (Michaud). Narrative has survived the world trying to rid itself of it. The story of Lazarus denotes the restoration to life. Lazarus defies death by being raised by Jesus. The allusion to Lazarus in all three parts of the novel is significant for it evokes hope that life will always have the capability of being restored. This is possibly Miller's way of foreshadowing that the era is coming to an end and new life will soon be born.

Narrative plays a momentous role in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. Susan Spencer's research into Miller's work examines oral and literate culture in the novel. She purports that Taddeo's rediscovery of the memorabilia is not just a "renaissance of science but also a revolution in the role of text as communication rather than text as an object" (Spencer 138). Spencer is proposing that the rediscovery of the scientific blueprints is significant because it indicates more than just an unearthing of previous scientific knowledge; it also represents a means by which to view any ancient texts as a communication with the past. The monks respond to this rediscovery with apprehension, namely the librarian, Brother Ambruster: "to the custodian of the Memorabilia, each unsealing represented another decrease in the probable lifetime of the contents of the cask, and he made no attempt to conceal his disapproval of the entire proceeding. To Brother Librarian, whose task in life was the preservation of books, the principal reason for the existence of books was that they might be preserved perpetually" (Miller Jr. 197). While the librarian is an extreme case, even the abbot, Dom Paulo, is concerned about such an abrupt and complete dissemination of texts as he confides to Thon Taddeo: "You promise to begin restoring Man's control over nature. But who will govern the use of power to control natural forces? Who will use it? To what end?" (Miller Jr.

224). Thon Taddeo ultimately hands over his scientific findings to Hannegan who brings about another war.

The dissemination of the information found in the memorabilia produces a wider spread literacy which “leads to a diversification of, and contradictions within, previously homogenous ‘oral’ cultures, as readers are differentially influenced by earlier stages of the cultural record, interpret them differently, and use them to support divergent versions of aspiration and intent”, as Alan Durant (337) explains in his work on observations about orality. Dom Paulo pleaded with Thon Taddeo to keep destructive information from the hands of Hannegan who intends to use the scientific knowledge to progress technological development. This intention leads to the devastation which the monks of the order are trying to escape in the third part of the novel. Although the monks were unaware of the content of what they were preserving, they experience the consequences of the misuse thereof.

There is an advantage of the monks’ not understanding the content of the memorabilia; they are unable to be prejudiced against certain texts and, as such, treat every article of the memorabilia equally. They are unbiased so they preserve everything from grocery lists to scientific blueprints. All texts are considered transcendent by the monks. Ong points out, in a paper entitled *Oral Remembering and Narrative Structures*, that recalling the whole past in its entirety is overwhelming and, as a result, causes the issue of what to preserve (Ong). The memorabilia is made up of worldly sources. From literary, to scientific to historical content; there are blueprints, plays, and copies of dialogue. Thon Taddeo takes upon himself the insurmountable task of distinguishing between what knowledge of the memorabilia is useful and what is not. This brings about the question of what should be included in a collection of knowledge. Taddeo’s rediscovery of scientific blueprints represents the beginning of discrimination between texts. He begins to divide the memorabilia up into what could be useful and what is of no importance. This discrimination represents the “revolution in the role of texts as communication rather than text as an object” (Spencer 138).

While the monks did not understand the materials they were safeguarding, they certainly recognize the “value in the structure of the information they contained, that even if the original meanings of

the texts were lost to time, they were preserving a symbolic understanding of knowledge” that would one day be understood and used in the future (Miessler 5-6). “Fiat Homo” is a story of the conservancy of texts in the hope of a time when the world becomes interested in its heritage (Miessler). The guarding of the memorabilia would remain the task of the monks as they wait patiently for humanity to realize the value of the past knowledge: “The monks waited. It mattered not at all to them that the knowledge they saved was useless, that much of it was not really knowledge now, was as inscrutable to the monks in some instances as it would be to an illiterate wild-boy from the hills; this knowledge was empty of content, its subject matter long since gone” (Miller Jr. 66). However, as the novel continues into “Fiat Lux” and “Fiat Voluntas Tua”, it becomes clear that this knowledge cannot solely be preserved by the monks but is used by man for destructive purposes.

Although “not every book in a library is popular or in continuous circulation; some books are weeded, some are lost or destroyed, and some sit on shelves in perpetuity. Some books contain practical information that can be applied across time and disciplines, others are useful as historical documents, and a few have no redeeming value” (Miessler 12). Therefore, Taddeo may favour scientific books over others. But all the artefacts preserved within the memorabilia represent something greater than the sum of their parts. The whole library represents at least one version of collective memory of humanity and the foundation for its future (Miessler).

The symbolic structure and interplay remained the reason for the memorabilia’s preservation, even though the knowledge within the memorabilia had long lost its content, being meaningless to the monks who could not understand it. For the understanding of how a knowledge system works means the understanding of the significance of knowledge itself and, thus, it is vital that it be preserved until such time that an “integrator”, who understands the knowledge, can piece it all together (Miller Jr. 66). In this case the integrator is Thon Taddeo. Thon Taddeo represents how the understanding of the pre-apocalyptic history can be distorted. He marvels at the previous civilization’s technology as he refers to it as “wise” and “great” and hopes to recreate it (Miller Jr. 78-79).



The Thon predicts the fate of the world once the memorabilia is understood. The world will undergo an “intellectual revolution” causing a great technological advancement resulting in machinery such as airplanes, cars, and even cities (Miller Jr. 214). However, he also predicts that this will only be achieved through violence “for no change comes calmly over the world”; as the scientific discoveries made from the memorabilia have the potential for disaster if used wrongly (Miller Jr. 214). On the other hand, Dom Paulo muses that “the memorabilia was full of ancient words, ancient formulae, and ancient reflections of meaning, detached from minds that had died long ago, when a different sort of society had passed into oblivion. There was little of it that could still be understood [...] The memorabilia could not, of itself, generate a revival of ancient science or high civilization, however, for cultures were begotten by the tribes of Man, not by musty tomes; but the books could help, Dom Paulo hoped – the books could point out directions and offer hints to a newly evolving science” (Miller Jr. 146).

In an argument with Dom Paulo, Taddeo says they cannot wait until all men are holy and pure to continue with their scientific studies and chides the abbot for withholding their knowledge at the abbey. Paulo angrily recalls all the moments in the abbey’s past where their founder, Leibowitz, as well as other monks made sacrifices for the preservation of knowledge. The statue of Leibowitz, a scientist himself, stands upon kindling and the remains of burnt books because he knew it was the misuse of scientific knowledge that caused the apocalypse to end the previous civilization.

Scientific knowledge is an invaluable resource and, if used empirically, it can have a didactic capability. Dom Paulo professes that men before them have seen the atrocities of nuclear war so surely they would have learnt by now that such technology cannot improve the world? This is reminiscent of Russel Hoban’s musings about the inception of *Riddley Walker* where he hypothesizes that people in a post-apocalyptic society would surely want to learn from the past devastation and prevent it from happening again. In a study on the novel, David Seed closely examines how the meaning of texts is transmitted and how the nature thereof shifts over a great period of time (Seed). For example the meaning behind stories about the end of the former world shifts over all three parts of the novel. In the first part Brother Francis describes the apocalypse as a “monster [that] had not survived, but Francis [he] had heard the legends” (Miller Jr. 18). However, characters like Thon Taddeo look back in history with admiration for the advanced

science and technological aspects but fail to recognize that it is those sort of advancements that created nuclear war. Whereas Zerchi, in the third section of the novel, having witnessed first-hand the destructive use of technology, considers pre-apocalyptic civilization bitterly as he believes mankind should have learnt from the past. Therefore, with the ever-changing opinion of the former civilization, it makes it difficult to learn from past mistakes.

Ultimately the knowledge discovered by Thon Taddeo does indeed advance scientific and technological development to the point of another nuclear war in the final section of the novel. In a final attempt to save humanity, an emergency plan to depart earth on a spaceship, named “*Quo peregrinatur grex*”, in order to perpetuate the memorabilia on colony planets is underway. With regards to this plan, Dom Zerchi asserts that “we all know what could happen, if there’s war. The genetic festering is still with us from the last time Man tried to eradicate himself. Back then, in the Saint Leibowitz’ time, maybe they didn’t know what would happen. Or perhaps they did know, but could not quite believe it until they tried it – like a child who knows what a loaded pistol is supposed to do, but who has never pulled a trigger before. They had not yet seen a billion corpses. They had not seen the still-born, the monstrous, the dehumanized, the blind. They had not seen the madness and the murder and the blotting out of reason. Then they did it, and then they saw it” (Miller Jr. 277). He goes on to suggest that the logical means of moving on would be to learn from past mistakes, as is a prevalent feature in post-apocalyptic fiction. For such fiction is written as a plea by the author to consider the damage we are doing in our own, current world. Yet, there is always the possibility to repeat rather than to learn from the mistakes of the past. Zerchi, having witnessed the destructive capability of technology, urgently explains that they cannot repeat the past: “they cannot do it again. Only a race of madmen could do it again” (Miller Jr. 278).

The mission of “*Quo peregrinatur grex*” is impending. The candidates from the abbey board a plane to New Rome. Zerchi boards the plane for some final words with his monks: “The ship will remain in your hands, and the memorabilia. If civilization, or a vestige of it, can maintain itself on Centaurus, you will send missions to the other colony worlds [...] wherever Man goes, you and your successors will go. And with you, the records and remembrances of four thousand years and more. Some of you, or those to come after you, will be mendicants and wanderers, teaching the chronicles of Earth and the canticles of the Crucified to the peoples and the cultures that may grow

out of the colony groups. For some may forget. Some may be lost for a time from the Faith. Teach them, and receive into the Order those among them who are called. Pass on to them the continuity. Be for Man the memory of Earth and Origin. Remember this Earth. Never forget her, but – never come back” (Miller Jr. 291-292). Zerchi is affirming that their mission is to use knowledge to create a new, prosperous world rather than recreating the destruction that happened in the time of Saint Leibowitz and the destruction their current era is undergoing. The participants of “*Quo peregrinatur grex*” are embarking upon an exodus to save the memorabilia which could be the tool to recreate a new beginning for humankind.

The mission of “*Quo peregrinatur grex*” represents the need to preserve pieces of humanity. It represents “an act of hope. Hope for Man elsewhere, peace somewhere, if not here and now, then someplace... It isn’t hope for Earth, but hope for the soul and substance of Man somewhere” (Miller Jr. 286). The operation will send a spaceship into space with the memorabilia preserved on a microfilm. Spencer suggests that Miller’s intention, by sending the memorabilia into space, is that the knowledge inherent in the memorabilia preserves human values, which is why it needs to be kept safe. The memorabilia represents the moral vision of civilization amid the decadence of the surrounding world. The belief is that it is not the knowledge that will lead to another war but rather who uses the knowledge and how they use it: “it was no curse, this knowledge, unless perverted by Man” (288). This quotation is of particular importance for it suggests how the role of narrative can play a significant role in rebuilding society; unless the knowledge used from the narrative is corrupted and used in a destructive manner. Narrative is so influential that it has the capacity to yield results both good and bad; it can enhance or destroy the world. It is the way in which it is used that determines its outcome. The scientific knowledge discovered by Thon Taddeo had the ability to bring about positive technological advancements but the misuse of information eventually results in devastation. Before its discovery by Brother Francis, the blueprints were no threat. Only once man obtained such knowledge was it able to be tainted.

It becomes clear that the memorabilia is not a curse itself but it is the misuse of it by man that erodes its potential for renewal and magnifies its destructive capability; thus, demonstrating the power of narrative. In the final part of the novel men have indeed “perverted” the scientific knowledge as a second apocalypse is occurring (Miller Jr. 288). As Gary K. Wolfe, in his study of

science fiction, states “nuclear holocaust is a weakness of culture, not of science; the wasteland is the ruins of mankind’s works” (Wolfe 146). Thus, the end is brought about not by the knowledge that created nuclear weaponry but by humankind’s abuse of such technological knowledge.

The final chapter of the novel illustrates the monks and children boarding a spaceship. On the horizon they see “Lucifer” as black clouds and flashes overwhelm the skies (Miller Jr. 337). As the devil imagery of war overwhelms the world, the last monk murmurs “sic transit mundus” meaning “so passes the world” (Miller Jr. 337). Thus, a new era must begin. He goes on to clean the dirt from his sandals; leaving the earth behind both figuratively and literally. “Quo peregrinatur grex” has seemingly been successful as the spaceship takes off and makes its way towards space. While many instances, such as Rachel’s rebirth and this mission, express hope for the future of humankind one still wonders if the movement of the memorabilia into space will merely cause a repetition of this cycle on a cosmic scale. For the memorabilia is still in the hands of men. And, despite the advancements society makes throughout the novel, afforded by the memorabilia, it can be asked if we ever really overcome our primitive desires; those driving the need for power and progression. The character of Zerchi seems to be one of the only characters who does overcome this primitive mind-set. He is able to understand both the importance of science as well as the destructive potential. He acknowledges the power of the memorabilia and its scientific content by ensuring it leaves this earth safely; yet, his strong opinions against the euthanasia illustrate his acknowledgement that scientific knowledge is able to be destructive. He recognizes that knowledge can be perverted by man “as fire had been” (Miller Jr. 288).

There is a recurring motif of fire in the novel. The imagery of light and fire act as an allegory of knowledge. Knowledge, like fire, has the dual ability to both enlighten and destroy. The world ended in flames, owing to the misuse of knowledge. Scientific knowledge literally created the nuclear flames that ravaged the earth. And change will happen once again “by flame and by fury” as described by Thon Taddeo (Miller Jr. 214). Therefore, the memorabilia is referred to as “the flame of knowledge” (Miller Jr. 115). Similarly, in *The Road*, the father tells his son that they are carrying “the fire”; the values and ethical beliefs learnt via father’s stories providing hope for humanity (McCarthy 128). Even in *Riddley Walker*, the story of “Hart of the Wud”, depicting an exchange with the devil for knowledge of how to make fire, illustrates the symbolism of fire as

representative of knowledge. All stories and their use of fire imagery allude to Prometheus. In Greek mythology, the Titan Prometheus steals fire from Mount Olympus to give to the people on earth. As such, his deed deems him the creator of humankind. The acquisition of knowledge has prompted human progress and, as a result, civilization. However, it should be noted that he was eternally punished in Tartarus for his actions because Zeus believed humankind to be too irresponsible to hold such knowledge. Therefore, illustrating how humanity cannot be considered reliable to use knowledge to better mankind.

The ending of the novel is rife with pastoral imagery. The name of the mission, “Quo peregrinator grex” loosely translates to “whither wanders the flock”; and Brother Joshua is referred to as the “shepherd” (Miller Jr. 286). The imagery of the shepherd leading his flock has biblical resonances. In Psalm 23, verse 1, “the Lord is my shepherd”, God is referred to as a shepherd leading his flock through darkness and towards goodness (*The Holy Bible: King James Version* 279). This pastoral imagery evokes a peaceful, harmonious impression of nature much like the Garden of Eden. Miller has used this imagery specifically to suggest that this mission will result in a cleansing of mankind and offer the chance of renewal and human innocence.

The final pastoral image at the end of the novel depicts a shark swimming into “old clean currents” illustrates life on earth after the end (Miller Jr. 338). By suggesting that the shark “was very hungry that season”, Miller is suggesting that the shark lived for more than one season and that there was some sort of life that survived the apocalypse (Miller Jr. 338). In both *A Canticle for Leibowitz* and *The Road* the novels end with a pastoral image. This is because they are acknowledging the resilience of nature. Nature cyclically survives and will regenerate. There is hope for the earth and its revival even though humankind may not survive. The image of the shark suggests that some form of life on earth will endure. Like the imagery of nature being created in Genesis, the pastoral image of the shark represents a tabula rasa. Earth will not vanish but rather regress to its older, completely natural state in which human beings do not exist and earth will be preserved and left to grow naturally. Thus, Miller’s intention is to prompt humanity to consider life on earth without humankind and, hopefully, elicit a change in current society.

## **Riddley Walker by Russell Hoban**

The novel *Riddley Walker* (1980) by Russell Hoban follows the story of the eponymous narrator through a post-apocalyptic wasteland. This society is plunged back into an age that is reminiscent of England's prehistoric Iron Age. This post-nuclear holocaust presented by Hoban is used as a setting to explore the desire for knowledge and the power thereof. The only remaining vestige of the past is the legend of Saint Eustace, which has come into the consciousness of the people of Cambry via a description of a fifteenth-century wall painting of the legend in Canterbury Cathedral. This supplies the narrative context for the Eusa puppet show. The Eusa show retells the nuclear annihilation of the world and aims at acculturating and entertaining the people of Cambry in Inland.

In an interview about the inception of the novel, Russell Hoban describes how he was visiting Canterbury Cathedral while they were restoring the mural of The Legend of Saint Eustace “and the whole world of *Riddley Walker* dropped into my head. I had already been thinking a lot about Punch. Suddenly I had this idea of desolate England, long after civilization is destroyed and Christianity is defunct, when the state religion is something that's carried on by puppeteers going from one little fenced-in settlement to another... The Eusa story was one of the first things; I worked that out before I got to where it first appears in the book” (Hoban, *An Interview with Russell Hoban*). As a result, the post-nuclear conception of England is created depicting a physically and culturally oppressive society.

Hoban uses the oppressive culture in *Riddley Walker* to investigate the livelihood of humankind; “I don't think that humankind has ever worked out whether it wants to live or die. It is always assumed that we want to live, but our actions do not bear them out, because what we do with cars on the roads, what we do with drink, what we do with drugs, with cigarettes, what we do with violence everywhere [...] It does not look as if we are actually certain which it is we want, and I don't think that this has ever been recognized. It is always assumed that we really do want to live, and I don't think we can make that assumption. I think the two urges are always in conflict, and the conflict is still unresolved” (Hoban, *Rupert Loydell talks to Russell Hoban*). This is clear in *Riddley Walker*. For there is the desire to progress but the means by which to progress will lead

them to knowledge that will eventually result in nuclear warfare and end the world once again. This idea of Riddley, together with the moral deterioration of current society, resulted in this post-apocalyptic setting used by Hoban to warn modern civilization by creating a future of what our world could possibly look like.

This post-apocalyptic setting is described by Jack Branscomb as a “squalid environment” in his essay about *Knowledge and Understanding in Riddley Walker* (Branscomb 107). He calls the people of Riddley’s society “a small group of foragers in the southeast of England who eke out subsistence by digging up scraps of ruined machinery which they barter. They use bows and arrows to defend themselves from packs of vicious, uncannily intelligent dogs – representatives of outraged and alienated nature – which wait, just out of bowshot – for stragglers. There is a pervasive sense of a ruined, legendary civilization beneath the surface of this wasteland” (Branscomb 107). This clearly exemplifies the primitivism of this society.

Although epitomized by the Hobbesian state of nature, the community in which Riddley lives seems to be on the brink of some sort of advancement. David Cowart’s study, *History and the Contemporary Novel*, discusses the cyclic nature of humankind. While there is advancement in Riddley’s society in the form of an “agricultural order [that] seems to absorb more and more of the human energies once expended on hunting and gathering. The death of the last wild pig, with which the story opens, represents the passing of wilderness and even heralds the accelerating displacement of animistic religion (the Big Boar and the Moon Sow) by more sophisticated cults like that of Eusa” (Cowart 87). This advancement suggests that the society may be on its way to becoming a civilization. They even have a type of governing body in place. However, their lack of moral direction suggests that the little knowledge they do have can easily be perverted by man and will eventually bring about destruction with the formula for gunpowder.

The destruction that caused the social collapse was originally initiated by nuclear warfare. This demise of humanity is dictated by myth in the novel. The role of myth in *Riddley Walker* is highly significant for it not only illustrates the apocalyptic calamity but also provides the foundation of the religious and political dynamic of the society. Various stories are used to describe the

apocalyptic devastation of the former world but ultimately they all depict a nuclear war that caused the annihilation of society.

The result of the social collapse leads to a yearning for knowledge. In the novel there is just one piece of history remaining from the "clevver" times, the term they use to refer to the pre-apocalyptic world (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 17). The piece of history is a short account of a fifteenth-century wall painting in Canterbury Cathedral depicting The Legend of Saint Eustace. The description narrates the life and martyrdom of Saint Eustace and provides the framework for the Eusa story. The Eusa Story, being the only preserved artefact from the past, becomes the central myth which is the foundation for the beliefs of Inland. In Michael Sullivan's notes on The Eusa Story, he describes the Eusa myth's thirty-three numbered paragraphs as telling a tale of technology which aided in the development atomic weapons in the United States of America and resulted in the nuclear war that brought the world to an end (Sullivan). In the Eusa Story, a figure named "Eusa" became greedy for "cleverness", under the influence of "Mr. Clevver", the devil figure, and used technology to split "the Littl Shining Man", the atom, into two which led to the explosion known as the "1 Big 1" which destroyed civilization (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 30). The aftermath of the explosion is described: "nothing only nite for years on end. Playgs kilt people off and naminals nor there wernt nothing growit on the groun. Man and woman starveling in the blackness looking for the dog to eat it and the dog looking to eat them the same. Finely there come a day agen then nite and day regler but never like it ben before. Day beartht crookit out of crookit nite and sickness in them boath" (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 19).

Following this destruction, Eusa's family is dispersed and the "Littl Man" appears to Eusa to prophesize his further sufferings (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 30). The stories about the end of the previous world differ because they have been "past down by mouf" as there has been no writing since the apocalypse; and, as such, the stories change depending on the story-teller (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 20). These different versions are often dependent on the teller and their political agendas. These different interpretations vary in worth as some are helpful while others are destructive; what distinguishes the two is the motivation of the storyteller (Branscomb). For example, Lissener portrays the Eusa folk, the deformed mutant descendants from those who survived the nuclear war,



as being victimized by a totalitarian government; whereas Goodparley illustrates the government as dedicated to progressing society for the entire community's benefit.

This ability to change the ending of the Eusa story to fit a particular set of needs depicts that there is essentially a battle for power in this society. Both the Ram and the Eusa folk wish to use knowledge as a means of power. The Eusa folk wish to revolt against the Ram for the torture of their kind and the Ram seeks to maintain control over society. The Eusa folk and the Ram are in a race to find the knowledge to recreate gunpowder in order to acquire control over society. The Eusa folk join together to "do some poasyum" to try piece together their hereditary memory of theoretical science to recreate the nuclear formula (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 107). This "some poasyum" ultimately ends in violence. The Ram tortures Eusa folk for the information in order to recreate gunpowder; thus, also resulting in violence. Even when Granser eventually combines the ingredients, after Riddley discovers Sulphur, he accidentally blows himself and Goodparley up. Thus, the search for knowledge is rendered futile as it seems only to result in violence and destruction. This illustrates that, regardless of the narrator of the Eusa story, the critical feature of the story is missed in every interpretation: that technological progress needs to be subordinate to ethical development.

There are echoes in the Eusa story of various narratives. On one hand it is a straightforward narrative about the desire for forbidden knowledge which leads to the downfall of civilization; not dissimilar from the nuclear scientist's story in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. There are other allusions to religious narratives including the temptation for forbidden knowledge, much like the temptation experienced by Adam and Eve, the suffering Christ in the imagery of the little shining man on a crucifix, and the journey embarked upon for answers like in the Book of Job. Ultimately the Eusa story is similar to the Biblical account of the Fall, explaining humankind's miserable state as a result of men's excessive pursuit of knowledge (Branscomb).

The Eusa Story provides Riddley with a means by which to try to connect his past with his future. Hoban reconstructs the mythical value systems of primitive Hobbesian society by imbuing Riddley's society with an inadequate spiritual or governmental system (Coward). The people who are instilled with the beliefs of the Eusa story become a cult-like following and the puppeteers who

portray the Eusa Story are cultivating the story to become the law or spirituality, by which the people of Cambry live, as a means of fundamentalism. It becomes clear that the role of this narrative within the story becomes the foundation for the rebuilding of the civilization in *Riddley Walker*. Since the “Bad Time”, the time of nuclear war, the remnants of humanity used the Eusa Story as the foundational myth for their society (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 2). It is from the Eusa story that the Eusa show originated.

The Eusa show is a puppet show performed by government members. David W. Sisk describes it in his novel about dystopian fiction as a “show that inculcates official propaganda and historical interpretation, which is performed by the Pry Mincer (Abel Goodparley) and the Wes Mincer (Erny Orfing) of Inland. The Mincers are the highest officials in the Ram government, and their authority extends all over Inland. Their itinerant puppet show is not entertainment, but a serious means of political indoctrination and social control. The Eusa story is Inland’s central myth, explaining how “Bad Time” came about; the Eusa show serves an ongoing exegesis to interpret this myth. The connexion men’s duty is to explicate the meanings of the Eusa show for the populace. Riddley has been trained to “make connexions” by memorizing the Eusa story. He can also read and write, rare skills in a predominantly illiterate culture which preserves both history and legends in oral tales and songs” (Sisk 139). The Mincery depends on connexion men to interpret Eusa shows and, thus, maintain the Ram’s control over society. There are also “tel women” who also make interpretations but of natural events such as stillbirths and the weather (Sisk). They are not literate like the connexion men but they serve to preserve the knowledge of Inland and act independently from the Ram. One such “tel woman” is Lorna Elswint. She is able to influence Riddley by exploring the idea of the “1<sup>st</sup> knowing” in the stories of Inland, which refers to spirituality, wisdom and unity with nature, as opposed to merely the “cleverness”, the scientific aspect of the stories (Sisk). She tells him the significant story of “Why the Dog Wont Show Its Eyes”.

While the story “Why The Dog Wont Show Its Eyes” too infers the destruction of the former world and how people had knowledge, it also tells about “the 1st knowing” but “they [man] los it when they got cleverness and now cleverness is gone as wel” (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 17). The story depicts the transition of society from a state of nature to a more ordered community. A man and woman develop from hunter-gatherers into agricultural farmers with the help of a dog; the dog

looks into their eyes and they have the “1st knowing” (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 17). With their new knowledge and their “contract” with the dog they caught goats and cows and farmed barley and wheat and began to make beer and bread (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 18). Ultimately they begin to create machinery, initially to manufacture agricultural equipment, but technology advances significantly and soon they create the “1 Big 1” to make the “Master Chanynjis” (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 19); a “Power Ring” is built and a nuclear bomb of sorts was created in the advancement of technology to create light all day and eliminate night for the benefit of agricultural farming; but this creates a nuclear explosion that eliminates humankind (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 19). This story differs from the Eusa story as it does not blame the destruction of civilization solely on one scientist but rather on men and women in general. In Lorna’s estimation of humanity she blames people for thinking that “if the 1<sup>st</sup> knowing is this good what myt the 2<sup>nd</sup> knowing and 3<sup>rd</sup> be and so on” (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 18). Thus, illustrating the potential danger inherent in the acquisition of more knowledge and misuse thereof.

Therefore, the stories that the people tell in *Riddley Walker* offer reinterpretations of fragments of the past and how the social collapse is configured in the novel. Although some of the stories and myths tell different ways that the end of the world came about, there is one common thread – nuclear war was rife and ended civilization. Stories were told orally and so changed depending on the storyteller. There had been no writing since the apocalypse, much like the other novels, and so illiteracy is a recurring motif used by the authoritarian figure to keep their societies illiterate in order to control them. As a result of the apocalyptic cataclysm and the deliberate control over the people in Inland, humanity declines significantly (Hoban, *The Guardian Bookclub: Riddley Walker*).

This society illustrates this decline of humanity as it has become backward and fulfils Hobbes’ notion of the state of nature as the people of Inland, despite their attempts at entering into a social contract, are still exceptionally primitive. This post-apocalyptic version of humanity in England is “quite literally, a “bad place”: disease, semi intelligent wild dogs, eternally foul weather, and the lingering effects of radioactive fallout... life expectancy is short, infant mortality rate is high... The constant threat of warfare is clear” (Sisk 143). The brutalities of political expediency are rife and contribute to this state of nature; they cull the Eusa folk, murder the Ardships every twelve

years, torture people for information, and brutally behead those who threaten the order of society and display their heads on poles (Sisk).

One of the most distinctive signs that humanity has declined greatly following the social collapse is the language used in *Riddley Walker*. Like the brutish setting, “the novel’s language manages at once to reflect primitive or mythic paradigms” (Cewart 87). The language in the novel reflects the violated new world in which it exists. This decomposed sense of humanity demands a new register to reflect such deterioration. With its neologisms, phonetic spellings, homonyms or homophonous puns, metathesis, onomatopoeia, childish pronunciations and the widespread use of Cockney English, this language invented by Hoban clearly depicts the world it inhabits (Sisk). John Mullan’s study into the language in *Riddley Walker* suggests that the language used in the novel is a fragmented language and displays how humanity has declined (Mullan). The condition of language in Riddley’s environment, should not be considered a depiction of semantics but rather as a metaphor for the extent of the disaster of humankind (Cewart).

The reduction of language in *Riddley Walker* acts as a metaphor for the world in which Riddley lives. This violation of language is representative of the ruthless diminution of humanity. The apocalyptic cataclysm “halts all other forms of social vitality – so Hoban asks his reader to imagine – would arrest or at least severely retard the evolution of language itself” (Cewart 88). Thus, Hoban has invented a new attenuated language to mirror the disillusionment and disintegration of this primitive society. In order “to convey the stultifying effect that the rigidly controlled society would have on how its citizens think and speak,” post-apocalyptic writers need to “create an imaginatively valid language reflecting the specific social and technological realities of the projected future” (Sisk 145). By coercing his readers into a position where they have to struggle with the language in this post-apocalyptic society, Hoban is reflecting the struggle it must be to live in such a society.

The novel presents the reader “with strange orthography, run-on sentences, multifaceted puns, and a host of other linguistic difficulties that are never facile” (Sisk 138). The vocabulary of this language depicts corruptions of twentieth-century language, particularly the semantics of science, computers, and politics (Branscomb). Hoban stated that “the language we speak is a whole

palimpsest of human effort and history” (Branscomb 107). As such, the terms derived from computer, scientific and political jargon have undergone changes in order to reflect the inner nature of the things named. For example, Branscomb suggests that the government is named the “Mincery” for it shreds and grinds as much as it administers; and the “Pry Mincer” pries into the affairs of the populace. He also acknowledges the twofold nature of the word “Ram”, the seat of the Mincery, for being both a shortened version of Ramsgate, the legislative district for England’s parliament constituency, but also a computer’s Random Access Memory (RAM); thus, linking political and technological power.

There is also the existence of the archaic diction of English, “old spel” in which the Eusa story is written (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 29). This older version of English proves more difficult to read with its orthography even farther removed from today’s English (Sisk). It is more phonetic and most easily understood when read aloud. The existence of this older written language is to exemplify the every-changing nature of language as well as the sacred element of language. Today older versions of language such as Latin are preserved for sacred texts much like this antiquated form of English is considered holy as it is used to recite the sanctified text of Eusa.

When asked why he did not make a more detailed glossary, bibliography, and reference list for *Riddley Walker*, Hoban suggests that the language, because of its fragmented nature, left more room for interpretation. The same way Riddley wonders about interpreting the idea of life, the reader too is able to understand how different interpretations can be. When the language drifted in the novel to this invented language, Hoban left it as fragmentary saying that the “price of admission [to reading and understanding the novel] is working out language yourself. They’re saying what they’re saying. There is no one there to explain it to you” (Russell Hoban at the San Diego State University). This is what Hoban describes as more like “real life” because we do not always understand or have the answers to everything (Russell Hoban at the San Diego State University). The function of Riddley’s language aids in slowing down the speed of the reader’s perception to mirror the speed of Riddley’s perception of his world (Hoban, *The Guardian Bookclub: Riddley Walker*).

Therefore, it is clear that the apocalyptic nuclear war that destroyed civilization resulted in a decline of humanity. However, humanity has managed to survive some thousand years following the apocalyptic cataclysm. Yet, the dynamic of the recovery of humanity is based on a misinterpreted fragment of the past; and it is upon this misinterpretation that they build the foundation for a civilization.

In an attempt to recover following the apocalypse, the society of Inland appointed a governing body; simulating the effects of a social contract. However, rather than appointing an authority that works towards, fairness, justice in equality in society, as is the implied purpose of a governing body in the social contract theory, the government in *Riddley Walker* seeks to control social order. They have manipulated the Eusa story to disseminate official propaganda. The power of this story is so influential that “Hoban depicts a society so thoroughly controlled by the oligarchs’ use of religiohistorical myth that neither physical conditioning nor brutal terrorism are necessary to maintain power” (Sisk 148). This repressive government specifically keeps its citizens illiterate and misinformed, thus, suppressing opposition. Only government officials and unwitting apologists, such as the connexion men, are able to read and write to limit heretical beliefs. This abuse of power illustrates an issue with the social contract as suggested by John Locke. When appointing one authoritarian body, society found that this “thing which they had devised for a remedy, did indeed but increase the sore which it should have cured. They saw, that to live by one man’s will, became the cause of all men’s misery” (Locke 42). Thus, the government is hindering humanity’s recovery by controlling the myth central to their social functioning.

The Eusa story provides a mythic model of history that the people of Cambry have embraced and is described by Mircea Eliade as a “myth of the eternal return” for it represents the acquisition of knowledge which will be an eternally recurring endeavour (Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* 89). In his studies on the role of mythology and ritual, Eliade suggests that myth and ritual are vehicles of “eternal return” to the mythical age (Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* 89). Traditional man’s mythical and ritual influenced life imbues his existence with value by constantly uniting him with the origins of time. Eliade’s theory in *Myth and Reality* is also valuable for it considers the nature of the myth and how “knowing the origin of an object, an animal, a plant, and so on is equivalent to acquiring a magical power over them” (Eliade, *Myth and Reality* 15). If one

gains control over the origin of the myth, one gains control of the myth itself; thus, if the Mincery has control over the origins of the Eusa story, they have control over what messages the Eusa show disseminates. Eliade concluded that, if origin and power are to be the same, "it is the first manifestation of a thing that is significant and valid" (Eliade, *Myth and Reality* 34).

In an interview, Russell Hoban suggests the importance of the Eusa myth: "Yes, I think the myth-making capability is vital to our survival, and I think it has been allowed to atrophy, to shrivel up. I think the mythic way of receiving things is a natural one that helps us understand the world better, to get a better grip on things than what you would call the rational" (Hoban, *Rupert Loydell talks to Russell Hoban*). Myth provides us with a context from which to draw. The Eusa show portrays a myth from which Riddley and his people draw, however, it has been grossly misinterpreted. As a result, it becomes "a degenerate or factitious myth of the fall and of endless punishment, is unbuttressed by myths of creation or redemption; consequently it offers little to those who embrace it" (Coward 90). Being a primitive ritual, the Eusa show represents "the mythical time of the beginning" by unifying the participants with a myth about origin (Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* 20). Eliade assumes during the time that lapses between the original and the ritual that humankind has erred in some way and, as a result, myth and ritual allows for a new beginning. This is true in the case of *Riddley Walker*; for the origin of the myth is today's world and the myth itself is occurring as a ritual to Riddley's people and, in between these two time periods, an apocalyptic cataclysm has destroyed the world; thus, paving the way for a new beginning for Inland. However, Hoban's characters do not return to a pristine beginning but rather a primitive society. As such, the mythic perception of time and history functions imperfectly and Riddley's society becomes increasingly aware of their primitiveness in contrast to history; therefore, leading the people of Cambry and the Mincery yearning to acquire the former material greatness of their ancestry.

In this desire to recreate the technological advancement of the previous civilization, Goodparley creates a new puppet show in an attempt to justify his new objectives and beliefs by reshaping the Eusa story. He tried to manipulate history as the people of Cambry know it; this is reminiscent of George Orwell's deceitful Ministry of Truth as Goodparley, like Big Brother in *1984*, modifies history when deemed necessary (Coward). Thus, it becomes clear that the people of Cambry believe

myths that inadequately serve the good of the people. Ultimately this society is somewhere in between a state of nature and entry into a social contract in this apocalyptic aftermath. The result of the apocalypse sent the remnants of humankind into a downward spiral and, although they have a government and some sort of religious system, it is ill-functioning, and their customs are still somewhat primitive and so the dynamic of their recovery is complex. Recovery is difficult when those aiding in the recovery are using the only remnant of the past as a tool for propaganda.

Riddley's character is the only character that provides hope for humanity's recovery. Riddley's development has an ethical undercurrent to it. This becomes evident when Riddley and Lorna muse at the thought there is "some thing in us it dont have no name" (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 5). When she explains to Riddley that "its looking out thru our eye hoals" it becomes clear that Lorna is describing the brain and human consciousness (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 6). She goes on to say "we aint a naturel part of it. We dint begin when it begun we dint begin where it begun" (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 6). This could be seen as an allusion to religion or spirituality; there is something bigger than us, controlling us. There must be something that created us. And "it thinks us but it dont think like us. It dont think the way we think" (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 6). Lorna believes there is some greater force. Riddley begins to wonder if he was always aware that there was something in him like this; "our woal life is a idear we dint think of nor we dont know what it is" (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 7). He concludes the chapter by suggesting that it is these thoughts that probed him to write his story: "Thats why i finely come to writing all this down. Thinking on what the idear of us myt be. Thinking on that thing whats in us lorn and loan and oanesome" (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 7). This inquiry into human consciousness suggests a reversion back to religiosity of the former civilization. The character of Riddley illustrates both the need and desire to believe in something greater than the Eusa story and something greater than themselves.

In such a post-apocalyptic milieu, these people have no knowledge on human beings and their capacity. The existential question Riddley is asking is dissimilar to questions contemporary humankind asks. In modern society people question their existence based on their purpose and the meaning of life. Riddley's existential question, however, is far more basic. He wants to understand how humankind exists. In current society we have many narratives describing how humankind came into being; from religious to scientific. Yet, when Riddley asks this question he has no



knowledge of the past to aid in his understanding of humankind. His world is based upon misinterpreted stories of the war and the Old Catholic Saint Eustace. This society is only beginning to develop and have yet to realize what humankind is capable of and how they are capable of doing it. They do not have the scientific knowledge about the brain and biological processes of the human body. They have no psychological way of understanding their desires and they have no moral compass with which to guide such desires. And with so many variations of their canonical text, the Eusa story, Riddley embarks upon a journey to come up with his own understanding of “what the ideal of us may be [...] the thing that is in us” (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 7). It is upon this mission that Riddley will begin to answer his own existential questions and, thus, begin to understand how his society can recover.

The journey Riddley embarks upon is similar to the journey travelled by Eusa. As a penalty for misusing science to create nuclear warfare Eusa’s penalty is to experience all the “Master Chaynjis” much like undergoing the changes caused by the radioactive decay following the fission of the nuclear particle (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 19). Thus, leading to Eusa’s wandering about the dead towns. Therefore, by re-enacting Eusa’s travels, through the travelling Eusa shows, the Ram is hoping that the repetition of such a journey will eventually lead to some form of higher understanding. This is clear in the ritual prayer chanted by the connexion man and the audience before a Eusa show is performed:

I said, “We are going ain’t we.”

The crowd said, “Yes we are going.”

I said, “Down that road with Eusa.”

They said, “Time and requyrt.”

I said, “Where them Chaynjis take us.”

They said, “He done his time we will do our time.”

I said, “He is doing it for us.”

They said, “We are doing it for him.”

I said, “Keep it going. Chances this time.”

They said, “Chances next time.”

I said, "New chance every time."

They said, "New chance every time."

Excerpt (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 44)

In this journey, emblematic of Eusa's journey, Riddley himself experiences his own Master Chaynjis. At first Riddley desires this scientific knowledge. When Riddley talks about the "2 wantit to be 1 agen" he is suggesting that there are cosmic forces beyond his or anyone else's comprehension that will eventually adjoin to create the knowledge necessary for creating the scientific technology that will ultimately lead to nuclear discovery (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 158). Riddley begins to desire the knowledge that will lead to the growth and improvement of society.

However, with each experience, Riddley gains new insight, a "new chance" (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 44). He learns that the Eusa show is merely a tool for the government to maintain control over the people. He realizes the potential dangers of misusing knowledge to wield technological power destructively. He has a spiritual experience in the Cathedral in Cambry leading him to value spiritual power and wisdom over technological power. This Cathedral has always signified technological power as it was the location of the "Power Ring" but Riddley has an epiphany that this place also signifies a spiritual power, much older and stronger than any technological power (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 19).

Riddley's surreal moment in Canterbury Cathedral allows him to discern the history of human transgression where he discovers a version of the tree of Knowledge. Following this moment, a story comes to him which leads him to scrupulously analyze the different types of knowledge from the destructive scientific knowledge pursued by politicians, like Goodparley and Orfing, to the mythic and cultural tradition transmitted in the tales and fables in the novel (Cowart). It is in this spiritual epiphany that Riddley conceives of the figure of Greanvine. Greanvine is the puppet he later uses in his own show that embodies man's unity with nature and his revulsion against technology and its destructive potential. This illustrates Riddley's growing insight into the human condition enabling him to differentiate between the various kinds of knowledge.

Riddley's entire journey surrounds his realization that the pursuit of knowledge for power can only lead to the recreation of the destruction of the former world which frightens him (Gerry). As a result, Riddley is able to recognize the danger and moral burden of power: "The onlyes power is no power", which he later he amends to: "I sust that wernt qwite it. It aint that its no power. Its the not sturging for Power thats where the Power is. Its in jus letting your self be where it is. Its tuning in to the worl its leaving your self behynt" (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 196-197). He means to suggest that one must abandon the idea of self to the totality of the universe for it is imperative that mankind be at one with the universe and "Riddley's most profound insight, and the moral heart of the novel, expresses this perception in historical terms that remind the reader of the familiar problems of modern civilization" (Gerry). This problem that knowledge can be abused by men for their own avaricious motives.

It is important to note that Riddley himself discovers Sulphur, the key ingredient to recreating gunpowder. As such, Riddley has to bear the guilt of having discovered this destructive substance and like Punch's hump; this signifies "Drop John's [the devil] ryding on his back" (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 219). Thus, "Riddley's narrative provides a basic understanding of nuclear fission, which in turn enables the reader to grasp the profundity of the moral issues involved" (Sisk 149). Through the explanation of the creation of nuclear weaponry, Hoban is able to "unite quantum theory, social development and individual responsibility" (Sisk 149). Therefore, to assuage his guilt and take responsibility for this potentially destructive discovery, together with the Master Chaynjis experienced on his journey, Riddley creates his own show in the end, teaching values that are absent in the Eusa show; purporting goodness and moral direction. Sisk asserts that Riddley and Orfing's Punch show tears down the tenets of the Eusa show in order for their society "to make the transition from passive observers to active participants in their own destiny" (Sisk 153). Thus, Riddley uses the trusted, most influential form of imparting information in his society, a travelling puppet show, "to educate the populace away from dependence on official myths and toward a reliance on personal morality" (Sisk 153).

An example of Riddley's personal morality is illustrated in a tender moment he has with the leader of the dog pack. At one point on the journey the leader of the dog pack presses his nose into Riddley's hand. This affection causes Riddley to weep. He is showing a kind of compassion that

seems to be forgotten in his world. This gesture suggests that it is possible for the people of Riddley's world to be able to rekindle their morality with compassion and love; emotions lost among the primitive. Riddley wonders if no power really is the only power. He begins to think that in fact it is actually "in jus letting your self be where it is. Its tuning in to the worl its leaving your self behynt and letting your self be where it is" (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 197). Hoban cried when he read about the leader dog seeking affection from Riddley because it is such a powerful image of love and humanity amongst the violence in the novel (Hoban, *The Guardian Bookclub: Riddley Walker*). Therefore, it is evident that the character of Riddley and his journey signify a hope that humanity can recover.

Therefore, *Riddley Walker* clearly demonstrates how significant narrative can be in creating a civilization. It is apparent that a misinterpreted story is the narrative that shapes the society which Riddley inhabits. Their socio-political functioning uses a false myth of Saint Eustace as its foundation. This clearly suggests that narrative plays a momentous role in the rebuilding of society in the post-apocalyptic landscape that is known as Cambry. The role of the Eusa story has negative and positive influences. It guides and defines the actions of particular characters, and the story is used to create what resembles the basis of a governmental body and a skewed spirituality in the novel, which are pivotal features in reconstructing an effective social contract.

However, it is important to note that the Eusa story is not the only story in the novel. There are more stories that act as fables such as the "Hart of The Wud". These are fables as they depict right versus wrong. This particular story is reminiscent of the temptation in Adam and Eve. "Mr Clevver" represents the serpent and tempts the man and woman with the knowledge of how to create fire but in doing so they murder and eat their own child. They burn to death as a result of their sins. An ethical code is suggested in this story as the ideas of right and wrong are alluded to through these characters. The reference to cannibalism suggests a decline in ethics and is resonant of the charred infant body in *The Road*. The sacrifice of the baby in "Hart of the Wud" also echoes the Punch and Judy show which too has a moral undercurrent. Riddley wonders "Why is Punch [and the recurring figure of the devil] crookit? Why wil he all ways kil the babby if he can? Parbly I wont never know its jus on me to think on it" (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 220). David Cowart (95) suggests that "Punch represents erring, concupiscent humanity". He goes on to insinuate that

humanity will continue to give in to such nameless cruelty unless there is some sort of direction given to the people of Cambry.

It is through these various stories in the novel that allows Riddley to recognize the one constant in human experience – the figure of evil. Riddley’s entire narrative concerns a realization that the pursuit of knowledge tends to result in destruction and Riddley foresees a future which frightens him (Cowart). This leads Riddley to acquire a better understanding of the power of narrative and the moral implications of the knowledge that it conveys.

At one point in the novel Goodparley openly acknowledges the power of narrative as he exclaims, “words! Theywl move things you know theywl do things. Theywl fetch. Put a name to some thing and youre beckoning. Iwl write a message if I have to but I wunt word moren that on paper. Eusa ben fetcht by words on paper” (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 122). Words have the power to beckon; to bring into being. The Eusa story was brought into being by a vestige of the past, as displayed by Goodparley, when he states that “what ben makes tracks for what wil be. Words in the air pirnt steps on the groun for us to put our feet in to” (Hoban, *Riddley Walker* 121). Goodparley is reinforcing the power and influence of narrative. Their oral stories that have been passed down lay the way for the future.

Hoban is constantly reinforcing the power of words. This is also evident in the character of Lissener. Riddley remarks that Lissener cannot even see where he is walking let alone the possibilities of what may or may not happen. Lissener says that those who have eyes merely think they can see more than he can but no one can see the truth for they have been fed lies and misinformation by the Ram. Therefore, the physical act of seeing becomes unimportant and the ability to see beyond words is what is important; the lessons and value behind words. The knowledge within these stories can aid in making new discoveries which can lead to progress; or it would seem in this case, potential destruction.

The end of the novel is uncertain. Like *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, there is the potential for another apocalypse; with the memorabilia being sent into space with man there exists the possibility that men will merely misuse it again or rebuild civilization from it. In *Riddley Walker*, now that the

ingredients for nuclear warfare have been discovered, Hoban leaves the reader wondering whether or not this society will use this knowledge to complete the circular pattern of humanity which always seems to end in final destruction. Despite the pessimistic connotations of the cyclic pattern of human nature and the end, an essayist on Hoban's work, Nancy Dew Taylor, remarks that the existence of Riddley's Punch show suggests that "Hoban does not concede man's recapitulation to history" (Taylor 30). The fear that the formula for gunpowder will lead to the destruction of humanity once again is politically useful. It can help society to replace one story with another and thus modify its values. Thus, Hoban intends to illustrate that, with a fair warning, society may be able to change its ways.

Both the Punch show and the novel of *Riddley Walker* are narratives that aim to warn society against continuing the destructive cycle of humanity's misuse of knowledge. Rather than divulging the technological formula to recreate nuclear warfare, Riddley's Punch show intends to lead humanity towards the "1<sup>st</sup> knowing" which signifies "a near-Edenic understanding of humanity as part of the natural world's larger unity" (Taylor 29). Thus, illustrating a glimmer of hope that Riddley's new story may allow for humanity to regain such an understanding of human life and guide them towards creating a new, flourishing civilization.

Therefore, it can be said that *Riddley Walker* serves a didactic purpose for contemporary society; "Hoban's didactic warnings go beyond reminding us of the horrors of nuclear weapons [...] the speed with which scientific and technological knowledge progresses outpaces the moral and ethical growth necessary to deal with them" (Sisk 145). Technological advancement in the world is growing at such a rapid pace that advancements in scientific warfare are a realistic possibility. However, humanity has the ability to prevent such a cataclysm owing to our moral compass. Whereas the characters of *Riddley Walker* indicate the split between technological innovation and moral evolution; "the absence of moral maturity is the root of all evil, not technology" (Sisk 154). Thus, demonstrating the significant role storytelling can play in acting as a site of ethics and moral guide.

When probed as to whether or not *Riddley Walker* offers any hope at the end of the novel, Russell Hoban responds that "it is a very optimistic book. It has in it the idea that although we are driven

by all sorts of demons that make us destroy ourselves, we are equally driven by demons that make us try to understand why we destroy ourselves. So in us there is always a mingling of destructive and creative forces” (Hoban, *Rupert Loydell talks to Russell Hoban*). He hypothesizes that there exists in humanity a conflict between wanting to live and the potential for destruction in the desire to live. Like in Riddley’s society, they want to thrive, yet, in doing so, they recreate the catalyst for recreating nuclear weaponry which ultimately causes humanity’s demise. It is a character like Riddley who provides hope, for he recognizes this conflict, and seeks to rectify it by compiling his own Eusa show which will purport this message; a new narrative that will display the “linked complexities of nuclear physics and the overwhelming moral questions regarding the application of such knowledge” (Sisk 147). Therefore, *Riddley Walker* clearly depicts the significant role narrative plays in post-apocalyptic representations of the social contract.

## **The Road by Cormac McCarthy**

*The Road* (2006) follows a man and his son as they traverse a post-apocalyptic wasteland. A nuclear disaster has ended their world in flames and now they are making their way through a post-apocalyptic milieu. They are trying to get to the coast where it is rumoured that a new community is beginning to rebuild itself. Along the road, the father tells his son stories that ignite a metaphorical flame in his son. His son will use the flame of knowledge as the hope for a new future.

In *The Cormac McCarthy Journal*, Diane Luce considers Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and its inception. She discusses the exact moment the idea of *The Road* formed in McCarthy's mind "when McCarthy gazed out a hotel window in El Paso and imagined what it "might look like in fifty or a hundred years. I [he] just had this image of these fires up on the hill and everything being laid waste and I thought a lot about my little boy. And so I wrote those pages and that was the end of it" (Luce, *Beyond the Border: Cormac McCarthy in the New Millennium* 9). This image of a blazing city remained fixed in his memory, in conjunction with that of his son sleeping in the bed behind him. At a time when nuclear war is a possibility, the apocalypse is once again relevant and McCarthy delves into an investigation on how he, as a father, would protect his son if such a disaster were to strike and how one would survive such a catastrophe. This novel was written not long after 9/11 and McCarthy is expressing his dissatisfaction with current social conditions and how the threat of nuclear war has made the idea of the apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic more pertinent in contemporary society.

This chapter discusses *The Road* and its potential to renew society as well as the role the father's stories play in reforming some sort of semblance of a society. Currently the world that the father and son inhabit is still in the state of nature with primitive hordes of cannibals roving the lands and no built up community just yet. They are travelling to find remnants of humanity. The father's stories provide one of the last remaining forms of hope for both the boy and humanity. The stories the father tells his son have vestiges of the past and remain a site of ethics for the boy. It is through this narrative that the boy understands the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. The loving relationship between him and his father is of the utmost significance because it indicates



the hope upon which the boy will one day found other relationships and, as such, build his own community around him. As is prominent in post-apocalyptic fiction, Cormac McCarthy has written with the assumption that the apocalypse has not eradicated all of humankind but there are human beings that remain; it is the quest of the father and son to find like-minded people and begin to build another society

The social collapse in *The Road* is physically exemplified in the post-apocalyptic environment that this pair are navigating. A nuclear disaster obliterates the world in flames and, only through the stories that the father tells his son and the man's memories of the past, can one understand how the social collapse is configured in *The Road*. The social collapse in the novel causes one to imagine what an apocalyptic moment may implicate for the future of humankind.

The man describes the beginning of the end of the world: "The clocks stopped at 1:17" (McCarthy 52). He goes into the bathroom and tries to turn on the light but there is no more electricity. He runs a bath. His wife, supporting her pregnant stomach, asks why he is bathing. He is not; he is saving what water they have left. He describes how in those "early years" he listened to the sound of birds migrating, knowing he would never hear their chirrups again (McCarthy 53). McCarthy is drawing attention to the things we take for granted and the menial, everyday nuances that begin to dissipate as the world comes to an end. McCarthy's didactic warning is making the idea of the end more real and accessible to the reader by forcing us to imagine life without what we have today.

The social collapse drives the man's wife to commit suicide as a gentler means by which to end her life; she would rather take her own life than face the prospect of trying to survive the post-apocalyptic wilderness that awaits them and the savages that roam it. The man describes a visual image of the post-apocalyptic world he sees around him which represents how humanity has collapsed: "[he steps] out in the gray light and stood and he saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world. The cold relentless circling of the intestate earth. Darkness implacable [...] the crushing black vacuum of the universe. And somewhere two hunted animals trembling like ground-foxes in their cover. Borrowed time and borrowed world and borrowed eyes with which to sorrow it" (McCarthy 130). The social collapse has obliterated the physical world and, as a result,

he aligns himself and his son to animals being hunted that need to survive in the wild. The apocalypse has destroyed what we know today and McCarthy has described imaginings of what a possible post-apocalyptic world could be like.

The father describes the throngs of people that walked the road after the world was destroyed due to ravaging fires. They would wear masks and goggles trying to escape the toxic climate. He reads an old newspaper in an abandoned house as his son sleeps and marvels at how such a cataclysm can resolve what were once problems and issues into nonexistence. McCarthy is illustrating how contemporary society faces problems that, in hindsight, become trivial in contrast to the difficulties delivered by the post-apocalyptic wasteland they must survive. He looks over to his sleeping son and asks himself if he is capable of shooting his son in the event that they get caught by the “bad guys” because he would rather his son die by his own hands than by being caught and eaten by the vicious cannibals; this depicts the severity of the post-apocalyptic circumstances surroundings (McCarthy 7). For a father would rather murder his own kin than let him die at the hands of people driven savage by their primitiveness. This post-apocalyptic milieu as described by McCarthy clearly portrays the state of nature. Men have reverted to primal means of survival. Thomas Hobbes and John Locke describe this state of nature as lawless and brutal. People living in such a climate become primitive and violent to the extent of resorting to eating their fellow men as a means of survival.

In an attempt to understand the calamity that brought about the end of his old world, the father asks himself, “what had they done? He thought that in the history of the world it might even be that there was more punishment than crime but he took small comfort from it” (McCarthy 33). The man considers the apocalypse as a punishment but this does not console him. In his discussion about the apocalypse and its aftermath, Jay Ellis considers *The Road* and how “the father and son problem is woven through the problem of the literal and the symbolic, the impetus to lead an ethical life of success conflicting with the call to death after you fail in a hopeless moral quest” (Ellis 28). He suggests the importance of recognizing the “distinction between the fires that ravage the hillsides and scorch the road, and the fire carried forward by the father and son” (Ellis 28). Ellis goes on to say that the symbolic fire the pair are carrying represents an ethical duty of humankind (Ellis 30). Ellis is asserting that physical social collapse should not be orientated inwards to a

personal collapse and that the father and son need to continue on their journey despite the challenges that face them. The obliterated world is all that is left and travelling the road is their only chance of survival. The father makes it his dying quest to get his son to the coast so that his son has an opportunity to continue living; but they have to make their way through the harsh terrain and survive the resultant decline in humanity that they encounter along the road.

The social collapse in *The Road* results in a regression of humankind to primal behaviour. Many characters that the father and son come across in the novel portray this reversion to a state of nature. It is seemingly only the father and son duo that have any kind of ethical values in the desolate post-apocalyptic milieu. *The Road* has many post-apocalyptic nuances, besides ransacked remains of buildings and the ash covered sky there are vile cannibals that lurk in the novel. These cannibals personify the decline in humanity in the novel. The father and son come across many of them and the father keeps a gun housing two bullets to spare them the horror of being eaten alive if they are captured by the cannibals.

The father describes the time directly after the apocalypse when humanity began to regress to its primordial state: “By then all stores of food had given out and murder was everywhere upon the land. The world soon to be largely populated by men who would eat your children in front of your eyes and the cities themselves held by cores of blackened looters who tunneled among the ruins and crawled from the rubble of white tooth and eye carrying charred and anonymous tins of food in nylon nets like the shoppers in the commissaries of hell” (McCarthy 181). Hobbes’s comprehension of the social contract theory suggests that the people looting do not consider this unjust because the notions of right and wrong have gone astray in such an environment. Once the remaining food stores have expired, the natural primitive instinct to survive overcomes any moral code, thus, leading to behaviour such as cannibalism. Anarchy, violence, and cannibalism is clearly portrayed in the father’s description of men’s actions following the apocalyptic cataclysm depicting the regression to the state of nature. This illustrates the need to enter into a social contract to resurrect some sense of order and justice in society.

There are numerous instances of brutality and cannibalism in the novel. Upon their journey, the father and son find a house in which they come across a locked cellar. In the cellar they find naked

people, some missing limbs. In the woods they encounter the remains of a boiled corpse and the scorched and blackened body of a headless infant cooking atop a fire. They come across mangled bodies in the road and a severed head in a looted drugstore. The man and son, amidst the brutality in the novel, affirm that they would never “eat anybody [...] even if we were starving [...] because we’re the good guys [...] and we’re carrying the fire” (McCarthy 128). As much as the father tries to reassure that he and his son are the good guys, the violent society through which they travel coerces the father to consider his actions. This in itself is a decline in humanity. For a man who may have grown up never considering a situation where he may have to commit murder or steal, now has to think about doing it daily in order to protect his son. The cannibalistic element of the novel considers atavism and the regression of humanity into a state of nature that illustrates an extreme form of savage behaviour. However, Jean Jacques Rousseau’s state of nature suggests that this kind of primitive condition forces mankind into a social contract. For the human race will cease to exist if humankind continues with this behaviour and, as such, they have no choice but to enter into a social contract.

Throughout the novel the family structure of the son and father is prominent. Jean Jacques Rousseau’s theory of the social contract states that the family structure provides the most natural model of apolitical society. The father acts as the governing body to his son and the son remains connected to his father through this dynamic. It is important that the bond between the father and son is so strong because the father, as the governing body, and his stories orientate his son towards developing a value and belief system. According to Rousseau, it is this basic familial structure that will provide the base from which society will progress in order to create a new social structure.

As a result of this decline in humanity, the father’s knowledge begins to fade as the “names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colours, the names of birds. Things to eat. Finally, the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought. How much was already gone? The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality” (McCarthy 88-89). The passing on of knowledge seems secondary in a time where the father cannot feed, bathe or shelter his son, yet, it will provide the foundation upon which to rebuild society.

They stumble upon mangled bodies in the road. The man offers his hand to the boy saying he should not have to see this because it will remain in his mind forever. The boy says “it’s okay Papa [...] They’re already there” (McCarthy 189). And the man describes the boy as “strangely untroubled” by the horrific sight of the bodies partially engulfed by the road, their body language that of writhing in pain (McCarthy 191). The man has a frame of reference; he lived and grew up in the old world and has an understanding of civilized society. The boy however is unmoved by the corpses for such ghastly images are his only frame of reference. Gory visions of the dead are permanently engrained in his mind for it is all he has known. This violent imagery has become his reality as a result of the social collapse.

The father has instilled the idea of the “good guys” and the “bad guys” in the son’s mind and, throughout the novel, there is a recurring thread that the boy must live up to the expectations of being one of the “good guys”: “this is what the good guys do. They keep trying. They don’t give up” (McCarthy 137). The boy is one of the only characters that does not display the decline in humanity but rather portrays hope for the dynamic of the recovery after the social collapse.

After the resultant decline in humanity owing to the apocalyptic cataclysm, the dynamic of the recovery of humanity is represented in the boy. While his moral compass may be juxtaposed against the drifting hordes of cannibals, the boy’s unyielding compassion and ethical behaviour still suggests that there is hope for humanity as it recovers from the apocalypse. In a world that seems lost, the recovery thereof becomes dependent on the boy’s humanity.

Even the idea of a god has declined in this post-apocalyptic society. The man utters that there are no more “godspoke” men on the road (McCarthy 32). This neologism suggests that there are no more men on the road who believe in God. Religion and spirituality give people a sense of purpose; but this dark world which they now inhabit has given men no purpose. He proclaims that these “godspoke” men are “gone and I am [he is] left and they have taken with them the world” (McCarthy 32). The people believing in God have either died out or those who believed in God no longer do; for what kind of God would cause or allow such devastation? Thus, religion and belief cease to exist on the road; only darkness, destruction, and desolation. This illustrates the decline in any sort of belief system and the need to recreate one to elicit faith and hope for humanity.

It is important to note that McCarthy grew up Catholic and much of his imagery and logic is biblical. Steven Frye's investigation into the work of Cormac McCarthy describes that, while McCarthy has expressed uncertainty about essential questions such as the existence of God, the relationship between good and evil, and the nature of transcendent moral purpose and order, he has still expressed the value of hope, faith and gratitude. Frye suggests that most of McCarthy's work systematically positions characters to permit contentious interaction in order to explore the deep and vexing questions about faith. The erratic pilgrimage made by the father and son to the coast explores the "human potential for violence, avarice, blindness, self-gratification, and depravity" (Frye 11). The philosophical content of the novel enriches the protagonists both physically and ethically as their quest is one of moral urgency. Joan Frawley Desmond's review of *The Road* looks particularly at religious elements of the novel. As their pilgrimage goes on, the father and son care for each other even more deeply and much of their discussion is based upon the ideas of sin, sacrifice, death, and love. Desmond suggests that, as a result of these musings, this community of two adopts the elements of a sacrament. The novel probes the reader as to what it means to believe in love and, if one believes in love, are they able to believe in God, the source of all love? The novel does not answer these questions but does insinuate that love is stronger than death and evil will not have the final word (Desmond).

An allusion to the necessity for faith is illustrated in a touching scene where the father washes his son's hair. This scene takes on the form of a ceremonial anointing: "this is my child he said. I wash a dead man's brains out of his hair. That is my job [...] All of this like some ancient anointing. So be it. Evoke the forms. When you've nothing else construct ceremonies out of the air and breathe upon them" (McCarthy 74). An anointing serves as a symbol of consecration. By recognizing the boy's goodness and the hope that the boy represents, the father considers him to be divine (P. A. Snyder 75). By anointing the son, the father is giving the boy a token of honour and giving the boy a special purpose to their endeavour of carrying the fire. This act serves to confirm the boy's faith in something greater than themselves, such as love. In a study in still life on *The Road*, Randall Wilhelm considers this moment of anointing the son as "a site of intense significance, performing as the narrative's supreme container motif, the core of ethical and religious values. The boy's innocence, coupled with the father's mental imagery, combine to evoke a sense of divine goodness,

with language and metaphor serving as a functional beauty that allows the father moments of determined faith that buoy his protection of the child from danger” (Wilhelm 136). While it is important to note that this allusion to Christianity does not mean to say that Christian morality is normative and is the moral code that ought to be followed, it does represent more than religion. Through this ceremonial anointing, the boy is able to learn tradition, love, and compassion from his father which are values one does not come across in their current living conditions; these values provide hope for the dynamic of recovery of society.

There are numerous instances where the boy’s love and compassion are evident. There is an abandoned dog in a deserted town and the boy does not want to harm the dog; a clear sign of his humanity. The boy acknowledges the innocence of the dog and hopes the dog will survive. The boy sees another boy about his own age. He chases the young boy, weeping, but he cannot find him. He is deeply concerned about the young boy: “what if that little boy doesn’t have anybody to take care of him? What if he doesn’t have a papa? I’m afraid for that little boy [...] We should go get him, Papa. We could get him and take him with us. We could take him and we could take the dog. The dog could catch something to eat [...] And I’d give the little boy half my food” (McCarthy 85). This clearly illustrates the boy’s humanity because he wants to save whomever or whatever he comes across even if it is to their own detriment.

The man and the boy happen upon an elderly man along the road. They try help him by feeding him and spending the night with him. The man asks the older man to thank the boy. The old man does not thank them. The father asks him “What if I said that he’s [the boy’s] a god?” the old man responds, “It’s better to be alone. So I hope that’s not true what you said because to be on the road with the last god would be a terrible thing so I hope it’s not true” (McCarthy 172). Travelling the road with the last god would elicit ethical pressure on the father to guide the last hope for humanity. When the elderly man refuses to express gratitude for their hospitality at the request of the father, who wants the generosity and goodness of his son acknowledged, he asks, “Why did he do it?” to which the father responds, “You wouldn’t understand....I’m not sure I do” (McCarthy 172). They have become slaves to the violent, terrible circumstances of the road and the boy’s actions, driven by goodness, in a world that has been stripped of its virtuousness, become incomprehensible. Phillip Snyder’s investigation into hospitality in the novel suggests that “this refusal by the old

man to thank the boy who acts solely out of a pure kind of ethical empathy reflects the Derridian notion that real hospitality exists without acknowledgment and without reciprocation; it exists as a gift, beyond anyone's ability to articulate it" (P. A. Snyder 81).

Judith Still's investigation into Jacques Derrida's work on hospitality relates to the crossing of boundaries and focuses on the fundamental ethical question of human boundaries. Derrida's law of hospitality not only denotes the political domain of laws and rights, but also a socially situated moral code. The politics of hospitality include a moral social code which covers the physical practice and labour of gestures (Still). This moral code, although varying in different cultures and times, refers to an affective structure; that if the gesture is made without sincerity then there is a transgression of the code of hospitality (Still). The laws of hospitality comprise both rights and duties. As such, it is the boy's right to be thanked and the old man's duty to thank the boy for his kindness; but, in a world devoid of humanity the laws of hospitality have been transgressed. Derrida suggests that "hospitality is ethics, [it] is the condition of humanity... for hospitality is not some region of ethics... it is ethnicity itself, the whole and the principle of ethics" (Still 7-8). Derrida's insight into hospitality elucidates ethical responsibility; to be able to be hospitable is an indication of one's inherent ethical demeanour. Therefore, the boy's hospitality and integrity is inherent and so he does not expect acknowledgement thereof, which illustrates his sincerity; thus, depicting hope in the boy's recovery of humanity.

Wilhelm considers how the scenes of human depravity seen by the boy can be juxtaposed to the way in which the father tries to protect him from such sights. The father tries to fill the boy's mind with stories of "courage and justice" (McCarthy 41) where they were "always helping people" (McCarthy 268), stories of what is good and beautiful, which is symbolized by the literal and metaphorical fire they carry (Wilhelm 138). Although the child knows little about the old world and its customs, "he does have within him the knowledge of prayer, charity and gratitude, qualities that must have been embedded in the stories the father has told him. And even if the father forgets sometimes, the boy remembers" (Wilhelm 138).

A key moment in the novel that portrays this problem of the father forgetting the lessons he has taught the boy through his stories, but the boy remembering them, is when their cart is looted.



They find the thief and the father, in anger, compels the thief to undress and takes his shoes. The boy pleads with his father to stop and help the scared, dying thief. The son has taken responsibility for the role he has played in this encounter and regards himself as his own agent of responsibility for himself (P. A. Snyder). The father shows remorse and tries to tell the son that “I wasn’t going to kill him (McCarthy 260). The boy responds, “but we did kill him” (McCarthy 260). The father is doing a good deed by protecting his son, yet, has also done badly by harming another. Despite this problem of good versus evil, the son manages to convince his father to do the right thing by leaving the thief’s clothing in the road in the hopes that he will find them; thus, demonstrating the boy’s values.

They find an underground cellar on the property filled with tinned food, water, paper towels and blankets; “the richness of a vanished world” (McCarthy 139). The boy queries if they are allowed to take the goods or if it would be stealing; a sign of the boy’s understanding of right and wrong. The cellar provides the man and the boy with warm shelter, water, a toilet and more food than they can eat. Before they eat a feast of ham, eggs, biscuits and coffee the boy asks the man if they can thank “the people who gave us all this” (McCarthy 145). The boy goes on to pray: “Dear people, thank you for all this food and stuff. We know that you saved it for yourself and if you were here we wouldn’t eat it no matter how hungry we were and we’re sorry that you didn’t get to eat it and we hope that you’re safe in heaven with God” (McCarthy 146). While neither the boy or McCarthy himself may not necessarily understand who or what God is, they both recognize the faith that He represents. The boy’s understanding of the importance of prayer displays his compassion, gratitude, and faith which are fundamental in ethical consideration.

The man and the boy eventually reach “the gap”, a place where the man once stood with his own father (McCarthy 33). In his investigation into the route of the road in the novel, Wesley Morgan postulates that the road almost becomes a metaphorical memory lane that the father is travelling. As he travels this memory lane he tries to pass his memories on to his son in order to use these remnants of the past to impart a form of humanity onto his son (Morgan).

The man watches the boy while he sleeps and is overcome by tears; “he wasn’t sure what it was about but he thought it was about beauty or goodness. Things that he’d no longer any way to think

about at all” (McCarthy 129). By reciting stories to the boy, the man is trying “to judge, carefully, which skills of cunning, of suspicion, of handiness, to hand down to the child, and which habits of these would prove to be a burden, even a curse” (Ellis 33). The father acknowledges that the boy represents the recovery for humanity and realizes it is a burden as he looks at him sleeping; and the father weeps. He recognizes the boy’s inherent integrity. And it is the role of the stories that the father tells the son, the narrative he passes on to him, which kindles the metaphorical fire of hope and knowledge in the boy.

The reader grows desperate for the desolation and hopelessness that engulfs the father and son. But there are small glimmers of hope throughout the novel that restore the reader’s faith in the possibility for rebuilding civilization in this post-apocalyptic climate. These moments occur every time the father tells his son stories. Some are fragments of a past lost to the father, some are dreams. But these stories play a momentous role in the novel. Thomas A. Carlson, an essayist on McCarthy asks, "What become of time and language, of life and story, in the presence of such darkness, in the seeming collapse of the world [...] What role would memory and expectation [play] in sustaining the time and language of a world sufficiently living to bear (or to be born by) the telling of a story?" (Carlson 55). These narratives represent the boy and the man’s connection to the past civilization; the boy’s last remaining link to humanity. The boy was born during the apocalypse and so he has no living memories of the world before it burnt but eagerly wishes to learn more from his father: "You can read me a story [...] Can’t you Papa?" (McCarthy 7).

In a study on *The Road*, Christopher Walsh suggests that the South, the place to which they are heading, “not only functions as a physical frontier and goal, but also as an imaginative refuge” (Walsh 53). Much like the images of the frontier depict a movement from a place of desolation and darkness to the realm of possibility for humanity to recover goodness that was lost to the corruption of depraved civilization. The idea of the South induces hope for the father and son and allows them to imagine a new potential world. In order to keep the son heading towards the refuge and keep the fire of hope ignited within, the father tells the son stories as “narrative and story-telling is perhaps all that these two have left” (Walsh 53). The boy pleads for stories and the father obliges to his son and portrays utopian imaginings in order to implore his son to keep hopeful because “this is what the good guys do. They keep trying. They don’t give up” (McCarthy 137).

Martha Nussbaum has written an in depth discussion about emotions in the political sphere and suggests that the emotional culture in a political society is highly significant for it can either advance the progress of society towards its goals or it can substantially hinder progress. The little boy's emotional disposition, his compassion and kindness, so rare in this violent society, provides hope in this post-apocalyptic wasteland. Nussbaum cites Immanuel Kant and his psychological insight into human psychology with regard to religion as an important model when considering political emotions. Kant notes that humanity has flawed tendencies that allow them to compete as a result of envy; to avoid these tendencies it is men's ethical duty to join together and form a strong social support structure; thus, entering into a social contract. In *The Road*, the social contract is illustrated in the father-son dynamic much like Rousseau's theory on the social contract; and it is the stories that the father tells the son that provides a moral compass for the boy. Nussbaum's concept of emotions does not just refer to emotional impulses but are made up of appraisals that assign evaluative content to emotions. Thus, emotions are considered thoughts and make a valuable contribution to moral society.

Emotions form part of our ethical reasoning. They are suffused with intelligence and discernment and, therefore, are able to establish a deep sense of awareness and understanding. Martha Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought* asserts that emotions have a cognitive aspect for they involve thought, judgement, and evaluation. As a result, they play a great role in our experiences and, therefore, play a role in how we perceive ethics in society. The boy in *The Road* shows great and deep emotions; the love he feels for his father, the fear of the "bad guys" and the sympathy and compassion he shows towards other people and animals that they encounter on the road. The emotions the boy feels are forms of evaluative judgement that he uses to ascribe great importance to various things or people; thus, resulting in his own personal flourishing (Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*). Human emotions are rooted in their past experience; for example, the boy is so deeply loved by his father from when he was a baby that this has instilled a great value of the emotion of love in the boy. Therefore, emotions have a narrative structure; the understanding of human emotion is incomplete unless its narrative history is considered (Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*). Nussbaum asserts that this suggests the significant role the arts play in human self-understanding: "for narrative artworks of

various kinds give us information about these emotional-histories that we could not easily get otherwise... Certain truths about human emotions can be best conveyed, in verbal and textual form, only by a narrative work of art” (Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* 236). Thus, illustrating the role of the father’s stories in the development of the boy’s emotions, and in turn his ability to guide his own morality.

There is “a mutually supportive relationship between an account of emotional health and a normative ethical view” (Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* 297-298). By developing his emotions, the boy is able to form a conception of the good versus the bad, resulting in the capability to critically reflect the world in which he lives; and, consequently, allowing the boy to grasp the concept of ethicality. The boy is innately aware of his feelings enabling him to embody integrity and internal goodness.

Emotions allow people to discriminate between what is of value and importance and what is not (Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*). Thus, emotions can contribute considerably to moral society because it is via emotions that thought processes are regulated and consequently how actions transpire. A moral agent is an emotionally mature person capable of feeling and portraying virtuous emotions such as compassion, empathy and honesty which contributes to social morality. Diana Fritz Cate’s investigation into Martha Nussbaum’s work claims that virtue consists of actions, as determined by principles, and emotion; thus, to be virtuous means a clear understanding of human morality and its relationship to human emotions (Cates). The boy clearly demonstrates the quality of virtue in *The Road*, therefore, depicting how significant social morality is and the role narrative plays in evoking such virtue.

The boy and the man continue on the road and walk through a burnt city, ash covering the ruins of old cars and streets. A corpse litters the doorway of an old, derelict building. The father tries to protect his son from such a devastating sight and tells him to “remember that the things you put into your head are there forever” to which the young boy queries “you forget some things don’t you?” (McCarthy 12). The father responds “yes. You forget what you want to remember and you remember what you want to forget” (McCarthy 12). McCarthy is demonstrating the importance of memory and the father’s response makes it clear that memories are archived fragments of a past.

The past cannot be recalled as a coherent, complete whole but rather pieces of what once was. This sentiment is followed by the father's recollection of a "perfect day of his childhood" where the father had visited his uncle's farm and they had spent the day in a boat on the lake (McCarthy 13). The father believes that such a day as that is one upon which to shape the rest; rather recall and mould days around the idea that there can be joyful moments in the world rather than have the sight of a burnt corpse engrained in the memory.

The man describes his fear of his memory fading; "each memory recalled must do some violence to its origins. As in a party game. Say the word and pass it on. So be sparing. What you alter in the remembering has yet a reality, known or not" (McCarthy 131). Thus, in his recollection of the past, his memories alter and, as a result, his memories no longer reflect what was once real. This is problematic in the argument for the significance of narrative as it can be argued that misunderstood vestiges of the past cannot be significant. But, as discussed in the importance of narrative chapter, whether the stories are real or not is irrelevant. It is the moral connotations within the stories that ignite the fire that the boy is carrying and, therefore, ignites the potential of hope for humanity.

In one scene of the novel, the father and son come across a burnt library. This image suggests that "the world of the arts and humanistic values has almost vanished" (Luce 18). The image of burnt books portrays the remnants of the past and archives of history as being damaged and dysfunctional. The books are dismissed as lost, useless artefacts from a forgotten time: "soggy volumes in a bookcase... Everything damp. Rotting" (McCarthy 130). The resultant state of nature due to the social collapse leads not only to primitive behaviours, such as cannibalism, but also to a society where fragments of the old world are becoming forgotten and have been destroyed in the apocalypse. This is evident when the man and his son enter the remnants of the burned library: "he'd stood in the charred ruins of a library where blackened books lay in pools of water. Shelves tipped over. Some rage at the lies arranged in their thousands row on row. He picked up one of the books and thumbed through the heavy bloated pages...He let the book fall..." (McCarthy 186-187). This devastating image of the burnt books is an allegory for the extinction of humanity's link to the past. The library represents a key to humanity for it contains knowledge about ethics, laws, science, and history that could possibly be used in this post-apocalyptic realm to progress towards a civilized society.

Carlson describes the library as "the space of this written and once living memory, the library as it appears here in its ruin, was essentially – and the ruin itself illuminates this – a space of expectation... by this story of the failure and fall of books and their possibility" (Carlson 51). This notion advocates the power of knowledge and narrative for, as Carlson notes, there are possibilities inherent in the books in the library and these possibilities may aid in the reconstruction of civilization. The wrecked books serve as metaphor for the lost, irretrievable past, yet, the father still continues to tell the son stories; therefore, recognizing the significance of the role of narrative and the moral guidance he is passing on to his son via his stories.

The guidance passed on by the father's stories can be compared to the lessons Don Quixote learnt from memorizing an entire library. Murphet and Steven's chapter entitled "The Charred Ruins of a Library", in a novel devoted to styles of extinction in *The Road*, compare Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, a novel about a character who internalized a library and whose quest was driven forward by the lessons learnt in the library, to the burnt library in *The Road*. They question whether it is possible to learn those lessons if the books containing such knowledge have been destroyed (Murphet and Steven 3). However, Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz, in his journal article about *The Road* and its role in rewriting the myth of the American West, suggests that, "it is only storytelling that can provide their [the protagonists'] journey with some sense and significance" (Ibarrola-Armendariz 7) which is clear in the novel as the young boy chooses to carry the fire, instilling his journey with meaning and purpose.

The man asks himself, "do you think your fathers are watching? That they weigh you in their ledger book? Against what? There is no book and your fathers are dead in the ground" (McCarthy 196). Ancestry and heritage provide a standard from which one can gauge the customs and conventions of society; on the post-apocalyptic road that the man and the boy are travelling, there is no more ancestry or heritage from which to use as a normative judgement for their current conditions. For years it has been a crime to commit murder; it is the contemporary convention and the normal base from which one can judge or determine right or wrong. This heritage no longer exists in the post-apocalyptic world so there is no more basic standard of judgement against which the remnants of humanity are to use as a baseline for ethical conduct.

In the end, as the son says goodbye to his dying father, the father reminds him: “[...] you have to carry the fire [...] It’s inside you. It was always there. I can see it [...] You have my whole heart. You always did. You’re the best guy. You always were. If I’m not here you can still talk to me. You can talk to me and I’ll talk to you [...] you have to make it like talk that you imagine. And you’ll hear me. You have to practice. Just don’t give up” (McCarthy 279). This love is the foundation for the boy’s virtue and will aid in the boy carrying the hope for the future of humankind.

The boy finds another family travelling the road and “regardless of whether this family can ultimately survive the destruction of the earth, the novel ends with a positive affirmation of hospitality as a meaningful continuing ethic” (P. A. Snyder 83). Therefore, the boy enters into another family structure and will hopefully orientate his new family to share the “fire”, his values and ethical beliefs he learnt from his father’s stories, thus, providing hope for humanity. This scene gestures toward the onset of a social contract. Not only does the boy’s ethicality provide hope for the future of humankind, but this coming together of human beings into a family unit in order to survive insinuates the beginning of a social and political infrastructure that will continue to grow and hopefully manifest in the form of a civilization, and thus, a social contract.

The son finally faces the world alone in the end and the reader can only hope that by filling the young boy’s mind with “stories of moral goodness”, the father’s attempt to “shape the child’s ethical vision, a strategy that seems to have worked if we consider the several episodes where the boy’s thoughts and actions reveal a moral consciousness superior even to the father, who had first inculcated these values in his son”, that there is hope for a new breed of humanity (Wilhelm 142). While one cannot know if the family the boy finds are the good or the bad guys, it is clear that the “father has seemed to construct an ethical roadmap for the future, for the boy’s thoughts” and there is indeed hope (Wilhelm 142). This novel depicts the knowledge, hope and ethical foundation inherent in narrative and, as such, clearly portrays the significant role narrative plays when trying to reconstruct a society that has been obliterated by an apocalyptic cataclysm.

In conclusion, the closing paragraph of the novel portrays pastoral imagery of the brook trout, a serene image of life. This pastoral image is significant because it represents peace and idyllic life in an otherwise hellish world. The trout represent the memories of the old world and we are left with the suggestion that the resurrection of memories from the old world may bring about the new world. As Wilhelm suggests, “the beautiful trout in the stream... serve as an icon of fragility, wonder and goodness, qualities that offer us subtle entrée into the novel’s philosophy regarding the fate of humanity and the ethics of that future possible existence” (Wilhelm 142). The trout offer a peaceful, beautiful image in contrast to the dire landscape that the father and son traverse. While the trout swim in the depths and have survived the unnamed apocalypse, their existence provides hope for humanity much like the father’s stories. The maps and mazes etched into the backs of the brook trout depict the indelible record of the world in its becoming. What once was, has become a mystery and new maps and mazes need to be created for there is a new world. The existence of the trout suggest that there is a possibility of humankind learning from the archives of the old world (be it etched on the backs’ of trout or from the father’s stories) and creating a new, better world.



## **The Book of Dave by Will Self**

*The Book of Dave* (2006) by Will Self is a novel that follows the rantings of an angry and mentally ill London taxi driver, Dave Rudman. This brutish protagonist spends his days in his fetid cab loathing everyone and everything around him. Dave impregnates, marries, and consequently divorces one of his fares, Michelle. Battling his fury following his divorce and nasty custody battle, Dave is prescribed anti-depressants which results in temporary psychosis. He writes a book in his irrational state and has it printed on metal plates which he buries in the garden of his ex-wife for his son to find. However, driven by delusion, the book illustrates his hatred for women, his thoughts on custody rights between mothers and fathers, and the importance of The Knowledge, the intimate familiarity of the city of London required by London taxi drivers. This book is unearthed centuries later after a catastrophic flood has destroyed humankind. The remnants of humankind excavate this book and use it as a sacred text to dictate a dogmatic, cruel, and misogynistic religion. The bifurcated novel moves between the two distinct eras of Dave's life as it is and the future post-apocalyptic society that is governed by the frenzied taxi driver's aberrations; this split takes place both temporally as well as geographically in sixteen alternating chapters.

In an interview by *The Guardian*, Will Self discusses the inception of *The Book of Dave*: “A couple of years ago, following the increased raisings of the Thames barrier, I began thinking about London being flooded as a result of environmental catastrophe” (Self, *In The Beginning: Will Self on the Genesis of The Book of Dave*). He goes on to suggest that the person in the best position to recreate London would be a London cabbie with their “unrivalled knowledge” of the city (Self, *In The Beginning: Will Self on the Genesis of The Book of Dave*). This thought process emphasizes the use of paradox in Self's work; the London setting is both recognizable and completely foreign simultaneously. Self had also recently read the Bible which “got me [him] thinking about the nature of revealed religion” (Self, *In The Beginning: Will Self on the Genesis of The Book of Dave*). As a result, “these two preoccupations jammed together in my mind, and I came up with the following riff: what if a London cabbie were to set down a rant against the contemporary world and then bury it (for mad reasons of his own), on high ground somewhere in the London area? What if London was then flooded, and civilization destroyed? And what if, centuries hence, the cabbie's

jeremiad was unearthed and became the basis for a future religion?" (Self, *In The Beginning: Will Self on the Genesis of The Book of Dave*). Thus, by asking himself these questions, Self most likely felt compelled to put down into words how he believes society may come to an end and the possibilities of what may follow. In a study on Will Self's work, M. Hunter Hayes praises the writer for his "inventiveness and willingness to explore difficult issues in his writing" (Hayes 2). Self uses the apocalyptic event for triage in order to explore challenging matters in human nature such as the political, social, and religious. The impetus to write this novel is "to express fundamental concerns about religious fervour, masculine identity, and familial harmony and discord" (Hayes 17).

As a result of these questions, the world of England is created and shaped around the theology of the scurrilous rantings of the grotesque character that is Dave. Self creates a future where the disinterred metal plates become the template and only guiding principle upon which this post-apocalyptic society is founded. Thus, it becomes clear to the reader how important stories are in *The Book of Dave*, for it is Dave's narrative that becomes the canonical holy text that dictates society. This post-apocalyptic fiction depicts the movement from a state of nature to a social contract. Dave's book becomes the foundational text upon which the post-apocalyptic society builds a religion, a government, and a culture. Hence, society is surrounded upon the premise that Dave is a godlike figure and his word becomes the foundation for the social, legal, and religious constructions in society. This results in a degenerate social structure – not because it is dissimilar to contemporary society but because it is based upon the views of a bigoted, misogynistic, racist man.

At this point it seems necessary to review the plot of Self's novel. Self's novel is subtitled *A Revelation of the Recent Past and the Distant Future*. The chapters that deal with the recent past relate the life of London cab driver Dave Rudman. The taxi driver who divorces Michelle, with whom he had a son, Carl. He is driven to a breakdown after his failed marriage and by the restriction of contact with his son. While incorrectly medicating his depression Dave descends into a delusional, crazed state of mind in which he believes it is necessary to put into words the self-pitying monologue he recites to himself every day as he drives around London in his cab. Consequently he compiles *The Book of Dave*. His very own weltanschauung advocating sexual

and racial hatred, the separation of men and women and the exploitation of women by men. Dave is ultimately shot and killed by Turks to whom he owed money. The chapters making up the distant future take place several hundred years following the apocalyptic flood. These chapters conjure a post-apocalyptic society depicting a broken down civilization. The setting takes place in the same geographical terrain across the temporal expanse but the landscape has altered drastically (Hayes). This society, living according to the rules decreed by this supposed sacred text, signifies the moral decline in humanity resulting in the degeneration of the social contract. Self deconstructs existing social practices to depict a distant future wherein the dehumanizing tendencies of humanity are so severe that he creates a debased society in the aim to warn contemporary civilization to change their ways.

An important aspect of Dave's book is the Knowledge. The Knowledge refers to "the encyclopaedic grasp on London streets that a licensed cab driver has to have" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 305). Dave uses this Knowledge to create a version of his own utopia. A new version of London: "the 320 routes that make up the Knowledge are a plan for a future London. Between them and the points of interest at each starting point and destination they make a comprehensive verbal map of the city [...] a city of Dave, New London" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 305). As a result, Dave creates in his mind his own utopia; geographically as well as culturally and socially. This utopian imagining is saturated with hatred and anger, depicting humanity in a harsh manner. His entire book is made up of psychotic incidents that are violent, fervent and pent up with animosity. This utopia allows Dave to justify his abuse of Michelle and Carl by implementing customs which dictate that men and women, who are ruthlessly subservient to men, live separately and share custody of their children.

Jane Bernal, Dave's psychiatrist, describes the text as a "revelatory text" and that the author is a self-proclaimed god (Self, *The Book of Dave* 280). She asserts that "there's more to it than just his Knowledge, there's a set of doctrines and covenants as well" much like "one of the Mormon holy books" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 280). This comparison to the Mormon religion is of particular significance. In *The Oxford Handbook of Mormonism*, a collection of writers recite the history of the Mormon religion. Mormonism was founded upon the scripture as written by a prophet named Mormon that was inscribed on gold plates. The plates were buried by his son and later discovered

by an American farmer more than two millennia later (Shipps). This scripture became a sacred text for the religion containing doctrinal and philosophical teachings. The book presents particular religious and political teachings that emphasize the importance of a monarchy as the ideal form of government and a religion based upon the premise of a monotheistic faith (Shipps). Mormonism also has a history of practicing polygamy (Reeve). There are clear comparisons to Dävinanity, the established religion of England. Both holy texts were inscribed onto hard, resistant metal plates and promulgate similar doctrines. Both emphasize the idea of a state that has absolute power, both worship one distinct god, and their family model does not entail the conventional marital structure; one practicing polygamy and the other structured around separate parenting.

Dave's doctrines and covenants comprise of "the usual stuff, how the community should live righteously, the rules for marriage, birth, death, procreation. It's a bundle of proscriptions and injunctions that seem to be derived from the working life of London cabbies, a cock-eyed grasp on a mélange of fundamentalism, but mostly from Rudman's own vindictive misogynism [...]. He's separated from his wife, there's a court order restraining him from seeing his fourteen-year-old son. He's been mixed up with one of those militant fathers' groups. It's all very... distressing" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 306-307). These covenants depicts a set of unwavering, irreducible beliefs. Dave's psychiatrist refers to this as distressing because she can comprehend the conviction with which Dave believes in his version of a utopian society that he has created for himself. The following excerpt of a dialogue between Dave and Dr Zack Busner illustrates Dave's stringent beliefs about the way a family structure ought to be organized:

Dave: "Men and women should live entirely separately. No mixing. Half the week the kids stay with the dads, the other half with the mums"

Dr Busner: "So there is no family as such?"

Dave: "No, no, I s'pose not."

Dr Busner: "What happens when the dads are working – they do work, don't they? Who looks after the kids?"

Dave: "Um... girls, older girls. Girls who haven't got kids of their own yet, theyre like y'know, au pairs."

Dr Busner: "And the older boys?"

Dave: “They, they’re boning up on the Knowledge’, learning the runs and the points.”

Dr Busner: “That’s men’s work, is it?”

Dave: “Oh, yeah, you can’t be doing with women drivers now, can you?”

Excerpt (Self, *The Book of Dave* 309).

This extract depicts the delusional state in which Dave was when he created this idea of New London. However later in the book, once Dave has recovered, Dave concedes that his knowledge is “just the Knowledge, nothing else. I [Dave] think all that other malarkey was me falling [...] falling apart” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 316). This is of the utmost importance because here Dave is admittedly recognizing how distorted the social and familial structure in his book was. In an attempt to make a full recovery, Dave tries to recall and face the book he has written. Dave recoils at the thought of digging up what is “buried inside me [him] [...] all that sickening guff [...] poisonous thoughts” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 322). This is a significant acknowledgement by Dave as he admits that what he has written to his son is terrifyingly repulsive. Dave is too scared to excavate the delusions in his mind which illustrates how perverted his thoughts were at the time of writing the book. Dave makes the shocking epiphany that he did in fact write a book that he buried in the back garden of Michelle’s home for Carl to find one day. Until now, the book existed only in his imagination but this is Dave’s acknowledgement of a physical, material artefact that is one day found and misused.

It is important to note that Dave recognizes that his initial book was written when he was in an irrational state of mind and so writes down a sequel in order to rectify the mad ravings in his first book. He writes to his son about the book that he once wrote “to tell him the truth about all that mad bollocks you [Dave] buried in their garden” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 456). Phyllis, Dave’s partner, tells him that “the important thing is you can’t let all that stuff you wrote when you... were ill to be the final word. It’s bad enough that it’s there at all, up on that hill, cast in bloody metal... screaming at the future” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 456 - 457). And so, Dave writes about “the torturous pattern of mad doctrines and madder covenants. He summoned it up, the hellish design for living he’d tried to foist on his lost boy. Each lunatic run across the mental metropolis was pulled out of him and coiled on the table to be picked over by the two of them” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 458). Phyllis would help Dave recant and assure him “that’s not right – you know

you don't believe that, you know that's wrong [...] and now you've got to make things right" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 458-459). And soon, a new book is formed; one that rectifies all the mad delusions evoked by the first book.

This "new epistle to the son, which told the lad to respect men and women both, to strive always for responsibility, to understand that we make our own choices in life, and that blaming others is not an option. Children need both their mothers and their fathers, yet if their union does not last there should be no conflict, no tug of hate. The new Book's composition was evidence of this harmoniousness, for its true author was Phyllis quite as much as Dave. And as for the Knowledge itself – the mad bigotry of the London cabbie, his aggressive loneliness, his poisonous arrogance, his fearful racism – that too, had to go. What profiteth a man who can call over all the points and runs, if he still does not know where he truly is?" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 459). The new book goes on to say that "there can be no excuse for not trying to do your best and live right. Put a brick in the cistern, clean the ugly smear of motor oil from beneath your trainers and walk away from the city. Abandon it, lose it, let it fall from your mind, for there cannot be – not now, not ever – a new London" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 459). This second book is buried near the first book in metal canisters by Carl and Cal as a homage to his late father, Dave. This book symbolizes hope for the recovery of humanity in the post-apocalyptic world. This book represents a chance that humanity can enter into a social contract and become a flourishing civilization.

The apocalyptic cataclysm that causes the social collapse in the book of Dave is a catastrophic flood that disintegrates London into an archipelago of islandic communities that make up England. Self particularly used an environmental disaster as it reflects the resurgence of concern about apocalyptic endings in current society. In the introduction to *Riddley Walker*, Self writes "every generation gets the end-of-the-world anxiety it deserves. It used to be transcendental, then it became elemental, and now it's environmental" (Self, *Introduction* vi). The small, isolated communities making up this archipelago are mediated by Dave's book. As stated by Stephen O'Leary at *The End Times Colloquium* this makes the end depicted in this novel more relevant to today's audience as this kind of cataclysm is easily imaginable owing to current climate change.

The social collapse is configured through Dave's own personal collapse. The flood itself is not described but rather reflected in Dave's individual devastation: "Dave knew none of it – his Knowledge was gone. The city was a nameless conurbation, its street and shop signs, its plaques and placards, plucked then torn away by a tsunami of meltwater that dashed up the estuary. He saw this as clearly as he'd ever seen in his life. The screen had been removed from his eyes, the mirror cast away, and he was privileged with a second sight into deep time" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 403-404). In his delusion, these things have collapsed in Dave's mind; while they have literally collapsed in the post-apocalyptic world. A list of what is destroyed in the flood are named; from disposable razors, to computer-disc cases, to hubcaps. These things may not be of great use, yet, will never be seen or created again. This results in a more vivid image of the end for such things, which have been destroyed by the inundation, are recognizable to the reader, yet, are inconceivable in England. The reason the loss of Dave's cab was so meaningful was because it represented the Knowledge Dave had to pass on to his son, Carl. With no one to pass it on to, Dave began to associate his cab, his Knowledge, with the loss of his son and, therefore, with loss itself. This metaphor of no one to pass knowledge onto represents the uncertainty of the post-apocalyptic world and questions how knowledge will be passed on or survive an apocalypse.

This metaphor recognizes the role narrative may play in the reconstruction of society as wrought by such a disturbing social collapse. Narrative can either aid in reconstructing the world after an apocalyptic moment has devastated humankind or destroy it. The social collapse in the novel serves as a didactic warning to our society as it yields a decline in humanity.

The apocalyptic flood that causes the social collapse in *The Book of Dave* results in a terrible decline in humanity much like the brutish state of nature described by Thomas Hobbes. Anne Fortin's study into the linguistic element in *The Book of Dave* suggests that the result of such a collapse is a world in which a "gruesome and abject corporeality is omnipresent" (Fortin). This novel portrays the distinction between a state of nature and entering into a social contract. While the people of England have a basic governing body, which creates rules and laws to govern their people, the doctrine upon which these rules and regulations are based is fundamentally flawed. This results in primitive behaviour suggesting that these people have not yet advanced from a state of nature into a civilized society. As John Locke asserts, in his theory of the social contract, an

apocalypse eradicates all prior knowledge and understanding, thus, yielding an age of men that are “ignorant and without the use of reason” (Locke 21).

The result of this decline in humanity following the flood manifests in the basic functioning of this post-apocalyptic society. The most notable characteristic of this decline is the linguistic upheaval. Humanity is in such decay that there is a need for a new register to reflect this new world. Self’s reinvented lexicon serves to express the “various psychic and emotional states his characters experience” (Hayes 3). Self has reduced the English language by inventing and devising a new language in order to reflect the disintegrated and violated new world. The prose is heavy with puns, slang, onomatopoeia and neologisms. While Self provides a glossary in the back of the novel, the reading experience is still difficult for the reader; thus, emulating the difficult experience of living in this society. The vocabulary in the novel consists of eponyms, taxi-based metaphors, and examples of Dave’s erroneous, idiosyncratic spelling. Nathaniel Rich’s review of the novel in the *New York Times* expresses how the linguistic experience of the novel is further complicated by the addition of a street dialect of Arpee, called Mokni, which is the common speech used in the novel modelled after Dave’s Cockney language (Rich). In order to understand this language, the reader must invest both visually and aurally in trying to understand this novel. This linguistic upheaval is similar to that in Russell Hoban’s *Riddley Walker*. Both Self and Hoban have written *The Book of Dave* and *Riddley Walker* in languages so fragmented in the hopes to represent and reflect the fragmentation of the new post-apocalyptic world. Both post-apocalyptic settings, as represented in these two novels, depict new, damaged societies that require a new kind of language to adequately portray these new worlds.

Jean-Jacques Lecercle’s philosophy on language suggests that language encompasses historical materiality. In his novel *The Violence of Language*, Lecercle’s outlines a concept called “Brissetizing remotivation” (Lecercle 61). Brissetizing remotivation refers to a belief that the etymology of language contains the truth about both the spoken word and the world as whole. This is owing to the fact that the history of humankind is rooted in language. Words have a history; therefore, words reflect the history of those who speak them. Thus, language can be corrupted; and, as a result, so too can the semantics of language be corrupted. Lecercle states that “language is not a rational construct but the product of a historical conjuncture” (Lecercle 48). This is evident



in Self's invented language. For example water is "Evian" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 10). Contemporary materiality provides the language for the distant future. While words such as "chellish", meaning evil, can only be understood once the reader learns about Dave's relationship with his ex-wife Michelle (Self, *The Book of Dave* 4). Thus, a violence has been done to the language by Dave's history imbuing particular meaning onto certain words.

The violence done to the language of the novel reflects the violent society in which the language exists. This post-apocalyptic world has reverted to the Hobbesian state of nature as primitivism is rife in the novel. This primitive behaviour is displayed in the graphic slaughter of deformed anthropoid creatures called motos. They are part-human creatures are described by Self in the novel's glossary as "large, viviparous, omnivorous, mammalian[s]," with "the functional intelligence of a 2-year-old human child." The killing of the motos represents the moral dilemma of violating both animal and human rights and interests. The murdering of an innocent creature represents the lack of virtue, kindness, and compassion in this society.

Another example of brutality in the novel is the torture that takes place in the Tower, the prison in New London. Both Symun the heretic, and his son Carl Devush are imprisoned in the Tower. The Tower is the pinnacle of primitive, violent behaviours in the novel. Not only are prisoners tortured, but they are barbarically executed too. Men would be tied to a great wheel and spun until their brains haemorrhaged. They were then disembowelled and their genitals cut off and stuffed in their mouths. Their heads would then be stuck onto spikes at the water gate in order to warn society about the punishment of heretical beliefs. Women perpetrators were "burned on the Barbie" and the smoke from their burning bodies was used to gas their own children (Self, *The Book of Dave* 202). While Carl escapes his fate of being spun on the wheel his father is unable to escape. Symun is elinguated and exiled back to Ham where he is considered the "Beastlyman" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 6). This example of primitive violence elicits John Rawls' theory of the social contract. Rawls' largest concern about the social contract theory has to do with the notion of justice. By having a fair justice system as the base of a society, that society will be able to move into a social contract with ease. However, the people of England's treatment of heretics in the Tower is neither fair nor just; therefore, illustrating how the people of England are trapped in a benighted, brutish state of nature.

Another instance of how this society is in decline is the separation of the sexes. This separation of men and women affects the family structure. Dave's book contains his irrational imaginings of the perfect "New London" in which mothers and fathers live separately and their children spend half the week with each parent. Every Wednesday the children move from one parent's house to the other, known as the "Changeover" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 14). Traditional family structures in contemporary society involve a support system wherein two individuals come together to create one unit that provides care and stability for their offspring. This type of family is the most natural family model. To clarify this does not mean that a married, heterosexual couple is the nuclear family. Rather two individuals, regardless of race or gender, come together and have a child (by any means, not necessarily birth – the child could be adopted) and create one unit representative of a family. Such a family unit is founded upon support and love. However, in this post-apocalyptic environment, the dynamics of the natural family structure have been warped as they are based upon a severely flawed philosophy. Jean Jacques Rousseau's contribution to the social contract theory suggests that the family model is the most basic social structure upon which to base the functioning of society. In the case of *The Book of Dave*, the family structure, which should provide a model for greater social structure, is severely compromised; therefore, resulting in a defective social structure.

In this defective social structure, not only do women live separately to the men but they are treated differently too. The treatment of women in the novel also reflects the primitivism of this society. Women are abused and objectified. As teenagers, women are referred to as "opares" and are used by the men for sexual satisfaction and child-rearing (Self, *The Book of Dave* 2). Once a woman has given birth, they are considered "boilers" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 20). These women are deemed wrecked by childbirth and their purpose in society is to pull the island's only plough. This treatment of women is the kind of behaviour Dave suggests should be customary in his eccentric book. While women in today's society may experience gender inequality, the role of women in this post-apocalyptic society has regressed back to a time where women are wholly subservient to men.

The resultant decline in humanity following the apocalypse distorts the dynamics of society owing to the living conditions and primeval environment of this society. This distortion makes it more difficult for this society to recover from the social collapse and begin a new civilization. The first step to recovering following the apocalypse is the appointment of a governmental body. The people of Ham begin to enter into a social contract by creating a governing body, the PCO. This refers to the Public Carriage Office, the head of transport in London during Dave's time. In his book, Dave often refers to the PCO as his authority figure and, as such, the PCO becomes the governmental body in the post-apocalyptic world. It may seem as if the people of England are beginning their movement from a state of nature to a social contract. However, this supposed movement towards a social contract by appointing a governing body is contrasted to the primitive behaviour of society, thus, keeping society in a state of nature.

The PCO promulgates the utopian idea of New London. Dave's book describes the physicality of New London: "perfect circle nineteen clicks across. Every street and most of the significant buildings had been ordained by Dave. Since the Book's discovery by the founding dad of the House of Dave, in the London burb known as Hampstead, court Drivers had laboured to interpret its dävine plan for the city. As each run was deciphered by these phonicists, so it was laid out. Once surveyed, the principal points were built and occupied, many by the Drivers themselves. In these newly founded Knowledge schools the learned queers debated and refined their understanding of the Book, thus, ensuring that yet more buildings might be erected" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 335). The physical description of New London is important. This is because the physical design of this utopian place was created by an outrageous architect. In reality, the city of London was not laid out in this way; therefore, the physical landscape does not match the described utopian city and has to be rebuilt accordingly.

As a result of this physical incongruence, there were sceptics who believed "that New London was not only incomplete but quite wrong" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 335). Highly critical people noticed how, as the PCO grew, so did the burden of "religious bureaucracy the sole industry of which was its own perpetuation" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 336). Yet, the bureaucratic stronghold was so firmly based upon the doctrines and covenants of the book that any criticism of society was subdued. Dave wrote this book in a psychotic state and his idea of New London has held so steadfast in the

minds of the Inlanders for it promises the vision of a “heavenly world” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 336). However, zealots pointed out the “topographical dissimilarity between the London of King Dave and the New London of the Knowledge” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 336). As such, doubt began to arise in London long before Carl fled to London to find his father. It is also in New London that the protest against the PCO begins and the reader becomes aware that the people of England do not believe in their system involving the changeover.

The dynamic of the recovery of humanity after the flood is most clearly illustrated in the characters Symun, Carl and Antonë. They all have dissenting beliefs about the way in which the PCO rules England and have doubts about their cultural identity and the way in which they live. As such, these characters orchestrate a movement against the PCO which elicits hope for the reader that humanity can recover from the apocalyptic cataclysm which they survived.

Symun is known in the book as the “Geezer” and “the Beastlyman” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 24,6). Symun is a heretic in this society for he claims to have found the second book written by Dave. This second book declares that “the first Book had been naught save the ravings of a dävine mind misshapen by anger and hatred” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 340). This new faith does not purport the message of New London but rather wishes his fares to “live in the cities and towns that they themselves founded” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 340). Symun rebels against the “Braykup” which is an “invisible barrier that divided brother from sister, man from wife, and a child from its own very nature” and “they knew better than to question it” and is exiled to New London for his defiant actions (Self, *The Book of Dave* 189). Once Symun was exiled the PCO intervenes in the island’s organization in order “to dominate the lives of the Hamsters – dominate them more than their isolation, dominate them more than their peculiar symbiosis with the motos, dominate them, perhaps, even more than the Book itself” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 190). John Locke points out that, although the first step in achieving a social contract is by appointing an authority figure, there exists the potential that said governing body may not be working for the benefit of the greater community. This is clearly apparent in the PCO. Characters like Symun pose a threat to the government for they are aware that the government is abusing their power and making use of propaganda for their own benefit.

It is becoming clear that throughout all the novels there is a hidden political agenda. One in which does not seek out progress for its people; there are and always will be people vying for power and a race for political authority. It is this that causes apocalyptic circumstances in the first place. The need for progress and advancement, whether it be socially, politically, environmentally, or technologically; the greed and necessity to be better than others in all aspects is what causes the world to end. The world as we know it always seems to end by the fault of man's doing and their need to control and be better than the last society; in trying to avoid the mistakes of the past, people end up making other mistakes and this cyclic nature is a recurring theme in all the novels. This reinforces Norman Cohn's claim that apocalyptic movements could very likely be antecedents of political phenomena. The post-apocalyptic creates a platform for new political realities.

Symun is considered a "flyer", a heretic, for complying with his natural instincts (Self, *The Book of Dave* 192). It is natural human nature for men and women to be together and procreate, and the habit of human emotion to love and want to be together and have a family. However, the PCO uses the idea of New London to coerce them into believing in the ways of Dave, thus, keeping this society from entering into a social contract. The PCO fears Symun and his son, Carl, for they represent the "Antidave, ready to spread more poison in the world"; for "the future of Dävinanity on Ham thus depended on toyist superstition" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 195). Similar to the notion that people must be kept illiterate and unintelligent in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, it seems necessary for the PCO to keep society under "toyist superstition", a false sense of meaning of life in order to maintain control over the populace (Self, *The Book of Dave* 195).

The character of Carl indeed becomes a kind of "Antidave" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 195). Carl feels the same way Symun did, that the changeover is unnatural and families should not live as they do. Carl flees to New London to find out what happened to Symun. It is his intention to "make common cause with the Blunt dissenters. A simple petition will enable us to discover the fate of your dad. Mayhap these two endeavours, so curiously enmeshed, will serve to put a spoke in the Wheel" – by both thwarting the social system as well as putting an end to the physical wheel of torture (Self, *The Book of Dave* 137). Thus, he hopes to find other dissenting believers in London in the hopes to cause a revolution.

The dynamic of recovery of society is not only evident in the characters of Symun and Carl but also in Antonë Bom. Self describes Antonë's "quizzical, inner eye" which constantly questioned the functioning of their society (Self, *The Book of Dave* 326). Antonë's feelings represent those of the entire society. For he was aware that men and women felt their way of living was unnatural but are unable to express it as they are "bound into Dävinanity, which, with its rituals and precepts, circumscribed their conduct and governed their innermost thoughts" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 326).

Antonë is vehemently against the inequalities in New London. He began to see how the PCO sought power for its own sake as members of the government such as lawyers, guildsmen and the Inspectorate live a life of opulence while poverty struck others. Antonë also states that "the truth is that posh mummies and daddies have always shackled up with each other, daddies even as they left the very Shelter itself, going straight to the mummies of their children, children they freely acknowledged as their own" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 406). This illustrates how even the fundamentally distorted familial structure that dictates this society does not apply to the wealthy; thus, furthering the economic divide to a social divide too. As such, Antonë no longer believed in the dogma the PCO promulgated. The rumours of a second book with alternate beliefs about society marks the beginning of a revolution. While the physical second book has not been discovered, it symbolizes the hope for a new, better faith. Antonë represents the heretic believers and his exile from London represents the public manipulation of the government; for his dissenting beliefs are a threat to the current social functioning and, as a result, he is banished. Antonë's story is pertinent because it depicts how the social conditions of this society, although considered the norm, feels inherently wrong. So, while society may be making its way towards entering a social contract, it is based on evidence so distorted that the dynamic of this society's recovery too is distorted.

New London is advanced in some respects, such as the wheeled rickshaw that represents Carl's first ride in a wheeled vehicle, but there are some paradoxical elements to this progress. For, in the midst of the progress of London, there are also "the rotting heads of traitors [...] impaled on a palisade of spikes" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 397). Therefore, looking in from the outside, New London may look like a civilized society but there is evidence that shows otherwise – all because of Dave's psychotic account of his miserable life. It suggests that this new society has the

capability of entering a social contract but lacks the guidance for their divine leader is mentally ill. There is a great economic divide in New London and it becomes clear that the PCO is working to manipulate the public in order to maintain such a divide. Self explains how “it is only since the dävidic line assumed control of the PCO that the writ of State and Shelter have become one, and that the King’s political allies have sought to dignify their suppressions with dävine doctrine” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 406). Thus, the PCO promulgates the Dävidic doctrine in order to control society.

The increasing number of heretic believers signifies that this society is aware that there is something fundamentally wrong with their basic functioning. Their The desire to change the laws and ways that govern their society illustrates a hope that their society will recover from the social collapse and the resultant decline in humanity. Therefore, while there are seemingly some aspects of recovery (such as the creation of a governing body, the PCO) that mark the movement towards a social contract, these aspects are overshadowed by the unnatural organization of this society and the clear manipulation of society by the governing body. Therefore, a full recovery of this society and entry into a social contract cannot take place yet because this society’s beliefs are based upon the delusional rantings of a mad man.

Thus, the role of narrative is significant in the dynamic of the recovery of the society in this post-apocalyptic world. The book, written by Dave in his deluded state of mind, creates the foundation upon which this postlapsarian society is built. Thus, the dynamics of society are perverted by the rantings of a lunatic. This is why the rumours of a second book are significant. Dave, once recovered from his mental disorder, writes a second book to his son explaining and rectifying his delusions in the first book. The existence of a second book of Dave symbolizes hope for salvaging this society as this book represents a new way of thinking.

Therefore, the dynamics of the new society were based upon the first book and, as such, was dysfunctional. This demonstrates the significance of narrative because Dave’s book was one of the last remaining vestiges of the past upon which a new society was founded. With no other guiding principle or alternate history from which to draw, the people of England use the only fragment of the past they have to rebuild society. Dave’s narrative passes down a supposed culture, values, and

ideologies that are used to create a kind of social order. This forms the root and foundation of a new religion, government, and culture.

The reader is forced into a position where they have to consider how the life of the people in England would have turned out had they found the second book of Dave rather than the initial book. Perhaps had they found the second book, which encourages respect, acceptance, compassion, and the dissolution of violent conflict, they would have been able to recreate a well-functioning civilization. The existence of this second book illustrates hope for the future of England. Belief in this second book represents a revelation that the main Dävidic doctrine controlling their societal structure is in need of revision and humanization.

By keeping this society illiterate and subdued to the teachings of Dave, the government has full control over the organization of New London. With no other remnants of the past, the society is susceptible to the gospel according to Dave. It is their only connection to the previous world and their only starting point by which to create some sort of social system. Thus, if the governing body is controlling the preaching of the book of Dave they are able to control what information is disseminated to the public. The PCO abuses their power in order to maintain the economic divide between the PCO and the community. They are able to reap the benefits and rewards of being part of a governmental organization while the rest of society suffers. People began to resist “the exactions of the heavy-handed PCO” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 194).

The second book of Dave, resolving the misguidance of the initial book, represents both the hope and ability for society to change. Much like George Orwell’s novel *1984*, there is a sense of surveillance where “agents of the PCO, who had seeseetevee men everywhere, and who looked for flying and schism with fanatic eyes” (Self, *The Book of Dave* 195). Not only is that a similarity, but in *1984* there exists a book, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, by the character Emmanuel Goldstein, who is akin to Symun. Both this book, and the second book of Dave, although their existence has not been proven, their potency grows. The existence of such books represents another way of life and, therefore, they represent hope for the recovery of humanity.



The downfall of the second book is that, if found, society will still be governed by one man's limited thinking. However, the second book is not merely about its content but rather about what it symbolizes. It symbolizes diversity. That there exists other ways in which to do things. That there is the possibility that there could be more than one political or social structure that they could follow. There is the possibility that they can do things differently and do not have to follow the word of Dave because his word is not the only word. The second book does not have to necessarily have to be found in order to have an impact on society. Its existence proves to people that there is not just one method of living as they do currently but that there are other possibilities that exist.

The second book asserts that society needs to recover and continue building. Symun asserts that the second book contradicts the tenets of the first book. He proclaims that "troo Nolidj az bin loss, an ven ve Nolidj iz loss iss ve end uv Am" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 173). Without true knowledge society will come to an end. Symun asserts that the second book says that they "shúd B reedin uvvah stuff, maykin R oan búks evun" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 90). By reading other stuff and expanding their knowledge base, they will be able to make alternate discoveries and draw their own conclusions about society. Symun also has a hollowed tree trunk where he stows his "Daveworks" (Self, *The Book of Dave* 83). These are fragments of the past and are believed to be plastic fragments deposited into the sea by Dave when the previous world ended and the new world was created. He is keeping them safe and using them to learn the alphabet and words of the old world. His thirst for knowledge is illustrated through his collection of these past relics. In his growing literacy, it becomes clear to Symun to use Dave's book and its explanation of their creation to discover the mysteries in the Forbidden Zone, namely the discovery of the second book.

Thus, narrative is a powerful tool which can be used to create or destroy civilization. In *The Book of Dave* narrative is perverted by man and misused to create a fragmented society, yet, there is hope in the idea of the second book. The second book contains a narrative that will set society on the right track towards a more cohesive, well-functioning civilization.

Self makes use of satire to comment on the deterioration of contemporary society; socially, politically, and religiously. In a study on Will Self's work, M. Hunter Hayes proposes that the prevalence of satire in Self's fiction deems his work analogous to that of Jonathan Swift. However,

Self has stated that “the problem that satirists have to face is moral relativism. And in that context, it seems to me that the role of satire that I produce [he produces] is to make the audience think for themselves. It is to throw the whole burden of moral thought back onto the audience. So I am [he is] not trying to convert people to anything but thinking seriously. I’m [he is] trying to be a provocateur” (Hayes 18). Thus, Self is writing with the intention to cause a strong reaction or dissension to the way in which current society functions. Self asserts that “I don’t [he doesn’t] write fiction for people to identify with and I don’t [he doesn’t] write a picture of a world they can recognize. I write [he writes] to astonish people” (Hayes 1). He has indeed astonished with his work in *The Book of Dave*.

Ultimately this novel depicts how narrative plays a significant role in rebuilding civilization after an apocalyptic cataclysm has destroyed humankind as we know it; by a society using an irrational, fragmented story upon which to base their entire cultural, social, and political functioning. The people of Inland take a fragmented vestige of the past and recreate a fragmented civilization accordingly. When the dynamics of such a society become clearly dysfunctional, there is a sort of revolution where a second vestige of the past is more clearly understood as normality; a few members of society try to preach and implement this new discovery. The rumoured existence of a second book with an alternative and better outlook of society provides hope for this postlapsarian society. Therefore, this novel clearly depicts the role narrative can play in trying to enter a social contract in a post-apocalyptic representation of the world.

## **Conclusion**

*“There is no greater power on this earth than story.”*

*- Libba Bray, author*

*The Role of Narrative in Post-Apocalyptic Representations of the Social Contract* has argued that narrative plays a significant role when trying to rebuild civilization following an apocalyptic cataclysm. In the early theoretical chapters of this dissertation, it is evident that an apocalyptic event results in the total disillusionment of existing social structures. Post-apocalyptic fiction has used this tabula rasa created by the devastation of humankind to imagine potential futures for humanity.

The apocalyptic tradition has endured and, as a result, humanity has always feared final destruction. This dissatisfaction with the present, coupled with the fear of the future, has led to an increase in the desire to change the world. Therefore, the end is not only marked by fear but with hope for a better future. A better world that can be renewed and renovated. This unyielding notion of the end that has unequivocally existed still has a powerful influence over humankind. Current society is rife with apocalyptic symptoms; moral degeneration, environmental damage, government corruption, poverty, and religious conflicts. Our world is deteriorating and there is a desire for renewal. Apocalyptic thinking provides a blank canvas that allows for post-apocalyptic imaginings.

The post-apocalyptic considers the aftermath of the transition from apocalyptic to post-apocalyptic society and inspects whether the remnants of society regress into primitive decadence or if they will use this revelation as a means of renovation and redemption. Therefore, the apocalypse can provoke great social reconstruction for post-apocalyptic imaginings. In order for this social reconstruction to take place, post-apocalyptic writers write with the intention to evoke social change. By addressing the fear and pathos that inevitably accompanies apocalyptic attitudes and post-apocalyptic thinking, post-apocalyptic fiction writers attempt to provide a catalyst for change. Post-apocalyptic writers have a didactic intention; by illustrating the possibilities of how our world

ends and what the potential humanity that follows could possibly look like, they are writing to warn existing society.

In a world where the apocalypse has shattered existing social structures and, as a result, prompts erasures from memory, there needs to be some kind of reconstruction of civilization. There needs to be a movement from the primitive state of nature into a functioning, coherent, and civilized society. A social contract needs to be reached in order for civilization to truly renew itself. A social contract will allow for social infrastructures to be created and, thus, a social order should follow. By putting various political arrangements and social practices in place, people will be able to start working together as a community. When this community becomes an organized society by assuring rights, liberties, and equalities (and in doing so individuals may have to give up certain freedoms, such as committing crimes), there is the potential for a stable and happy society.

However, with little or no historical record from which to draw, the entry into a social contract seems unlikely. Thus, society needs to utilize what few historical remnants and remaining traces they have to reconstruct social structures. By using what legacy of knowledge remains, there may be hope to create a new civilization.

This is because narrative remains a site of ethics from which to draw. Stories embody love, hope, forgiveness, justice, and aspiration in order to transmit and preserve cultural values; thus, narrative functions as a reflection of the world and, as such, is able to encompass the distinction between goodness and evil. And it is values, in the core of all stories, which “lay the foundations for social transformation by simultaneously undermining beliefs and retaining some continuity, so that people are not immobilized by the changes taking place around them. When stories are deeply grounded in values, they can communicate a vision and not merely a picture of the realities we face” (Hodges). Therefore, it can be said that narrative is at the root of all transformation and the centrality of human experience. The role narrative plays in moral edification allows storytelling to facilitate in ethical inquiries. Narrative is valuable because it shapes the perception of norms and values; thus, helping the cultivation of the mental capacities, and the resultant behaviour, of humanity. Hopefully through stories of the past, humanity can rekindle its moral compass and rebuild itself into a civilization. There may be no hope at all for humanity without narrative in any

form. As Thomas Hobbes puts it, “there are few things that are incapable of being represented by fiction” (Hobbes 76). Thus, making narrative a significantly powerful tool especially when building a civilization.

The exploration in these primary texts clearly depicts the significant role narrative plays after an apocalypse has occurred in the attempt to recreate a functioning social order. The narratives, although vastly different in each novel, can be reconstructive or destructive. The myth of the Eusa Story in *Riddley Walker* plays a cyclic role because, within the myth, information about gunpowder will eventually bring about the return of nuclear weapons to Cambry. The *Book of Dave* illustrates the importance of narrative in the configuration of society based upon the mad rantings of a delusional cab driver. The second book found, supposedly to be Dave’s, suggests how powerful narrative is for anyone propagating the knowledge of the second book is imprisoned and tortured for their heretic beliefs. The scientific knowledge preserved by the monks of Saint Leibowitz in *A Canticle for Leibowitz* proves to be destructive when misused by men; but leaves the reader with an ounce of hope as the memorabilia takes off into space in the final chapters with a chance of recreating civilization with the few members of 'the operation'. The father in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* passes on his humanity through the stories he tells his son on their journey to the south and, although the final lines of the novel are open ended, they suggest the boy will continue to carry 'the fire', the metaphorical light of humanity, that will act as a moral code with which to use when recreating a social contract. All four novels clearly portray the significant role narrative plays in post-apocalyptic representations of the social contract.

Narrative has the power to aid in the recreation of civilization or the destruction thereof. In some cases the vestiges of the past can be abortive and adulterate civilization by being misinterpreted; thus, making it difficult to move from a primitive state into a civilized state. This is evident in *Riddley Walker* and *The Book of Dave*. *The Road* and *A Canticle for Leibowitz* depict a more cathartic ending to post-apocalyptic fiction whereby there is hope for humanity at the end of these novels, thus, assuaging the audience. The authors of these novels have written about the rebuilding of a civilization after the end in order to admonish current society and castigate certain aspects of contemporary living conditions in order to elicit change. These writers have been successful as they have created societies that are frighteningly recognizable. They have aspects of contemporary

society that have been warped and mutated to portray believable circumstances of the future which will hopefully prompt a didactic response of humankind to change our ways. These four texts clearly depict just how significant a role narrative plays in post-apocalyptic representations of the social contract.

It is through the consideration of these four texts that the role narrative plays when trying to rebuild society is significant. In a guide on storytelling, Bill Mooney and David Holt assert that “stories are how we learn. The progenitors of the world’s religions understood this, handing down our great myths and legends from generation to generation” (Mooney and Holt 7). When there is no world left and the only fragment of history is a piece of narrative, that narrative can be examined and used as an influential tool to both learn from and teach others. Without narrative as a guiding principle in a post-apocalyptic society, there will be no move from a primeval state of nature into a civilized social contract. The power of narrative is beyond measure and is fundamental to society.

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