Contents

From Caution to Confrontation

Speculations about the end of time have always fascinated and intrigued writers in a wide range of fields, from religious believers to literary scholars. Narratives and speculations about the end have been an ever-present part of Western culture, dominated in large by the biblical sense of an ending through the apocalypse. The end lies somewhere between the present and the imagined future, with its presence casting a heavy shadow. Looking at literature, visions and fears about the end seem to have influenced writers for a long time. In depicting the end, a gloomy narrative voice often emerges, as humankind is either close to extinction or heavily reduced. Literary visions of the apocalypse can be placed within the frame of speculative fiction, alongside dystopian literature, which create a connection between the two. (Manjikian, 2012:1-2, 22)

According to our 9th semester project *On the Road to Dystopia,* the dystopian genre functions as a social critique which is shaped by the historical context of the first half of the twentieth century. The most salient characteristics of dystopian fiction were determined as future time reference, technological advances, focus of setting instead of characterization and defamiliarization. These features were traceable when looking at the development of the dystopian genre, however when dealing with contemporary dystopian literature, these traits seem to have transferred into a young adult section of literature. Series like Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* (2008-2010) and Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* (2005-2007) are some of the most prominent examples of the dystopian young-adult genre and they both incorporate traditional dystopian characteristics into their novels. To some extent, these works of fiction still function as social critiques, but they tend to emphasize themes like love, peer conformity and rebellion. The dominance of these themes can be ascribed to the target reader of the novels being young adults who identify with these types of themes. Thus, in young adult dystopian fiction the aforementioned themes of love and rebellion are put to the forefront of the novel, with the actual dystopian setting coming in second.

While young adult novels generally have taken on the traditional dystopian features, the dystopian genre described in the 9th semester project has likewise influenced narratives focusing on end-of-times scenarios and what happens after the cataclysmic events have taken place. The dystopias of the twentieth century have culminated in a wave of post-apocalyptic fiction in which the dystopian traits also have merit. In this regard, post-apocalyptic fiction has inherited the traditional dystopian setting of a place that is too bad to be practicable in which a disaster has already taken place, making life as we know it unrecognizable and a new world order is either in the making or already

in place. Whereas dystopian fiction is rarely directly influenced by biblical references and religion as such, the opposite holds true for post-apocalyptic fiction. Post-apocalyptic fiction has a natural connection to the cataclysmic event that it is founded upon and thus implicitly alludes to a biblical understanding of the apocalypse. Thus, religion is often already present in post-apocalyptic narratives, through the apocalyptic event that precedes it. (41-43) Furthermore, the influence of postmodernism has created fragmented individual views on religion, which is also reflected in post-apocalyptic fiction.

The post-apocalyptic novels are distinguished from dystopian fiction in the sense that they focus on a future-time where a catastrophe or disaster has already taken place and changed the world order. Thus, dystopian fiction focuses on the degradation of society whereas post-apocalyptic fiction focuses on a world where the degradation is complete. Also, while dystopian fiction of the twentieth century was influenced by issues that focused on state terrors like totalitarianism, post-apocalyptic fiction is strongly influenced by contemporary issues, namely non-state terrors like disease, genetics, terror attacks and natural disasters. These non-state terrors represent a shift on the literary scene of dystopian fiction as they focus on incidents and disasters that are not necessarily caused by a corrupt or totalitarian regime, but rather combine various disastrous events. This turn from state terrors to non-state terrors is influenced by contemporary thinking and time, and can be seen reflected in cultural products such as films and novels. In post-apocalyptic fiction there seems to be a fear of external dangers because we live in a globalized world where there is an intense focus on global issues. (Bauman, 1999:6; Manjikian, 2012:1, 5) Whereas twentieth century dystopian fiction tends to warn the reader against possible dangers in the distant future, post-apocalyptic fiction focuses on the global consequences instead of global initiatives. In other words, the focus has turned from caution to confrontation.

Although the idea of the world ending seems unlikely to happen in the near future, and as such has to be imagined through fiction, the twenty-first century has already been permeated by events causing fear of the future. With the beginning of a new millennium only fourteen years in the past, the concerns and doubts that arise with such a transition is still palpable, especially in the media and literature in general. Even though the difference between 1999 and 2000 was not tangible, the fear and anxiety of the future permeated society and culture in the late 90s and was not quelled by the year mark. The hopes and dreams and in opposition, the fears, for a future that seemed ever distant, suddenly came closer with the turn of the millennium. Events such as 9/11, the following war in Iraq and natural disasters such as hurricane Katrina, asserted the fragile nature of Western, and

specifically American, society and brought the United States as a superpower in decline to the forefront. (Manjikian, 2012:1-2, 6)

Turning to the world of literary and cultural critics and scholars, the number of people interested in the apocalypse and related topics seem to be growing. Novels, articles and conferences are being published and held in honor of the apocalypse and speculations on its foundation within society are numerous. The craze for apocalyptic visions were only heightened in 2012, where the Mayan calendar allegedly had foretold the destruction of the world; a true apocalypse on December 21, 2012. This date has come and gone, but the interest in apocalypse is still very much alive. This is reflected in the publication of apocalypse films, novels and songs, and can also be seen in conferences held on the subject. These conferences include *Don't Panic! The Apocalypse in Theory and Culture*, a conference held at University of Kent at Canterbury in 2012 and *Apocalypse: Imagining the End*, which is a yearly conference that has been ongoing since 2012 at Mansfield College, Oxford. These examples go to show that the apocalypse is a contemporary issue that is widely debated both through popular culture, in literary circles and in the world of politics, although the word apocalypse is seldom mentioned in the latter. When looking at the disasters of the twenty-first century in relation to the growing interest in post-apocalyptic literature and in the end of the world in general, it creates a natural connection between reality and fiction. Therefore, post-apocalyptic fiction can be said to play with the idea that fiction is more than merely imagination and also carries connotations to reality. Although post-apocalyptic fiction is undeniably imagined, it is the close relation to real life that enables the reader to connect with the narrative and thereby be able to identify with that specific piece of fiction. By working with the connection between fiction and the reader, the foundation of this dissertation rests upon the existing literature and research on the subject, while at the same time seeking to expand on the understanding of post-apocalyptic fiction.

Post-apocalyptic ventures

A lone survivor of the apocalypse finds himself the caretaker of a non-human society while struggling with his memory of the pre-apocalyptic past; 1000 years in the future people struggle to survive in a post-apocalyptic America where fear and suspicion dominate; A community tries to find its footing in an American setting where the apocalypse is still ongoing; In a future America where morality has vanished, a man and a boy travel the road in search for hope. Those are the realities of the four post-apocalyptic novels, respectively Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse* (2007) James Kunstler's *World Made By Hand* (2008) and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006). Through these four novels, it is the intention to investigate

how fiction and reality relate to one another. The four novels in question share similar traits and will therefore be discussed within the same framework. Aside from being widely popular within the post-apocalyptic genre, they deal with a wide range of contemporary cultural issues having to do with post-apocalyptic fear and how people act in the wake of cataclysmic events.

The four novels take place in America or "the geographical space formerly known as America" (Manjikian, 2012:10) and deal with the demise and moral degradation of the American society. (10) As the setting in all four selected works is American we have chosen to focus on the American society of the twenty-first century. Despite the nowhere near resemblance to current American society and despite the future reference, as far as a thousand years into the future in Crace's *Pesthouse*, the reader of post-apocalyptic fiction still relates to an American geography. The fact that America is thoroughly dissolved in these novels bears testament to the nihilistic view on contemporary American society.

In the dissertation, we do not distinguish between natural and manmade events, as the cause of the apocalypse is often withheld from the reader. The events are interrelated by manmade destruction inducing natural disasters like overpopulation leading to an increase in diseases etc. Our distinction lies between realistic events, such as the two abovementioned, and supernatural events, like zombie apocalypse and alien invasion. The difference is that the former is a threat coming from within society and the environment, whereas in the latter the threat is an external one. Since we are want to focus on the threats coming from within society, the focus will be on how individuals and society cope with an ever-changing world and how this is expressed in post-apocalyptic literature:

Through a cross-field study drawing on ethical criticism, religion and psychoanalysis, we want to look at the interdependent relationship of reality and fiction in post-apocalyptic narratives.

Framework

As the field of post-apocalyptic narratives can be used and portrayed in differing manners, the approach that we want to take in this dissertation needs to be explained thoroughly. The theoretical basis of the dissertation is a main chapter that combines the fields of ethical criticism, religion and psychoanalysis, while also focusing on America as a nation. A cross-field study allows a broader understanding of how and why post-apocalyptic fiction deals with current social fears and anxieties. Initiating the chapter on ethical criticism, there will be an introduction to postmodernism and beyond in order to understand how society has developed in the last half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. In order to create the overall basis of our analytical

framework, the works of especially Wayne C. Booth and Marshall Gregory, make it possible to look at the abstractness of ethical criticism. The chapter will look at why ethical criticism is instrumental when dealing with works of fiction, as being social beings naturally means going through some sort of identification with the fictional characters. The first section of the chapter will look at why there has been a long period in time where ethical criticism was at a standstill, and how the fact that we are moving past postmodernism has affected ethical criticism. Therefore, we will look at how philosophy has had an impact on the new turn in ethical criticism that we are seeing in contemporary society. Hereafter, the focus will turn to religion, using the ideas of especially Mark C. Taylor in order to understand how religion functions within society. The post-apocalyptic setting of the novels in question alludes to the presence of one or more apocalyptic events that has led to a change of the known world. The apocalypse can be seen as a biblical event, signaling the battle between good and evil. However, apocalypse can also be used as a secular concept, denoting a catastrophe or disaster of destructive proportions. The connection between the secular and the biblical apocalypse in post-apocalyptic fiction raises ethical questions of survival and how people deal with the loss of their known world. Furthermore, the social qualities of religion allude to the connection between ethicality and religion, and also make it possible to comment on how religion functions in post-apocalyptic living.

The section on psychoanalysis begins with a look into how societies and individuals relate to danger and risks, and how this effect people's sense of ontological security. Next, the chapter takes a Freudian approach, focusing on fear and anxiety. It is a useful field to tap into to see how culture and socialization affects the constitution of a self in times of fictional apocalypse. When dealing with social fear and anxiety in a literary American setting, one cannot disregard the related concept of trauma. Post-apocalyptic fiction allows us to study trauma and people's reaction to insecurity, which is also why a cross-field study is beneficial. In contemporary trauma literature, such as *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) by Jonathan Safran Foer and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) by Mohsin Hamid, the protagonists deal with the repercussions of traumatic events, in this case the trauma of 9/11. This kind of literature is instrumental in recounting American history on fear and anxiety in the twenty-first century and we therefore acknowledge its importance. However, as it is post-apocalyptic- and not trauma literature that is the dissertation's focal point, we reserve the right focus on trauma studies in relation to post-apocalyptic fiction. Even though there is definitely a case for arguing the presence of trauma in post-apocalyptic fiction, there is a sound basis for distinguishing post-apocalyptic fiction and post-9/11 literature, the most

obvious evidence being that post-9/11 literature, though it can also be fictional, has a basis in a non-fictional event. Post-apocalyptic fiction, though tapping into already existing fears and anxieties, is, so far, grossly exaggerated or premature.

The last part of the dissertation's theoretical framework, deals with America in the twenty-first century. The choice of limiting our scope to an American setting is based on the origins of the novels' setting. All the novels take place in what was once known as the United States of America and the authors themselves, despite Crace who has English roots, are North American as well. This chapter looks at the decline of one of the world's most influential superpowers, which is caused by economic challenges and challenges in both foreign and domestic policy, and has left the American dream as a thing of the past. Furthermore, this chapter exemplifies how trauma can influence a whole society as the events of September 11 have left America fearful and insecure. These fears and insecurities have influenced the American culture, which becomes visible through the many post-apocalyptic narratives that envision especially the American society after the end.

Consequently, ethical criticism combined with religion, fear and anxiety and the America influence form the backdrop of a study in post-apocalyptic fiction through the aforementioned novels. In dealing with the abovementioned topics, it becomes possible to analyze the four novels while adhering to the overall notion of ethicality.

The Reality of the Post-apocalypse

The theoretical aspect of this dissertation is not build on individual theories, but rather a more cohesive collection of ideas and concepts that work together in creating a frame for the analysis of the four novels. The analytical aspect of this dissertation will therefore be divided into three sections; *Oryx and Crake, The Pesthouse and World Made By Hand* combined, and *The Road*, each dealing with the theoretical frame. As this dissertation is, relatively speaking, a continuation of our 9th semester project dealing with dystopia, the first novel in the analysis will be *Oryx and Crake* as it is closest to portraying the traditional dystopian society, in the form of a society gone wrong. *Oryx and Crake* is also the first novel to be analyzed, as the ending of the novel opens up for two possible ways of coping with the post-apocalyptic scenario. The first option is to stay behind and make an effort to rebuild the former civilization and create a new society. The second option is to admit defeat due to the devastating effects of the apocalypse leaving absolutely no hope of ever rebuilding a society. The duality of the ending in *Oryx and Crake* offers an interesting look into the different ways in which post-apocalyptic societies can be constructed. The first option of trying to rebuild leads to the ensuing analysis of *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand*, as both novels

deal with how it is possible to rebuild after facing a disaster. The two novels are discussed through a comparative analysis as plot and characterization overlap each other in the two novels, and therefore enforces the claim that post-apocalyptic literature share similar traits. Lastly, the analysis focusses on *The Road*, which deals with finding hope in a place where no hope is to be found and where society has seemingly admitted defeat.

The analyses of the four novels will form the backdrop for a discussion that intends to compile the novels and thereby discuss how fiction and reality are related. The discussion will firstly look at the four novels' similarities and differences. By dealing with certain ethical questions, we want to look at how the literary world is undetached from reality, thereby focusing on the overall theme of the dissertation, ethical criticism. The discussion will also focus on the relationship between author, reader and novel, by looking at how ethical concerns are portrayed today. In contemporary society, ethics seem to be under pressure, due to the limitless nature of contemporary scientific abilities. As ethical concerns develop alongside general changes in the world, the question is where ethical concerns are located in contemporary society. Furthermore, it is the intention to create a link between fiction and reality through the four novels, by looking at the possibility of post-apocalyptic literature as being beyond societal caution. In addition, the discussion will focus on American society and the issues that arise in the face of a discernable decline, as this is the scope throughout the dissertation. The American focus offers a precision in terms of discussing ethics outside the world of fiction and gives an idea of what context post-apocalyptic fiction most often figures in.

The Intention behind *Imagining the End and Beyond*

It is not the dissertation's purpose to act as its own cautionary tale against contemporary issues, like out of control consumer tendencies, the dangers of technological advancement or environmental fear. Neither is it our intention to endeavor in solving any current issues forecasting the end of the world, by discussing or proposing ideas for a future America. However, by acknowledging that the United States in particular is losing its identity and security in the post-apocalyptic space, it becomes easier to understand how both identity and security are constructed in contemporary time, thereby creating a natural connection between the literary and the real world. The purpose of this dissertation is not to look at the end of the world as a phenomenon, but rather what happens in the aftermath of an apocalypse, and how it is possible to move beyond the stage of total devastation. The idea of the world ending is often subjected to a wide range of ethical considerations; therefore, this dissertation will be built on the methodological pillar of ethical criticism. For us, ethics is an exciting field of study because of the level of abstraction and subjectivity. By applying the abstract

notion of ethics to a tangible subject such as post-apocalypse, it is possible to look at how the end of the world affects the basic ethical principles of human kind. More importantly it is also possible to look at the relationship between the author, novel and reader through ethical criticism, by engaging in the responsibility these three actors have towards each other. The overall purpose of this paper thereby is to create an understanding of the interdependent relationship between fiction and reality, by using examples of post-apocalyptic literature, within the frame of ethical criticism. We acknowledge that others before us have addressed post-apocalyptic fiction and it is on the shoulders of these that we stand to address the issue of ethics in post-apocalyptic fiction. As the ethics of post-apocalyptic fiction is strongly connected to what happens in the face of radical social change, the aforementioned framework will now be mapped out in an attempt to frame an ethical America.

Framing an Ethical America

An Introduction to Postmodernism and Beyond

To gain a deeper understanding of how society and critical thought has developed in the last half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is important to pay attention to the overshadowing presence of postmodernism. Encompassing a wide range of philosophers, writers, scholars and critics, postmodernism has had a huge impact on both social and cultural life. However, some argue that it has begun its decline and that new –isms have taken its place. This introduction to postmodernity and beyond intends to outline the important characteristics of postmodernism, relating it to this dissertation and also exploring what lies beyond postmodernism. In doing so, we create a link to the revival of ethical criticism and thus link the theoretical framework to a post-postmodern context.

Even though it may be ambitious to explain postmodernism in brief, the following will relate to how postmodernism is to be understood in this dissertation, while still acknowledging that there is a number of different approaches to the subject. Postmodernism rose as a response to modernism in the time after the Second World War and it influenced a wide range of disciplines, from philosophy to the arts. Drawing on literary theorist Brian Mchale's description of postmodernism, Professor Elana Gomel characterizes postmodernism as,

> […] having an ontological dominant in contradistinction to the epistemological dominant of modernism. Postmodernism is concerned with the nature of the world we live in and of the alternative/possible/impossible worlds that surround this one as a halo of virtualities. (Gomel, 2010:11)

Thus, postmodernism is defined as ontological; dealing with *being* and *existence* as opposed to the epistemological focus on knowledge. This goes hand in hand with the notion of ontological security, which will be described in the following chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities* and asserts the link between postmodernism and the concepts used in this thesis. Furthermore, postmodernism is characterized by the combining of different symbols into new, meaningful images, by the fragmentation and spontaneity that lets people play with irony, and also the abandonment of the grand narratives. (Heelas, 1998:4) Postmodernity celebrates a self-consciousness that makes it possible to question representation and reality, epitomized by French sociologist Jean Baudrillard.

Consequently, postmodernism has influenced both society and culture in the twentieth century, not just from a religious perspective, but also in a more general sense. However, with the changes of the late 80s and 90s both politically, technologically and socially, postmodernism has experienced a decline and scholars began discussing whether a new –ism was beginning to emerge in the late 90s and the beginning of the 2000s. The question of what comes after postmodernism has interested a wide range of scholars and is still a disputed topic, both in name and in content. In his article *The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond* Alan Kirby, author and PhD in English literature from the University of Exeter, argues that postmodernity is dead and gone. Instead, it has been replaced by a new –ism, a post-postmodernism that he in his article names pseudo-modernism and later renames digimodernism. Kirby's arguments relate to the highly digitalized world of the twenty-first century, and how the late 90s and early 2000s restructured the relationship between author, reader and text. Kirby continues, arguing that the reader of a text has gained importance in pseudo-modernism and that the reader often functions as a co-author of a given text. His critique is initially targeted towards "[…]all television or radio programmes or parts of programmes, all 'texts', whose content and dynamics are invented or directed by the participating viewer or listener." (Kirby, 2006) This encompasses reality shows, social networks like Facebook and even sporting events, where people vote for their favorite player. The recipient of a 'text' has to interact with it in, order for the text to be real and in Kirby's own words this "[…] makes the individual's action the necessary condition of the cultural product." (Kirby, 2006) This focus on reader response, or reader-action, fits well within the scope of this dissertation and links directly to ethical criticism, which also emphasizes the importance of the reader. Thus, ethical criticism functions within the framework of this post postmodern condition and alludes to a more reader-fixated interpretation of cultural products. Kirby further looks at the notion of pseudo-modernism and states that,

> […] pseudo-modernism's typical intellectual states are ignorance, fanaticism and anxiety: Bush, Blair, Bin Laden, Le Pen and their like on one side, and the more numerous but less powerful masses on the other. Pseudo-modernism belongs to a world pervaded by the encounter between a religiously fanatical segment of the United States, a largely secular but definitionally hyper-religious Israel, and a fanatical sub-section of Muslims scattered across the planet: pseudo-modernism was not born on 11 September 2001, but postmodernism was interred in its rubble. (Kirby, 2006)

What can be deduced from this is that fanaticism and anxiety are ruling emotions, which fit well within the scope of post-apocalyptic fiction. In Kirby's opinion, pseudo-modernism travels the spaces of a world that is influenced by a religiosity that is both existent and non-existent. And while pseudo-modernism did not suddenly occur after September 11, Kirby argues that postmodernism suffered a major setback in the rubble of the terror attacks.

If we accept that postmodernism is declining, the description of what Kirby named pseudo –or digimodernism seems plausible. However, a transition from one concept to another does not happen in a blink of an eye and it is possible to find traces of both –isms in contemporary cultural productions. The influence of postmodernism is deeply rooted in society; however, it is possible to trace new tendencies that points towards a reconfiguration of the postmodern condition that fits with the digitalized reality of today. We find ourselves caught between wanting to adhere to relativism, while at the same time seeking absolute truths, hoping for a better future, yet doubting it will happen. In other words, we oscillate between different extremities to find meaning in life, which symbolizes the complexity of life itself. In the wake of a turn towards the post postmodern condition, conceptualized by Kirby's notion of pseudo –or digimodernism, an increasing focus on the ethicality of literature has occurred, giving merit to the focus on ethical criticism in this dissertation. Therefore, the following chapter will focus on ethical criticism and the ways that this concept is useful when working with post-apocalyptic fiction.

Exploring Ethical Criticism

In 1988 the American literary critic Wayne C. Booth wrote *The Company We Keep - An Ethics of Fiction*. Although this book on ethical criticism was written many years ago, and despite the fact that this area has been developed significantly since, the way Booth deals with ethical criticism is perfect for an introduction of the term in this dissertation. According to Booth the word 'ethical' can be misleading when dealing with ethical criticism. Ethical comes from the word ethos which refers to character or habitual characteristics, as both individuals and society express character through some sort of habits of choice in every aspect of life. (Booth, 1988:8) However, the understanding of the word ethical has developed and in contemporary understanding, the word has a tendency to only cover a sort of approval. Following Booth's argument, an ethical choice thereby becomes a right choice. When dealing with ethical criticism, the word ethical has to cover all qualities in the character of both the author and the reader. It is not a question of only dealing with a limited set of moral standards like honesty, decency and tolerance, but rather "[…] the entire range of effects on

the "character" or "person" or "self". "Moral" judgments are only a small part of it." (8) That ethical criticism only aims to judge narratives and discuss how they affect the reader, are two similar misunderstandings connected to this field of study. This is without a doubt a crucial part of ethical criticism, however, Booth suggests that the term also includes the ethics of the readers, meaning that there should also be focus on the reader's responsibility to the narratives they consume. Besides connecting the terms 'ethical' and 'character' when working with ethical criticism, Booth also includes the term 'virtues'. Booth uses 'virtues' to describe the qualities of characters that are engaged with and affected by the experience with narratives. This refers to the original meaning of the word, which covers the idea of the whole scope of human strengths, capacities or behavior. (10) By having covered the different terms that Booth uses in his understanding of ethical criticism, it is possible to understand the following quote, which is Booth's attempt to define ethical criticism:

> If "virtue" covers every kind of genuine strength or power, and if a person's ethos is the total range of his or her virtues, then ethical criticism will be any effort to show how the virtues of narratives relate to the virtues of selves and societies, or how the ethos of any story affects or is affected by the ethos - the collection of virtues - of any given reader. (11)

This quote not only shows how aesthetic and ethical questions do not have to be separated, but also stresses the importance of ethical criticism, as narratives have an effect on both the individual reader and the society in which it is published.

According to Professor Marshall W. Gregory, the idea of stories being told and consumed has been seen as a fundamental and universal human activity throughout history. When a reader or listener engages in a narrative, a form of identification with the fictional characters is bound to happen. As most people feel the influence of this identification on the quality and content of their own lives, this transposition between the readers and fictional characters has an important ethical significance. This influence that the reader is experiencing and cannot disregard is what makes ethical criticism necessary. (Gregory, 1998:194) Ethical criticism rests on the fact that the reader cannot part himself from the ethics and morality present in the real world, while reading the book, because the same moral categories, which are encountered in real life, are also applied to the fictional characters. Booth suggests that just as friends or acquaintances are influential through their presence, thoughts and beliefs, so are the literary figures, and since thoughts about relations with other people are usually not morally neutral, neither will the thoughts on the literary characters be. According to

Booth, it is possible to assess the influence of these literary figures as legitimately as any other influence from real life. (Booth, 1988:15)

The Standstill of Ethical Criticism

Ethical criticism is not a new phenomenon, as ethics have always been a significant part of literary commentary. However, during the last decade or so, ethical criticism has been at a standstill. According to Gregory, this standstill was caused by the emergence of other modes of criticism, which Gregory used as a term to describe most of the critical approaches that have dominated the twentieth century literary scene, namely post-structuralism, deconstruction and postmodernism, which all served to discredit ethical criticism not only of the arts, but as a general human enterprise. (Gregory, 2010: 274) In the essay *Why Ethical Criticism Can Never Be Simple*, Booth is also concerned with this long period of silence in ethical criticism and he expresses his opinion on why this standstill happened. Booth believes that there is a certain amount of fear connected to the situation where ethical criticism of any kind moves into aesthetic territory. Since the point of expressing ethical judgments is to somehow challenge or awaken "[…] those who have missed the point" (Booth, 1998: 355), ethical criticism is naturally controversial. Therefore, still paraphrasing Booth, the fear lies in the fact that ethical criticism, even when the critics agree with the exclaimed opinions, is an unnecessary interference with the aesthetics. (355) "To be seen as an ethical critic can trigger thoughtless responses from purists who fear that the "lyrical" or the "beautiful" will be sacrificed to preaching." (355) When a critic uses political correctness or religious views to either praise or discard a specific work of art, it is seen as absurd, because political judgments are indeed subjective, and religion is not a subject of rational argument. Booth also points out that literature itself is a difficult term as it covers a wide range both ethically and aesthetically. The fall of ethical criticism was, according to Booth, a result of the recognition that no critical method is capable of covering more than only a part of actual works. Therefore, ethical criticism was criticized and considered merely unfair or irrelevant, as one method of criticism can be appropriate to one piece of literature and useless or destructive to another. (355)

The Inescapability of Ethical Concerns

Despite that ethical criticism has been more or less ignored for extended periods of time, it is still alive and well. Gregory describes it as "[…] the inescapability of ethical concerns." (Gregory, 2010:276) which alludes to the fact that despite how much effort twentieth century critics put into hiding ethical criticism in some distant corner, "[…]the human concerns from which ethical criticism springs kept pushing it back into the middle of the room". (276) To further explain the inescapability of ethical concerns, Gregory relates this to the idea that human beings' need to be

social is closely related to any kind of moral sense. Gregory argues that ethical and moral considerations will always be a part of the social constellation of being human, because our idea of sociability is chosen and culturally dependent, rather than being programmed and genetic as seen in the world of animals. Human beings have a natural need to be part of some sort of grouping, be it family or otherwise, and for these groupings to remain there need to be some social mechanisms of stability and protection. (Gregory, 1998:197) Furthermore, according to Gregory:

> […] these needs all contribute to the creation of moral categories as not merely contingent but as integral to human existence. This is not to say what the *content* of those categories is or should be, but it is to say that moral categories themselves are both persistent and necessary elements of social existence--the only kind of existence available to human beings. (197)

In the essay *Ethical Criticism: What It Is and Why It Matters* from 1998, Gregory also explains how ethics and morality are directly connected to relations between people. When we interact with other people, it is natural to speculate on the type of approval we seek, but more importantly on the impressions we are making and receiving. Still following Gregory's line of thought, people constantly judge each other through moral features, like honesty, kindness, fairness, self-control and trustworthiness, and it is only when we consider a person truly good or at least not bad in any fashion, that we can trust them and engage in a truly ethical relationship. (198) The inescapability of ethical criticism can thereby be explained by the fact that because we are social creatures, our lives are made up by a constant flow of moral considerations, moral judgments, moral categories and practical moral reasoning. Gregory hereby makes clear that our sociality explains where ethical criticism comes from, just as it explains why it never disappears completely, because we never stop being social creatures. (198)

The "New" Ethical Criticism

During the last couple of decades, ethical criticism has broken the previous standstill by coming back redefined. The philosopher Martha Nussbaum, who is one of the most prominent contributors of works on ethics and literature, calls it "[…] a marked turn toward the ethical."(Parker, 1994:32) as quoted in *Ethics, Theory and the Novel* by David Parker. Beside Nussbaum, most of the authors who have contributed to what looks like the resurgence of ethical criticism are philosophers by profession, rather than literary critics. This new turn towards the ethics is therefore closely

connected to a redefinition within philosophy, and rather than talking about the ethics in literature which has been a common understanding, it is now a question of the literary within ethics. The American philosopher Richard Rorty explains this change by a recent cultural shift towards a paradigm of pragmatism in which philosophy no longer is concerned with the foundational questions of metaphysics, ontology and epistemology, and where literature and the arts are helping ethics cope with the world. If this is in fact the case, it means that ethics is moving on from being a discourse dealing with the subjective side of experience, to being a subject of serious inquiry. (34) By reinstating ethics as a subject of serious inquiry, literature too becomes an important part of that inquiry as, according to Rorty, "Literature becomes for ethics what mathematics is for physics, a sort of necessary handmaiden." (34) Martha Nussbaum supports this opinion of Rorty, but takes it even further by treating literature as being moral philosophy, creating a close relationship between seeing the literariness of philosophy and seeing the philosophical nature of literature. Nussbaum draws on Aristotle and some of his characteristic ways of understanding ethics to create a starting point for this renewed ethical criticism. According to Aristotle, humans are different from plants and animals, in the way that they are capable of pursuing a rational existence directed towards action, with the highest form of existence being, that which is directed morally. Within ethics, Aristotle believed that "[…] we are not concerned to know what goodness essentially is, but how we are to become good men, for this alone gives the study its practical value." (37) This practical nature of ethics and ethical reflections, play an important role in describing ethical criticism as it focuses on practical reasoning, instead of just alluding to the abstractness of the concept.

Ethical Criticism and Postmodernism

In the essay *Redefining Ethical Criticism: The Old vs. the New* from 2010, Gregory also relates to the revival of ethical criticism, and claims that the reasons behind it lies in contemporary time and the fact that the postmodern wave that had a huge influence on critical thought and cultural products in the twentieth century, has begun to decline, which has also been commented on earlier in this dissertation. In his work, Gregory refers to several publications in order to support this claim of postmodernism losing its significance. By referring to these other publications on ethical criticism, Gregory manages to paint a picture of how ethical criticism has changed during the last three decades. In the beginning of the 1990s, Wayne Booth and Martha Nussbaum both contributed to the start of this new turn in ethical criticism and the search for postmodernist weaknesses and flaws commenced. In this same period of time, philosophers started to affect this turn in ethical criticism through publications dealing with the idea that human beings are not entirely social creations, but

> […] have a nature in which, not very far down at all, lies a vast network of inclinations, dispositions, neural programming, and perceptual protocols that come installed in every human being's brain as a part of our evolutionary heritage.
> (Gregory, 2010:281)

This means that concepts like metaphor and other figures of speech, which earlier on had been considered exclusive to literary criticism, instead became a part of a biological basis in the human being. This turn is also known as the cognitive turn and it followed the linguistic turn that had a focus on philosophy and language, and which had been dominant since the early twentieth century. During the 1990s, several publications were also made on how ethics and culture are related. The argument is that human nature is not, opposed to the postmodern perspective, shaped entirely by cultural forms of pressure and embodiment, as ethics "[…] comes neither from transcendental sources nor entirely from culture, but from intrinsic human needs that get mediated and tweaked by culture but that are not created by culture." (281) In 1996 the idea of a biological basis in ethics was supported by the publication of Steven Mithen's *The Prehistory of the Mind,* which focused on how evolutionary pressures have helped shape notions like ethics, human cognition, emotion and perception, as it has shaped the human brain. During the same year, it was also pinpointed that although ethics is centrally important to human beings, it is not unique for the human race, and that some features of ethics are in fact shared with other species of animals. This underlines that ethics is in fact a fundamental biological orientation, which is not solely a product of culture or cultural biases. (281) All the publications on ethical criticism during the 1980s, 1990s and continuing into the present have provided a new set of arguments for the importance of ethical criticism, which Gregory delineates in his essay from 2010. The publications cover different areas like literary criticism, philosophy and even science as the evolutionary aspect is considered a part of the relevance of ethical criticism. Following Gregory's line of argument, the publications together create a strong case against the postmodern assumption that human beings are entirely beings of social construction, but also an argument supporting the intrinsic importance of ethics to human beings. (281-282) All these publications have added to a resurrection of ethics in relation to especially literature, but also art in general. To return to the question of how postmodernism has influenced the rise of ethical criticism, Gregory also refers to the terrorist attack against the United States on September 11, 2001 as a reason to why postmodernism is on a downfall, and ethical criticism is growing stronger. As has been commented on earlier, the events of 9/11 left the

American nation shocked and disbelieving. According to Gregory, postmodernism was not a discourse that offered the comfort and the ability to make sense out of tragedy, loss and fear, which was highly necessary at this time.

> There was in fact mood of national urgency about the need for a frankly ethical discourse, an urgency that helps explain why George W. Bush's simplistic attempt to meet that need by giving the nation an ethical discourse revolving around his accusation about an »axis of evil« collection of terrorist states (State of the Union speech, January 29, 2002) was met with general acceptance instead of being widely ridiculed for the feeble notion that it was. The nation's social and political context then (and now) was not a context in which postmodernism could continue to thrive. (282)

This quote illustrates how America as a nation needed to place blame and that the ethical discourse of the government was greeted with pleasure and gave people a sense of purpose. The postmodern characteristics of irony and transgression were unable to comfort people in the confusing, emotional mood that followed the attacks and people began looking elsewhere for comfort and meaning. (282) The fear and anxiety that society experienced in the aftermath of September 11 will be explained in depth in the chapter *American Fears and Terrors*. However, for now the focus will remain on ethical criticism and its potential.

The Aims of Ethical Criticism

As has been made clear, ethical criticism has gone through a major transformation during the last decades, but has still managed to stay alive, which is because we as social human beings cannot deny that ethics are always a part of everything we do. However, if ethical criticism is here to stay, and as such is a big part of how we read literature, it becomes essential to look at what the aims of ethical criticism are, as this has been interpreted and understood differently through time. It is important to state that, according to Gregory, the purpose of ethical criticism is not to impose any kind of censorship of literature, to control people's thoughts or to manage how other people behave. In his essay *Ethical Criticism: What It Is and Why It Matters,* Gregory defines a number of aims for ethical criticism. The first aim is to create readerly understanding of potential literary effects. (Gregory, 1998:206) To create this understanding, fictional readers are addressed by ethical criticism in order to help in the progress of seeing, understanding and appreciating how fiction can

have a direct effect on the way of feeling, thinking and judging. Still following the viewpoint of Gregory, to create a readerly understanding of potential literary effects, is a question of ethical criticism trying to form a relationship between the reader and the specific piece of fiction. It is important that the readers understand that if they choose to engage in this relationship, it is very likely to have a permanent effect on both the reader's hearts and minds, as their reactions to stories happen in continuation of their reactions in real life: "until they understand that their responses to fiction are in some important sense a kind of practice at forming responses to real life - they are likely to dismiss the ethical significance of their relationship to fiction." (206) In this regard, it is also significant that the reader understands that literature cannot only be entertaining but also important, which can be seen as a reformulation of the didactic function of literature itself. Gregory further argues that it is important to understand that literature can only invite the reader into a response, but never force a reaction. The reader can always refuse to engage in the narrative, or simply be too tired, too distracted or too ignorant of the contents or settings of a piece of fiction. (206) However, if the reader has an open mind towards the experience that a piece of fiction can offer, "[…] the means by which the fiction gets delivered from the author and comprehended by the reader, can constitute powerful shapings of the mind." (207)

The second aim that Gregory presents as a part of ethical criticism is readerly understanding of moral criteria, which "[...] is to guide readers toward an understanding of the moral criteria that are relevant to making ethical judgments about fictional representations." (207) In this sense the aim of ethical criticism is to make the reader understand, that when reading a narrative, they are ratifying real ethical values within themselves, but also approving ethical values within the narrative by identifying with the fictional characters. A readerly understanding of moral criteria is thereby also a question of making ethical judgments, as the reader naturally decides who the good guys and who the bad guys are in any narrative.

The third aim of ethical criticism is a question of approving or not approving books for moral reasons, "[…] based on the critic's evaluation of a story's ethical presuppositions and the potential ethical impact that the story on the reader." (207) Gregory further explains that even critics find it difficult to not apply some ethical presuppositions, and he mentions the fact that traditionalists will always recommend canonical literature, just like multiculturalists will always recommend works that make their readers appreciate and respect cultural and ethnic diversity and so on. The point Gregory makes is that any recommendation of a literary text will be influenced by ethical presuppositions and potential ethical effects. (207) Consequently, Gregory has created an

understanding of ethical criticism that relies heavily on reader response and reader willingness. Both a willingness to actually participate in literary contexts, but also a willingness to relate to a piece of fiction in a way that makes it impossible not to bear judgment. His description of the aims of ethical criticism alludes to the importance of the reader and further underlines the difficulties that ethical criticism faces when being used. There is no doubt that Gregory does not look at ethical criticism as a tool for censorship, rather he sees it as a way to understand the complex interplay between society, reader and novel while focusing on the ethical questions and subtexts that is an inevitable part of literature.

To contextualize the arguments of Gregory, a further explanation of how Booth looks at ethical criticism is appropriate. Booth provides his idea of the aim of ethical criticism, which he, throughout his book *The Company We Keep - An Ethics of Fiction,* describes as the creation of a mutual relationship between a narrative and the reader or listener of this narrative:

> For any individual reader, the only story that will have ethical power is the one that is heard or read *as* it is heard or read - and that may have little connection either with the author's original intention or with the inherent powers of the story-as-told. (Booth, 1988:10)

Ethical criticism is thereby a question of the reader behaving responsibly toward the text and the author of that text, but at the same time, the reader must take responsibility for his or her own ethical interpretation of a text, as it will have an effect on how life is experienced hereafter. However, ethical criticism is not only a question of looking at the effects that follows a narrative. According to Booth one of the most significant aspects of ethical criticism is "[…] to find ways of talking about the ethical quality of the experience of narrative in itself." (10) In other words, it is also important that the reader relate to the characters present while reading or listening. Thus, Booth in concord with Gregory puts emphasis on the reader and his or her reaction to a given narrative. He further underlines the difficulties of deciphering the true intention of the novel or the author, and that the reader has a responsibility in acting appropriately toward the text they are reading. Booth seeks a way to discuss the ethical quality of reading and believes that ethical criticism can be useful in this aspect.

The description of ethical criticism and its core features have made it clear that it is a topic that is highly contested and also seemingly abstract at times. However, it is through ethical criticism that it

becomes possible to comment on a subjective matter such as reader response in order to make observations about the nature and scope of post-apocalyptic fiction. Walking the line from fiction to reality, ethical criticism becomes especially important in mitigating the distance between the reader and the narrative. As mentioned previously, ethical criticism constitutes the overall framework of this dissertation. However, in order to create a foundation on which ethical criticism can be used as a device for commentary, the following chapters will look at specific areas that are crucial when dealing with post-apocalyptic literature. Directly following is the chapter on religion, as moral and ethical questions have always been close to religious thought.

Following Religion

"You cannot understand the world today if you do not understand religion." (Taylor, 2007:xii) With this statement religious philosopher and scholar, Mark C. Taylor commences his work *After God*, which explores religion and its influence on various disciplines such as philosophy, economics, politics and literature. Furthermore, the position of religion in the twenty-first century is in focus in Taylor's work and this is significant in relation to the thesis of this dissertation. The role of religion is inserted into a cultural and social context, and used in relation to dystopian and apocalyptic visions, which is why it becomes important to clarify, how this dissertation intends to frame religion.

Religion is not limited to encompass certain beliefs such as Christianity, Judaism or Islam. Rather it surpasses these in relating to spiritual movements and differing indigenous peoples. Thus, religion becomes a cultural phenomenon that is dependent on the circumstances of its surroundings, in order to develop and function.

> Religion is an emergent, complex, adaptive network of symbols, myths and rituals that, on the one hand, figure schemata of feeling, thinking, and acting in ways that lend life meaning and purpose and, on the other, disrupt, dislocate, and disfigure every stabilizing structure. (12)

This definition both defines religion and displaces it. In Taylor's opinion, religion fits within certain schemata of feeling and acting that lend purpose to the specific person, thus bringing a quality of unity and affiliation to the word religion. Moreover, the description of religion as an adaptive network of symbols that, in some way gives life meaning allude to the ethical dimension of religion, since it probes the individual to feel, think and act in a way that is defined by certain schemata. At the same time religion can disrupt stable structures, which alludes to an unstable interpretation of religion as a concept. In this interpretation, religion is not a stationary entity that is easily defined; it rather functions as a fluctuating concept that adapts to the circumstances in which it is used.

> When societies change, many seek security and stability through traditional beliefs and practices. As the rate of change increases, a more radical reaction tends to set in. True believers set themselves apart from infidels by constructing an ideal past, which, they believe, has been corrupted in the present. The goal becomes to "recover" this

past by purifying the present through the conversion or elimination of nonbelievers. (23)

As this quote illustrates, religion is resistant to change, as believers cling to the norms and restrictions of a given religious tradition and seek to bring these to the forefront of society. This process is constantly ongoing, since societies are in a constant motion of change. How rapidly the changes happen, determine the size and actions of each group. The need for something to believe in both relates to groups and individuals in times of crisis or change and thus it influences the presence of religion. Arguably, in times of change, people likewise tend to forsake tradition or God in an attempt to find new meaning and escape from the constraints of a religious tradition. In times of crisis, the need to place blame leads to a denunciation of God, spurred by the belief that if God did exist, (s)he would not have allowed the fictive crisis to continue.

The binary opposition between clinging to religion in hopes of returning to a past that seems better, and to discard religion entirely because it has not lived up to expectations are important elements when working with religion in a literary context, and also relates to the concept of ethical criticism as people have to decide what they deem as right. As such, religion and ethical criticism relate to one another, which can also be seen through their shared focus on the 'social', as both ethics and religion are to a certain degree social activities. However, as will be discussed later in this chapter, religion has become highly individualized in the postmodern age and therefore also sets itself apart from the social focus of ethical criticism.

Towards a Re-sacralization

The tendency to secularize religion from society in general deserves attention, as it lends strength to the notion that religion and certain sectors of society belong in separate arenas of life. Quoting sociologist Peter Berger, Taylor describes how secularization encompasses the evacuation of religion from areas that were previously under religious control or influence i.e. the separation of state and church and the removal of ecclesiastical influence in connection with education. Berger further states that secularization is also mirrored in the decline of religion, which influenced cultural life and was visible in arts, literature and philosophy. According to this view on secularization, the modernization of society inevitably causes them to become secular and this is both irreversible and inevitable. (Taylor, 2007:131) The process of secularization has been an ongoing process through-out the first half of twentieth century culminating with postmodernism as the ultimate cultural marker of the secularized society, where religious influence has been all but removed from

institutions and governments. This removal of religious influence has been steadily supported and "[…] the disappearance of religion tends to be regarded as a mark of human progress." (131) Religion no longer holds the same power and the social obligation of religion has decreased. Thus, secularization is seen as distinctly positive, an inevitable development in a modern society and religion being pushed aside is seen a goal in itself. From the opposite perspective, the decline of religion and religious influence may signify a turn towards chaos and moral deprivation and the only solution is to return to past religious absolutes and fundamental moral values. (132)

The last half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century have shown signs of a return of the religious, a reversed secularization or a re-sacralization. People who holds on to the belief that religion needs to be kept separate from society and culture looks at the return of religious values as "… a regression that threatens to plunge the world into new primitivism made all the more dangerous by the destructive potential of modern technology." (132) The reference to the dangers of modern technology alludes to the idea that technology has the potential to threaten civilization and generate chaos rather than being the answer to the questions of life. The revival of religion as an important factor in human lives signifies a change that goes hand in hand with both the reanimation of ethical criticism and the gradual shift away from postmodernism towards a post-postmodern condition.

Even though, as Taylor vehemently argues, it may be a stretch to call for a return of religion when religion never truly left, the overt focus on religion in especially post-apocalyptic fiction validates the claim that re-sacralization is an ongoing process. It is possible to argue that the wish or even need for religion are enhanced in times of trouble, as people seek meaning and reason for present difficulties. This is a contributing factor to a reversal of secularization, as the need for stability and security outshines the fear of religious control. To return to the point of religion never having left, it is possible to argue that technology and science took religion's place as the all-encompassing creed and thereby also inherited many of the functions of religion. In a secularized world, the logic and verifiability of science makes it possible to found belief on facts, instead of adhering to traditional religious factions.

The strong influence of secularization in the last half of the twentieth century has not provided the answers or made life better. On the contrary, tragedy is still a tangible societal concern, which was made clear on September 11, 2001. The different philosophies of the postmodern era cannot explain the events or be used as a comfort for those left behind, and the need for a change of scenery puts religion and religious thought in a front position. This does not degrade the importance of science

and it is possible to argue that science and religion have become or can be infused to form a distinct set of beliefs that fits the individual's need for religion.

American and Postmodern Influences

Seeing that this dissertation takes its basis in an American setting, it is important to understand religion in an American context. Religious freedom has been an important part of the American constitution, which is exemplified in the transcript of the first amendment from 1789,

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances. (The Constitution of the United States, Amendment 1)

Religious beliefs are thus protected by the Constitution and cannot be banned by law. The majority of Americans identify themselves as being Christians, in one way or another. Professor Mary Manjikian comments on the relation between religion and the United States by quoting and commenting on John Winthrop's notion of America as a city upon a hill. America is founded on an ideology that rests on the nation as a city upon a hill, an ideal society that others would look up to. Several American presidents, including John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, have made use of this analogy, making it a part of the DNA of America's character. "[…] it describes both the state of what America is as well as implicitly making reference to what America will be in the future." (Manjikian, 2012:150) Thus, religion in America is connected to the belief that America, as a nation, is blessed by God and stands above others. In this sense, America is exceptional and answers only to God. This view on America as a nation seems to clash with the secularized reality of the late twentieth century, however, one reality does not rule out the other. The complexity of religion within the United States is reflected in the market-state and the secularized society that has dominated in the previous century. Taylor argues that even though the process of secularization has been ongoing, the market-state society of the twenty-first century is not secular at all. On the contrary, it "…rests upon a foundational faith in the omniscience, omnipotence and increasing omnipresence of the market." (Taylor, 2007:239) Taylor goes further, stating that God is indeed not dead, as Nietzsche has claimed; instead the market has become God. The way that the market celebrates and encourages individualism influences the surrounding society and culture by letting individuals create their own frame of religion within the society they adhere

to. This relates to the postmodern way of thinking and also alludes to a postmodern religious experience that focuses on individual choices and a blurring of boundaries.

The postmodern wave has had an impact on religion and the way it is perceived. As has been made clear in this chapter, religion is a deeply rooted presence in an American context and even though it is not as prominent as it was just 50 years ago, it still permeates American society and culture and is important when dealing with ethical and existential questions.

As has been explained in the chapter *An Introduction to Postmodernism and Beyond*, postmodernism in relation to this dissertation constitutes an ontological understanding of society and the combining of differing symbols and concepts to create new, meaningful images. This understanding of the postmodern condition leads to a religion, where the individual subject sets the agenda for its own religious experience.

> The deregulation of the religious realm, combined with the cultural emphasis on freedom and choice, results in intermingled, interfused, forms of religious – or 'religious'-cum-'secular – life which exist beyond the tradition-regulated church and chapel. (Heelas, 1998:5)

Following this argument, people draw on their individual experiences to create their own religious reality and they are thus no longer defined by traditional religious practices. When people draw on what they find useful in their particular situation, religious hybrids appear, meaning the religious and the non-religious function within the same framework, fused together by the individual. (5) As such, postmodernism has influenced religious thinking and has created differing views on what constitutes religion. This is an important point in relation to this dissertation as it alludes to the many functions of religion and religious practice.

Religion and the (post-) apocalyptic

After having explained the concept of religion and its relation to postmodernity, it is possible to move into a more detailed description of religion in relation to the ethics of post-apocalyptic thinking.

As Elana Gomel states, postmodernity is "spellbound by the idea of being perched on the very edge of a universal cataclysm." (Gomel, 2010:120) In continuation of the chapter on postmodernity, religion is still an important factor in a social and cultural context, even though its presence has

changed with time. In a world influenced by postmodern notions of breaking and blurring boundaries, religion has developed within a societal frame.

Fear and anxiety of a new century, and in this case also a new millennium, can be traced back in history, with the fin de siècle "movement" of the late 1800s and the revolutions of the late 1700s. As the twenty-first century began, unease was also traceable, however, Taylor declares that the fears presented with the end of the twentieth century were not just the usual anxiety that comes with the turning of the ages. Taylor states:

> […] there is a growing awareness that the very structures constituting the world are changing ever faster, and thus reality itself is being transformed in unexpected ways. Such moments of transition tend to provoke feelings of insecurity and uncertainty. In our day […] the ground is slipping from beneath our feet, and people are seeking a secure foundation that once again can provide meaning and purpose in their lives. (Taylor, 2007:348)

Thus, Taylor stresses how a fast changing world can cause people to seek a deeper meaning, which some find in religious beliefs. Some who deem themselves faithful to God, ascribes the uncertainty and anxiety of the twenty-first century, to the frivolous and wild 1960s. These believers insist that a crisis of values is the cause of uncertainty and that it can be traced back to the "decadent decade" of the sixties where all standards were abandoned and everything was permitted, which in turn moved people further away from God and religion. For these believers, the only solution is to return to basic and fundamental values. (349) This return to a past that may, or may not, have existed is not the solution according to Taylor. He argues that the crisis of values lies in the fact that people attempt to create an image of a past that cannot fit within present day's complex and ever-changing framework. They become a form of militant moralists, who want to return the past to the present and deal in absolutes.

> Nothing is more dangerous today than the growing devotion to dualistic either/or ideologies in a neither/nor world. If disaster is to be avoided, there must be a radical transvaluation of values that both reflects global complexity and promotes an ethic of life. (349)

In this quote Taylor promotes a way of thinking that goes deeper than the dualism which is often associated with traditional religion, and calls for an evaluation of the values that religion stands for. This is important when dealing with the ethics of religion and the way religion is represented in and through modern culture. Religion often lies underneath the surface, as a current not visible to the naked eye; however, it influences society and culture in a way that is not to be ignored, especially when focusing on post-apocalyptic- and dystopian fiction.

The End in Sight

Following Taylors argument, religion transfers into the twenty-first century by relating it to the social and political atmosphere of today and thus binds religion together with postmodern values of fragmentation and blurring of boundaries. Palpable deities, such as God, have been interchanged with free markets, especially in the United States, and this has created oppositions in the sense that religious fundamentalists seek to return to the past and do away with the sinful and corrupt world of today, whereas agnostic fundamentalists deny any evidence that God exists and see no reason to adhere to belief systems such as Christianity. These oppositions naturally clash and create a middle ground where religion becomes a disfigured ambiguous entity, difficult to grasp and almost impossible to explain. (Taylor, 2007:348-351) Furthermore, in keeping with Taylor, advances in technology have made it possible for people to act the part of God. For example, it is possible to decide whether to terminate a pregnancy because of the risks of having a disabled child; doctors can keep people in a coma alive for years even though there may be virtually no chance of recovery, and diseases such as the plague and tuberculosis have been all but eradicated in the Western world. These are just some of the cases where people in the past have looked to God for guidance, but today it is human beings that are the decision makers. This development opens up for new ethical questions about the morality of these actions, because who can decide when it is the right thing to get an abortion or to turn off life support machines. These questions are naturally loaded with personal, cultural and social feelings that guide the individual.

The post-apocalyptic literary genre often draws on moral and ethical dilemmas that make the reader of these novels question their own moral standings. Fiction that deals with the end of times and what comes after the end is related to a religious context in the sense that the bible too is a narrative that culminates in the end of times; namely the apocalypse. Here it becomes essential to understand the word apocalypse and the connotations it brings. The end of the world is a fascinating concept that has been of interest to many scientists and scholars throughout the years. Following Professor Mary Manjikian's outline of the apocalypse in her publication *Apocalypse and Post-politics* from

2012, it becomes evident that the word can have several meanings. The original meaning of the word is derived from the Greek word *apokalupsis* which means to uncover or reveal and is depicted in both Jewish and Christian texts as the end of the world. (Manjikian, 2012:42) From a religious perspective, the apocalypse is a revelation from God, signaling a final battle between good and evil, where good will win. The end of the known world signals the coming of a new age, where the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be judged. In this sense, there is finality to the word apocalypse and "…the apocalyptic narrative is, by definition, eschatological or concerned with the final events in the history of the world or mankind." (42) The apocalypse is, however, not confined to religious understandings and has been broadened to encompass the secular world as well. The secular apocalypse focuses on the destruction of manmade constellations such as the law and government. In the secular apocalypse, it is not God who punishes mankind, at least not directly. The end of times comes not because of a deity giving judgment, but because of mistakes made by human kind. The destruction of the world is caused by human beings and as a consequence, any vision of the end of times can be said to be apocalyptic in its outline, which underlines the understanding of the apocalypse as total devastation or destruction. (42) What can be derived from the above is that the apocalypse has both a religious and a secular meaning and that it can be used to delineate the final battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil or, in a more modern interpretation, the apocalypse alludes to disastrous events that do not necessarily have anything to do with religious motives. The distinction between the religious and the secular apocalypse creates differing ways of moving past the momentous event, into the post-apocalyptic. When dealing with the religious apocalypse, the idea of life after the apocalypse is dependent on the will of God, while the secular apocalypse often focuses on rebuilding or restructuring society in one way or another. These two distinctions are not always easily distinguished and they may even function side by side as a way of delineating apocalyptic events in post-apocalyptic times. The secular apocalypse may contain allusions to traditional religious apocalypses and vice versa.

Consequently, religion has developed alongside society and has been influenced by a wide range of socio-critical approaches. Furthermore, religion has taken on different shapes and can be said to have been transferred to both the market-state and to science as well. While never having actually left the literary stage, religion has experienced a revival especially in relation to post-apocalyptic fiction, which is also a testimony to the fears and anxieties of contemporary American society.

Social Fears and Insecurities

Ontological security

In a world where collapse and threats are parts of society in more forms than one, examples being: global warming, terror attacks, and the global recession, feeling secure is challenging and fear and anxiety become dominant feelings. Nevertheless, security is something to strive for, and the knowledge that we are secure in our homes, in our country, in the world, both individually and as a society become important. When speaking of the general concept of security, it lacks specificity and to narrow down the scope the following section will therefore focus on the concept of ontological security in order to map out social fears and insecurities.

According to sociologist Anthony Giddens, whose research in social structures has provided a basis for many social theories, having a sense of ontological security is measured in terms of stability and continuity in individual experiences. Thus, ontological security is a perceived sense of control and stability in social and cultural norms that governs social interaction and reaction. (Mamzer, 2012:178, Giddens, 1991) It is important to note that ontological security can never be factual but is only perceived and subjective, much like fear. Ontological security can therefore be said to rely on predictability and how we are able or unable to foresee or at least keep a positive attitude towards the future. Avoiding chaos and anxiety is therefore essential, as threats to stability are threats to one's sense of ontological security. In addition, one's feeling of ontological security is closely related to the sense of identity; how we perceive ourselves and the world in which we live. Consequently, ontological security is rooted in the positive view in which people see society, the future and themselves.

In a postmodern world characterized by modified identities, hybridization, change and uncertainty it is difficult to maintain a feeling of predictability and our sense of ontological security is therefore challenged, since there are no fixed rules that can maintain stability. Change is unavoidable and society changes so rapidly that people need stability in one way or another. As a result, having a sense of ontological security has never been more vital to society than it is today, and security has long been a key component on the social agenda, whether politically, psychologically or financially. (Mamzer, 2013:178). In this regard, the idea of the surveillance society becomes relevant, as it ideally offers a sense of security, however it also presupposes a dilemma as the security it offers is at odds with the notion of freedom. Likewise, the global recession of 2008 has threatened people's trust in a secure economy and the insurance of banks, contesting the meaning of the word 'safe' and the perceived sense of security from external influences. This raises the question of whether or not

security is an obtainable goal.

In her essay *Ontological Security: Socio-cultural Context,* Hanna Mamzer considers the shift from modernity to postmodernity in her appraisal of the sense of ontological security. She claims that it is not impossible to find security in an ever-changing world, since the shift from modernity to postmodernity has also meant a change in identities and how we perceive our sense of self and society. As such, ontological security has to be contingent upon the individual and not the external world: Given the social world's changeable nature, our sense of ontological security must come, not from predictability of the external world, but rather the internal. (179) Considering post-apocalyptic fiction and the fact that it features an end to society as we know it and often presents a tumultuous external world, the shift from external to internal security as Mamzer proposes is well founded. She further argues that "glorification of change as a value disturbs the traditionally understood sense of ontological security." (181) Change does not always carry positive connotations, as it threatens the routines and stability that usually goes with feeling secure. This is especially relevant today, where constant change seems to be a global concern. The world is fascinated by the future and the changes it brings, but the uncertainty of it is unsettling and challenges our sense of security in the present. This is especially the case when considering post-apocalyptic fiction and the non-fictional fears this kind of literature takes its roots in.

According to literary critic Frank Kermode (1968), as quoted in *Apocalypse and Post-politics*, anxiety about the apocalypse is not uncommon, as social and technological transitions in society lead to uncertainty and thereby anxiety. The paradox is that especially technological advances have made it safe to live in the world. Yet technology developed to prevent disasters and ensure security, poses a threat to stability in the form of nuclear war, chemical spills etc. (Manjikian, 2012:4-5) Instability is one of the pitfalls of the postmodern condition, seeing that without ontological security, it is difficult to project hopes and dreams into the future. This most often results in passiveness or helplessness. (180). As individuals and societies, there is a need to feel secure, but with an ever-advancing fear of future events it is difficult to feel secure in the present. In this regard it can be said that the present is always in some way dystopic. We are never content with the present and are always looking back because the future is too disconcerting. To exemplify, this kind of displaced temporality can be seen in Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris* where the protagonist is not content with the present and therefore finds himself projected back to the roaring 20s only to find people like himself who are not content with their reality and wish to be in a different era. Although it is not a piece of dystopian fiction, the movie illustrates perfectly how temporality serves as one of

the kingpins in dystopian- and by extension post-apocalyptic thoughts, and reflects that without ontological security, the present, no matter how economically, socially or culturally stable, will always be laced with insecurities about the future.

When entering into a discussion on futurity and the insecurity that goes along with it, one also enters into a discussion on the nature of risks, as risks are connected to the measuring of probability, the extent of uncertainty and sense of futurity. Thus, risks are connected to the uncertainty of a probable dangerous future. There is not necessarily a specific danger but rather the probability of a dangerous outcome and the risk lies in the uncertainty of not knowing what is going to happen. (Mythen, 2004:14, Giddens, 1998: 27)

The Risk Society

In a world characterized by change, threats to social structures and environmental challenges are risk related. There are many approaches to take when speaking of risks, but most notably is Ulrich Beck's (1992) notion of a risk society. Beck has sought to develop a new terminology that can help to explain how contemporary society differs from previous societies and this is how he came to conceptualize the idea of the risk society.

Although originally centering on German society in the 80s, Beck's risk theory is helpful when looking at Western culture in general. Beck's ecological awareness and his thesis that people were becoming more individualized in accordance with changes in modern society "struck a chord in the US and the UK" and ultimately had great importance for the shift from modernity to postmodernity. (Baert & Silva, 2011:256, Beck 1992) Beck proposes that the attitude connected to modernity, where science and technology were useful tools to control natural surroundings, has resulted in negative effects such as global warming. All contemporary fears and anxieties of catastrophes are therefore the direct result of trying to control nature. (Beck, 1992:20-2) Beck coined the term 'risk' to cover these man-made dangers and the term 'risk society' to cover how contemporary societies are confronted with their failed attempts to control nature. (Baert & Silva, 2010:257)

Beck's risk theory has influenced many fields of study and is intrinsically connected to postmodern culture, environmental studies and the psychology of anxiety. (Mythen, 2004:7) Beck's theory on the risk society is therefore important to look at since it can help illuminate the way in which fears and anxieties are expressed in post-apocalyptic fiction. Furthermore it can help explain how societies deal with risks, as "Beck has consistently maintained that contemporary Western society is embedded in a culture of risk which has profound impacts on the nature of everyday life". (12)

Beck proposes that society's risk consciousness is strengthened and nursed by the media, since it is through the media that societies are subjected to not only to local concerns, but just as much global concerns. As a result, there are many threats forced upon us on a daily basis, ranging from terror attacks to health -and environmental issues etc. One would believe that a heightened risk consciousness would result in a more secure social climate, but it is in fact the opposite. (3) On an individual and collective scale, people are questioning their level of security, because the more knowledge that is accumulated, the more fearful people become and the less safe and secure they feel, especially with the knowledge that the dangers, which are to be faced, are self-inflicted. In post-apocalyptic fiction, this takes form as social dangers that pose a threat to all life forms. In reality all consequences of the socially created dangers has not yet become apparent, which can help explain why speculative fiction, such as post-apocalyptic fiction, has gained a footing in literature, as it deals with the probability of eminent danger while simultaneously reining in the fears and anxieties that fluctuates in society. As previously stated, transitions in society provoke uncertainty and insecurity and everything that is not immediately understood or known has an unsettling effect, as the uncertainty enables societies to imagine the worst possible outcome of events.

Fear and Anxiety

Throughout history, the effects of civilization have resulted in times of fear and anxiety, both individually and on a societal scale. In early dystopian fiction, social fear and anxiety is reflected as political terror, often in the form of a totalitarian state that suppresses and micro-manages its citizens. As has been stated in the main chapter *From Caution to Confrontation,* there has been a shift from state terrors, internal dangers to external dangers in the form of diseases, global warming etc. Therefore, in post-apocalyptic fiction, fear and anxiety come from external dangers, but also from the void left by the apocalypse, the annihilation of most things familiar. In the wake of this nothingness arises an uneasiness of the unknown future. As Kierkegaard says, 'nothing' is what produces anxiety. (Tambling, 2012:121) Considering the shift from dystopian literature to post-apocalyptic literature, there is also a shift in the object of anxiety. One cannot revolt against nothingness, which means that in literature we have come to a crossroads, a kind of literary revolution. In post-apocalyptic literature, the external dangers do not come from an alien invasion, nor is there some evil Orwellian totalitarian state that needs to be feared and questioned. There may still be dangers in the form of hierarchal inequality and totalitarianism, but it comes not from progression but from rebuilding or reconstitution, from some tainted scraps of a lingering past that has long since been destroyed. There is still some basis to form a narrative on, a history, but it is not

to be attributed to a succeeding storyline, since the apocalyptic event offers a break in the narrative. The apocalyptic writer is in many ways starting from scratch. The reader will of course always insert the narrative into an already known context and so do many of the post-apocalyptic fiction characters, yet the narrative will always start out with some kind of finality to it, due to the nature of this type of fiction. As it is post-apocalyptic, the trauma of the end of most things has already happened and is therefore not some abstract, oncoming fear, but a realized fear that provokes new anxieties.

As in many other fields of study, language is an integral part of apocalyptic studies. In literature, the reader, and characters, can only feel the fear that the writer is able to convey through language. Furthermore, in a psychoanalytical context, the language of desire becomes relevant. Desires are a product of the unconscious and they become unconscious because they are directed into social goals through the influence of culture and thus are subjected to rules and repetitions - which are essentially done to obtain a sense of ontological security. It is these unconscious desires, intermingled with the many stages of socialization, which psychoanalysis especially seeks to explore (Wright, 1984:5).

When reading a text, we may interpret it in a way that was never intended, as Sigmund Freud says, "It may be that we have produced a complete caricature of an interpretation by introducing into an innocent work of art purposes of which its creator had no notion" (Freud, 1953:91). In *Psychoanalytical Criticism,* psychoanalyst and critic Elizabeth Wright claims that what is deduced from a text is still there regardless of the writer's initial intent and as such, "Author and reader are both subjects to the laws of the unconscious." (Wright, 1984:4) The language of desire has both a private and a public dimension insofar as a text can be seen not only as formed by one single individual, an author, but even more so produced in a field of social relations and interactions. (5) Seeing that a text often has more components than intended by its creator, it can be said that a text's status as a social product, and not just a product of an individual, has merit. As a text is a social and cultural product, it is important to note a text's context. Paraphrasing literary critic Norman N. Holland, Wright states, that "the source of pleasure we get from literature is derived from the *transformation* of the unconscious wishes and fears into culturally acceptable meanings" (63)

Psychoanalyzing Fear and Anxiety
In order to understand the socio-cultural fears and anxieties that fluctuate in literature, it is necessary to look further into the workings of psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud is one of the founding fathers of psychoanalysis, and as such, Freudian theory is one of the cornerstones when

discussing the psychological aspects of social interaction. However, given the extent of his work, we cannot help but be selective in our approach and therefore only Freud's theories connected to fear and anxiety will be explained. When discussing fear and anxiety, Freud's theories become relevant as they explain the inner workings of how people relate to danger and can help understand the way that instability and changes affect society.

In *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1920), Freud accounts for his work with the unconscious, dreams and neuroses. Although this dissertation does not take a direct psychological approach, Freud's understanding of how people deal with fear and anxiety, in addition to laying the groundwork for future studies on the concepts, helps create an understanding of how individuals handle fear and anxiety in a social context. In one of his lectures on fear and anxiety (later comprised in *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*) Freud states that fear is an effect of nervousness and that fear is "a reaction to the perception of external danger, viz., harm that is expected and foreseen. It is related to the flight reflex and may be regarded as an expression of the instinct of self-preservation." (Freud, 1920:341) Freud distinguishes between neurotic fear and real fear, the former having to do with mental illness and the latter manifesting itself in times of external danger. An important thing to notice is that fear as a concept is only perceived and not something factual. However, there is something called real danger, but often fear is connected, not to these real dangers, which arise in the moment, but connected to what we, as Freud states, perceive to be dangerous. It is these perceived feelings of danger, which trigger our instincts that keep us safe in moments of real danger. (341) The moment in which fear arises is therefore projected onto an event that has not yet happened, whereas real danger is something happening in that exact moment. Leaving semantics aside, as fear is something expected, it is therefore not an unconscious feeling, but the causes of fears often are. Power and control is accordingly a significant feeling when dealing with fear. Freud states that, "the occasions, viz., the objects and situations which arouse fear, will depend largely on our knowledge of and our feeling of power over the outer world." (341). Meaning that fear will arise in situations where people feel powerless, where the external world can no longer be manipulated to cater to our needs and where our knowledge becomes obsolete or expendable.

There are various dimensions of fear and anxiety, namely dreams, wishes and desires. One of the key stones in Freudian theory is the interconnectedness of mind and body and the way in which they regulate our drives and instincts. (Wright, 1984:9) As such sexuality, or more so sexual drive, takes a very significant form in psychoanalytical theory and the role of the unconscious, but for the

purposes of this paper, it is not of vital importance. However, the role of the libido will be commented on briefly as it plays an important role in relation to fear. The power to recognize dangers is what makes us fearful, which is especially what Freud argues is the case with children, as they often are unaware of the dangers that surround them. In this way, infantile fear is much like neurotic fear in adults, which comes from an unemployed libido. The more ignorant one is of danger, the more fearless. (Freud, 1920:343)

As concepts, fear and anxiety are similar and will throughout the dissertation mostly be used synonymously. Yet there are subtle differences that ascertain the distinction between fear, anxiety and its relative, fright:

> I avoid entering upon a discussion as to whether our language means the same or distinct things by the words anxiety, fear or fright. I think that anxiety is used in connection with a condition regardless of any objective, while fear is essentially directed toward an object. Fright, on the other hand, seems really to possess a special meaning, which emphasizes the effects of a danger which is precipitated without any expectance or readiness of fear. Thus we might say that anxiety protects man from fright. (342)

Thus, Freud states that fright goes beyond the simple abstract levels of fear and anxiety and encompasses that feeling which takes hold, when there is no preceding feeling of fear or anxiety. However, in this account of psychological perception of danger, the notion of trauma is missing. It can be argued that the cause of fright is danger and the effect of fright is trauma. This is why these other elements of how danger is perceived are important to factor in, especially when dealing with post-apocalyptic fiction, as all post-apocalyptic characters have survived a traumatic life-altering event and are therefore representations of traumatized human beings.

The subtle distinctions between these concepts also illustrate the importance of language, especially the way in which connotations reveal desire in language. By this is meant that language is not necessarily a 'publicly agreed code' that is collectively registered, seeing that words have different individual connotations (Wright, 1984:60) To extend this idea to the matter of fear and anxiety we need to look at if they are publicly agreed codes or an individual assessment of danger. Fear is most basically a product of the ego's reaction to danger, which presupposes an individual approach. With neurotic fear, the ego misinterprets inner danger as outer danger and roots itself in phobias of

various kinds: Fear of water, open spaces etc. In most post-apocalyptic fiction, the characters are afraid of open spaces (agoraphobia), due to the perception of real danger thriving in these spaces. Thus, the characters acquire one of Freud's essential subjects, paranoia – the fear of fear, which is what happens when neurotic fear is experienced as real fear. (Tambling, 2012:112) An example of such fear can be seen in *The Road* and *The Pesthouse* where travel across open spaces leads to a constant feeling of anxiety and fear of what might lie ahead, which will be elaborated in the main chapter *Facing Post-apocalyptic Narratives*.

Based on this we can deduce that the way in which we perceive danger is specific to an individual and the constituting self. However, through social interaction and comparison with others, fears and anxieties can be founded on a common socialized ground, and not only individually. These kinds of fears and anxieties through socialization have a multitude of implications and affect the way in which we experience fear in a collective sense. Fears and anxieties are integral parts of civilization, and therefore civilization has a significant role to play, as it is through civilization that fear is organized. (108) In light of this, it is not surprising that ideas of the breakdown of civilization present themselves as fears and anxieties.

American Fears and Terror

Trauma studies

When dealing with fear and anxiety in connection to post-apocalyptic fiction, the notion of trauma is important, as the survivors of an apocalypse naturally will be representations of traumatized human beings.

Since the 1980s, after the American Psychiatric Association acknowledged the phenomena Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), studies on how traumatic events affect people have become widely popular. As an academic field trauma studies have become an integral part of the humanities since the 1990s and have signified an 'ethical turn' (Crownshaw, 2013:167) Trauma studies have unified the fields of sociology, psychoanalysis and literature, inasmuch as they draw on each other to make sense of traumatic experiences. To continue in the footsteps of Freud, psychoanalysis has especially contributed to the field of trauma studies, as trauma can largely be said to be some kind of mental state. In *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Freud speaks of his work with trauma patients and says that they are often fixated on specific past events, a fixation they are unable to free themselves of. As a result, the trauma patients are "completely estranged both from the present and the future." (Freud, 1920:236) This fixation on the past has a crippling effect because it allows the trauma victim to escape the trauma by returning to the past and escape the uncertainty of the future. Thereby temporality becomes important when discussing the cause and effect of trauma, and therefore also figures as an important element in trauma narratives.

One of the leading researchers within trauma studies is Cathy Caruth, who draws on Freud's work with traumatic fixation and the unconscious. According to Caruth, trauma is "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena." (Caruth, 1996:11) The trauma is often expressed through hallucinations, dreams or repetitive actions – in Freudian theory these are what he calls compulsive activities - which is the subconscious' way to deal with the repressed event. (Freud, 1920:239) Dreams and hallucinations connected to the traumatic event are not symbolic in nature, but often appear quite literal. Yet, as the dreams are a product of the unconscious, the victim of the trauma cannot process these memories, or history as it may be, and cannot associate it with reality or truth. The trauma is therefore also a representation of history, as "the traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess." (Caruth, 1995:5) As trauma manifests itself in the subconscious, the events leading to the

trauma are not immediately confronted and the external impact manifests itself internally. In psychoanalytical terms, this is called repression. (Crownshaw, 2013:168)

Repetitions and compulsive activities function as a stabilizer in the wake of the uncertainty of trauma, and as has just been described, having a sense of ontological security is dependent on stability. These repetitive actions can therefore be seen as an unconscious desire to cope and regain a sense of security after a traumatic event. However, the compulsive activities often mask the trauma and prevent the victim from confronting the traumatic experience and the desire to cope is therefore not something tangible. The unconscious' inactive coping mechanism hinders the trauma victim and compared to the 'active agency' of perpetrators the trauma victim is objected to passivity and innocence. This contrast ultimately re-victimizes the victim. (169) This is especially important in post-apocalyptic literature, seeing that the trauma victims, as the characters inevitably are, are forced to deal with their own passivity and innocence faced with the active agency of morally corrupt forces. When dealing with trauma studies, post-apocalyptic literature gives the reader a look into how we experience and respond to trauma through narration.

Even though trauma is manifested unconsciously, the trauma and its symptoms can, according to Freud, "under various favorable conditions, become conscious." (Freud, 1920:241)

According to Caruth, one of these favorable conditions is through a therapeutic rendition of the traumatic events. She states that the survivors of a trauma need to narrate their trauma to an objective party in order to fully cope with the event. As soon as the trauma has been recounted and expressed externally, the trauma is on the one hand forced into a conscious state and on the other hand transferred to the listener. Therefore, there is a direct link between the speaker, the witness of the traumatic event and the listener, the one adopting the trauma, and how trauma goes from an individual experience to a collective memory. Thus, Caruth assume a culture of collective trauma or a collective trauma memory, by establishing that there are traumas that affect entire societies or cultures. (Crownshaw, 2013:169-170)

Trauma studies are connected to religious and ethical implications, as trauma is connected to something we believe violates our ethical convictions and the repetitive actions and hallucinations that is a sign of trauma is often expressed through religion. In contemporary trauma studies, an event that embodies the religious and ethical nature of trauma is the terrorist attacks targeted at the United States of America that culminated in the attack on World Trade Center and Pentagon on the eleventh of September 2001. 9/11 epitomizes the essence of a collective trauma, as it did not only affect those who witnessed it, but affected an entire country or to a large extent the entire world. In

addition, the traumatic events of 9/11 alerted the world to the fragile state of the world's superpower, America.

The Heritage of 9/11

The traumatic events of 9/11 warranted a change in how people relate to traumatic events. Since the attacks on the World Trade Center, one cannot speak of trauma without mentioning the American collective trauma of 9/11. Unquestionably, these events affected many people, but the reason why this particular trauma was stored in the collective memory is that it showed the vulnerability of the world's leading superpower and proved to the world and the American population that the security and safety of America could be breached. Mary Manjikian argues that the United States began to reinvision society after the events of September 11, as Americans had to deal with an attack targeted at their own country, instead of acting as an observer of international affairs. Manjikian continues by stating that "… in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, those who suggested that there might be understandable reasons why public opinion did not automatically favor American hegemony were pilloried in the press, accused of disloyalty and even treason." (Manjikian, 2012:59) This underlines the difficulties of dealing with a traumatic experience such as 9/11. While critics may have pointed to flaws within America itself before the terror attacks, the time after the attacks were characterized by a need to place blame and to stand together as a country. Following Manjikian's arguments, America had not only been hit in a physical sense, their strong belief in themselves had been hit too. Why would anyone attack a nation that had done so much to help people around the world? The self-image of America was shaken and the emotions and feeling towards the attacks were too strong and raw for anyone within the arts to comment on without risking giving offence. Aligning her arguments with that of British novelist Martin Amis, Manjikian agrees that every novel written after September 11 is influenced by the events of that day, because it changed America and in many ways also the world. (60) The fear of terrorism initially instigated American attacks and the following wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were directly linked to the events of 9/11, serving as a means of seeking justice for America.

The events of September 11 have also had a massive influence on art and literature in particular.

As previously mentioned, a lot of trauma literature cropped up in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. The fear of terrorism thus became part of the literary scene and although post-apocalyptic fiction does not directly deal with terrorism, it still tells us a lot about the social fears and anxieties of the twenty-first century American society. Before 9/11 America's fears had been relatively unfounded but the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon reopened people's eyes to

manmade destruction and terror. Furthermore, it resulted in people questioning America's position in the world, as has been stated previously. Taylor argues that:

> For a few brief moments on September 11th, the veneer of security was torn to reveal a primordial vulnerability that neither defense departments nor advanced technologies can overcome. The encounter with this awesome power is a religious experience that leaves nothing unchanged. (Taylor, 2001)

This description captures the essence of American thought after September 11, and alludes to the changed society of America. In many ways, 9/11 symbolizes an apocalyptic moment in the history of America, signaling a break from the superpower status that had been in place since the Second World War. Furthermore, the insecurities that grew from the terror attack in 2001 had far-reaching consequences that are traceable in American society and were brought to the forefront with hurricane Katrina hitting New Orleans. America was suddenly open to weakness and they were themselves victimized as nature did its best to destroy the city of New Orleans. The security that people had seen as a matter of course pre- 9/11, had turned into disbelief and insecurity and as another catastrophe struck, although not manmade, people again questioned the safety and efficiency of their country. (Manjikian, 2012:62) It is not only concrete, visible events that have caused confusion and insecurity in American society. Also economic security has been questioned after the banking crisis of 2007 and the following recession that dominated world-wide. Thus, economic, political and military security is being questioned and this leads to a perfect set-up for post-apocalyptic narratives to thrive. (65-66)

The Decline of America

In order to understand the American setting of the post-apocalyptic novels that is to be analyzed, it is essential to comment on the United States and the nation's difficulties in the twenty-first century. It is the intent to broaden the understanding of how a mighty nation such as the United States can inspire literature that is focused on the end of America as we know it.

Being a superpower in the world is not a new phenomenon. In classical times, the Roman Empire controlled and influenced a large amount of people and looking closer to our time, the British Empire had its time as the superpower of the world. After the decline of the British Empire and the failed attempts of Hitler's Third Reich, the United States has been relatively uncontested as the world's leading superpower in the last half of the twentieth century. Visions of the American dream

have been used as models and symbols of freedom and individualism, creating a glorification of the American way of life. However, with the new millennium, economical challenges and challenges in both foreign and domestic policy have permeated American society and thus contributed to a decline of the United States of America as the leading superpower. (Manjikian, 2012:1) As the secure ground of the population of America is shaken, so is the belief in a safe and secure future, which in turn spawns imaginative extrapolations dealing with the fall of America as a nation. Thus, it is not surprising that many post-apocalyptic narratives have an American setting, and focus on American people.

Interesting to look at in relation to this dissertation is the destabilization of America as a superpower. As America has been the world's superpower for half a century, they have been role models for other countries both economically, technologically and culturally. Globalization has opened the borders of the world, but while American culture still influences large parts of the world, in many ways China has succeeded America as the economic and technological superpower.

Post-apocalyptic America

Following the above-mentioned arguments, the American dream of freedom and opportunity has been challenged following September 11, 2001 and this has influenced literature as well. Post-apocalyptic visions of a degraded or destroyed America have flourished and imagined societies of differing moral and ethical values have been depicted to reflect the difficulties of being a part of contemporary American society. The fascination with the end is not surprising when taking into consideration the development of the past decade. Fears and anxieties have proven before to be feelings that are easily transferred into literature, as is the case with the nuclear anxiety of the 1950s and 1960s among others exemplified in Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon* (1959) and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968). These too dealt with the fear of the end that was prominent in their period of time, and thus reflect the symbiotic nature of contemporary times and literature. Just as the abovementioned examples focus on the contemporary fear of the consequences of nuclear warfare, post-apocalyptic fiction reflects the issues that are present in today's society, ranging from terror to environmentalism and economic decline.

Post-apocalyptic narratives are effective in asking the question "What lies beyond America?" and thus forcing both characters and readers to envision a world, where America has stopped functioning. The gloomy, destructive visions of America that often characterize post-apocalyptic fiction carry a presupposition that America was once great, yet it has changed to a place of

instability and insecurity. This idea is connected to the fear and anxieties present in American society that has been commented on in the chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities*. Post-apocalyptic novels set in an American setting are in some way realizations of the worst fears of society. In the words of Mary Manjikian:

> Somehow, the logic goes, if enough disasters occur and we do not anticipate them, or prepare for them, we risk losing everything. We will sustain catastrophic losses to our buildings, infrastructure, and people, but more importantly, we will sustain the loss of our identity in the international community, as well as our power, status, and autonomy. (Manjikian, 2012:62-63)

This applies specifically to the United States, as apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic novels depict the nation in a weakened state, and represent the fear that modern society can be derailed in such a way, that it no longer has any significance. As mentioned, it is not surprising, that much post-apocalyptic fiction focuses on an American setting, although the timeline varies from a few years in the future to a thousand or more years. The loss of identity that Manjikian mentions, threatens those who identify themselves as Americans, and even though the catastrophic, apocalyptic events may not have happened yet, it is all too easy to imagine an end to the world as it functions now. Consequently, a post-apocalyptic America seems to be an ever-present possibility that comes closer with each depiction of the end.

The consumer-driven, capitalistic society that the United States is a prime example of has created different scenarios of fear, than existed before. As Frederic Jameson claims, some of the great dystopias of the past, and here we assume that these are related to the post-apocalyptic narratives of today, focused on the fear of overpopulation, however this is a modernist fear. Jameson then delineates the great threats of our time:

> Indeed, it suffices to think of the four fundamental threats to the survival of the human race today— ecological catastrophe, worldwide poverty and famine, structural unemployment on a global scale, and the seemingly uncontrollable traffic in armaments of all kinds, including smart bombs and unmanned drones [...] leaving pandemics, police states, race wars, and drugs out of the picture, for us to realize that

in each of these areas no serious counterforce exists anywhere in the world, and certainly not in the United States, which is the cause of most of them.

(Jameson, 2010:22)

What Jameson is putting forward here, is the fragility of the world and in particular the United States. He alludes to the fact that there would be no way to stop any of the threats he lists, if they were to occur. Even though he may be overly critical in saying that the United States are the cause of most of these threats, his vision further underlines how America as a nation faces certain threats, that could easily be turned into a post-apocalyptic reality, which is what most post-apocalyptic fiction does.

In conclusion, it is possible to deduce, that America as a superpower has been on a decline. The events of September 11 showed both the American people and the world, that it was possible to wound the country, spreading fear and insecurity. The terror attacks, combined with natural disasters and economic insecurity created an environment of doubt and fear, building on the insecurities that arise in the wake of catastrophe. The attack not only affects America as a nation, but strikes at American culture as well, which is clear in post-apocalyptic narratives that envision society after the end. The question of what comes after America, as Mary Manjikian asks, has increased in importance and it is pivotal in post-apocalyptic fiction. Although America still clings to its title as the world's superpower, there is no doubt that the safety and security that they experienced before the turn of the century, have changed into an unstable present that has real fear concerning the future.

Facing Post-apocalyptic Narratives

Moving on from creating a framework that focuses on ethical criticism, religion, fear and anxiety within an American context, the dissertation will now focus on an analysis of the four novels. Firstly, Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* followed by Crace and Kunstler's *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand* and lastly McCarthy's *The Road*. The analyses will make use of the framework presented in the main chapter *Framing an Ethical America*, while still relating to the specific characteristics of each novel.

Analyzing *Oryx and Crake*

In *Oryx and Crake,* the apocalypse is associated with the death of civilization and culture, making it necessary to look at what effect civilization and culture have after the apocalypse. The first section in this chapter will give an account of the novel and the characters presented. In addition, this section will look into Atwood's redefinition of culture and society in the novel's post-apocalyptic world, and how Snowman, as the only survivor, is the custodian of the pre-apocalyptic world's cultural heritage. As Snowman is in charge of not only his cultural heritage, but also his religious heritage, the novel opens up a discussion on the function of religion. The second section will take its basis in the trinity of Snowman, Oryx and Crake and their function as a new religion, and will discuss the religious themes in the novel. Seeing that the notion of playing God by genetic engineering is one of the main themes in *Oryx and Crake*, this chapter will devote a third section to ethical discourse in the novel, paying special attention to the ethicality of genetically constructing humans and animals. Lastly, this chapter will look into the prevalent fears and anxieties, which follow in the wake of these ethical questions and how the characters in the novel experience security and danger.

Snowman's Reality

In the words of Atwood's protagonist Snowman, "Not real can tell us about real." (Atwood, 2004:118) Fiction can tell us a lot about reality, about contemporary trends and social structures, especially post-apocalyptic fiction, as it deals with how individuals and societies function after traumatic events. Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* is set in a post-apocalyptic world in which the protagonist Snowman fights for survival and sanity as a lone survivor of unspecified events leading to the collapse of civilization. Snowman lives on the outskirts of a superhuman 'civilization' consisting of a new race called the Crakers. The Crakers are genetically engineered by

Snowman's childhood friend Crake, who supposedly created them in the image of perfection, free of jealousy, genetic abnormalities, sexual frustrations, religious beliefs and other human weaknesses. Snowman acts as caretaker and prophet for these humanoids, who are unaware of the cataclysmic events leading to the end of the world, as Snowman, and we as readers, experience it. The events leading up to the apocalypse are narrated through flashbacks of Snowman's former life. In this former life, Snowman was a boy named Jimmy living in a well-guarded compound protecting scientists and their families from the chaos of the pleeblands. In the absence of a governing state, the biotech companies have taken over and separated the United States into two factions: The pleebs representing consumer driven majority, and the scientific manufacturers; the privileged minority. Snowman goes to Martha Grahame Academy, a rundown second-rate school for students, who are not adept science intellectuals. The arts are highly undervalued in this society, as the governing elite is investing everything in science. The children showing promising skills within the field of science are awarded every luxury and comfort the compound has to offer. As one of the most promising scientists, Crake is recruited by the prestigious Watson-Crick Institute, which is where Crake creates his humanoid prototypes, the Crakers. After college, both Crake and Snowman enter into a relationship with the mysterious Oryx, who is charged with educating the Crakers.

The three characters, Oryx, Crake and Snowman form a symbiotic trinity: Each character functions as the others' counterpart culturally and morally. Together they form a complete character as the embodiments of respectively rationality, intellect and passion, but separately they are lacking something fundamental. Crake lacks emotions, Oryx is living in denial of her past of abuse and Snowman lacks reason and stability. Furthermore, Crake seems to be occupied solely with the future, whereas Oryx seems only to be aware of the present and Snowman keeps reliving the past. In a sense, they are a temporal loop and temporality is therefore a salient characteristic in the novel. *Oryx and Crake* is a singular piece of post-apocalyptic fiction, both in Atwood's repertoire but also in general, since it projects a darker vision than other novels in its genre. (Howells, 2006:164) This is due to the extent of the cataclysmic events leading to the end of all things, as we know it. In most post-apocalyptic narratives, there is still something resembling civilization, but in *Oryx and Crake* we are confronted with a story told by a single survivor, or so Atwood would have it seem. It is not until the ending that we learn that Snowman is in fact not alone in being human, but leading up to the end, Snowman is surrounded by reminders of how badly the old world turned out. The narrative is not pessimistically bleak as such, at least not compared to the bleak setting of McCarthy's *The*

Road, but the near extinction of humans adds to the extent of the apocalyptic events. At one point, we learn that Crake used to play a game called Extinctathon, a trivia computer game meant to test the gamer's knowledge of extinct animals and plant-life. Ironically, Extinctathon is the source of Oryx and Crake's self-proclaimed names and choosing names of extinct animals, when they are about to become extinct themselves adds to the novels bleakness.

The majority of the novel is narrated through flashbacks mimicking Snowman's memories of a pre-apocalyptic American society. The flashbacks are slowly allowing the reader a glimpse into Snowman's former life, which ultimately reveal that the cataclysmic events are a product of global warming, but, to a larger extent, scientific delusions of grandeur resulting in a pandemic. Like most post-apocalyptic writers, Atwood confronts popular anxieties, and projects modern nightmares into a future setting: In this case the anxieties of biological science, especially advances in genetic engineering. The novel was in fact published on the fiftieth anniversary of Crick and Watson's discovery of the structure of DNA. (163) The name of Crake's College, the Watson-Crick Institute, might be Atwood's way of commemorating the event. Consequently, the novel deals with the 'what ifs' of contemporary human ethics. In her short essay *Writing Oryx and Crake,* Atwood states that, "The *what if* of Oryx and Crake is simply, What if we continue down the road we're already on? How slippery is the slope? What are our saving graces? Who's got the will to stop us?" (Atwood, 2009:323) Thus, Atwood confronts some of the major anxieties concerning the future both on a global scale, but more specifically within an American scope. In her short story the Salt Garden*,* Atwood says, "[…] the States are more extreme in everything." (Quoted in Howells, 2006:163) Furthermore, she argues, "[…] that everyone watches the States to see what the country is doing and might be doing ten to fifteen years from now." (163) which helps explain her choice of an American setting.

As previously stated, the dystopian genre still influences post-apocalyptic literature, which is also evident in *Oryx and Crake*. Although Atwood's novel can still be characterized as a dystopian novel, it does not follow all the typical dystopian patterns. Dystopia is defined as a society too bad to be practicable and in *Oryx and Crake* Atwood does portray such a society. The portrayal is limited to Snowman's memories and the flashbacks of his previous life as Jimmy and the impracticable society is therefore in the protagonist's past. Even Snowman acknowledges the death of society by stating, "He'll have no future reader, because the Crakers can't read. Any reader he can possibly imagine is in the past." (Atwood, 2004:46) Disregarding the Crakers, as Snowman clearly does, there is no society at all, not even an ill-functioning one. In this case, the lack of a

society enforces a shift in the dystopian tradition moving towards the post-apocalyptic.

When considering *Oryx and Crake*, one could say that narratives dealing with the structures of society have come full circle. The structure of civilization and society can be said to contain five stages: The dawn of civilization, building a good society (utopia), societal aspirations gone awry (dystopia), the collapse of civilization and the rebirth of civilization. This last stage is evident in *Oryx and Crake* in the form of the three humans on the beach appearing in the last chapter, signifying a new start and the hope of rebuilding civilization.

The Death of Culture and Civilization

Being a piece of post-apocalyptic literature, *Oryx and Crake* presupposes a break in culture: a break in reality, which will be discussed later, and in the narrative itself. The cataclysmic events leading to the death of civilization leave Snowman the sole teacher and preserver of culture, including religion. The fact that we, as readers, know that Snowman is not the sole survivor should of course not be disregarded, but throughout the entire narrative Snowman, and the reader too, operates under the assumption that he is alone, and consequently there is a foundation for analyzing his behavior as such. Culture has always rested on continuity, of passing down knowledge and experience through generations, and this continuity is therefore an intrinsic part of preserving the past in terms of culture. Crake explains this by saying:

> 'All it takes,' said Crake, 'is the elimination of one generation. One generation of anything. Beetles, trees, microbes, scientists, speakers of French, whatever. Break the link in time between one generation and the next, and it's game over forever.'(Atwood, 2004:261-262)

Skipping a generation would mean the end of culture, but in the novel, Atwood preserves a frail continuity in the form of Snowman, leaving a small hope for the preservation of culture. By leaving one human left from the previous generation, there is still a chance of carrying on the old traditions and religious beliefs to the Crakers. Although not entirely human, the Crakers are still susceptible to new impressions and are capable of preserving some of the former culture. Yet, the death of civilization does not necessarily mean the death of culture, because, as Crake says, "When any civilization is dust and ashes, "[…] art is all that's left over. Images, words, music. Imaginative structures. Meaning - human meaning, that is - is defined by them." (197) Therefore, according to Crake, art and language play a vital role in the preservation of culture. In the novel's pre-apocalyptic

society, the arts are highly undervalued, as the governing elite - comprised of the leading scientific institutions within the compounds, - is investing everything in science. There is a public opinion that science is the new 'religion' and that art no longer has any value. When in truth, art and science are inextricably linked, since they are generated from the same - imagination. (Howells, 2006:75) Before the apocalypse, the art of language is one of Snowman's passions and one of his hobbies is compiling lists of extinct words, seeing that "He'd developed a strangely tender feeling towards such words, as if they were children abandoned in the woods and it was his duty to rescue them." (Atwood, 2004:230). In his post-apocalyptic solitude, he often thinks of these words, trying to reassign them, and the world in which he now lives, meaning:

> From nowhere, a word appears: Mesozoic. He can see the word, he can hear the word, but he can't reach the word. He can't attach anything to it. This is happening too much lately, this dissolution of meaning, the entries on his cherished wordlists drifting off into space. (43)

By trying to resurrect long since forgotten words, it makes him an ideal choice as a preserver of culture. Snowman is well aware of this role and tries his best to live up to it:

> "Hang on to the words," he tells himself. The odd words, the old words, the rare ones. Valance. Norn. Serendipity. Pibroch. Lubricious. When they're gone out of his head, these words, they'll be gone, everywhere, forever. As if they had never been. (78)

However, as much as Snowman is trying to hold on to the remnants of the past, Crake has already taken the steps to create a new predominant culture. As such, culture has imploded and is in need of a redefinition. Snowman is trying to recreate and redefine it by explaining the ways of the world to the Crakers, mostly by clarifying the functions of the waste that the Crakers collect on the beach. This poses a challenge for Snowman, because the Crakers are not familiar with the consumer goods of the past and he cannot rely on the vocabulary, history and general experience, that cultural heritage has afforded human beings for thousands of years. The only source of reference the Crakers have is nature. During one of their many teacher-student-like sessions, the Crakers ask, "Oh Snowman, please tell us – what is that moss growing out of your face." (9) Being unfamiliar with

the concept of a beard, as Crake has dispensed them of this impracticality, they are naturally curious about it. Snowman replies that they are feathers, as any other reference would be lost on them. (9). Snowman's appointed role as teacher is therefore an extensive one, since they are only familiar with natural objects and not "things from the past"(9) or culture in general.

Through the creation of the Crakers, Crake believes he has perfected "the ancient primate brain" and intends for them to re-civilize the earth post-apocalypse (358). By creating the perfect beings in the Crakers, he simultaneously shines a light on the imperfection of human beings and our inability to adapt to our surroundings, to secure our own survival. As Crake says to Jimmy:

> You can't couple a minimum access to food with an expanding population indefinitely. Homo sapiens doesn't seem to be able to cut himself off at the supply end. He's one of the few species that doesn't limit reproduction in the face of dwindling resources. In other words - and up to a point, of course - the less we eat, the more we fuck. (138-139)

In Crake's logic, the human race is doomed, because we are shortsighted and never learn from previous mistakes. Even Snowman agrees that "… maybe there weren't any solutions. Human society, corpses and rubble. It never learned, it made the same cretinous mistakes over and over, trading short-term gain for long-term pain." (285) By this, he is agreeing to Crake's statement that there is a natural progression of the human condition, which is inescapable: "First the leaders and the led, then the tyrants and the slaves, then the massacres. That's how it's always gone." (184)

Despite this allusion to an unbreakable circle of self-destruction, the aforementioned open ending does inspire hope for the future, a hope of rebuilding a new civilization, as Snowman is no longer the only survivor. He has a choice to join the three humans appearing on the beach in the last chapter. However, the ending is somewhat ambiguous as there is a chance of Snowman staying with the Crakers and continue to act as their prophet, their divine intermediary to Crake.

The death of civilization and the aspiring hopes of social rebirth raise a series of questions concerning the importance of society. In the last chapter, Snowman flicks out an ant from his hat and wonders: "Can a single ant be said to be alive, in any meaningful sense of the word, or does it only have relevance in terms of its anthill?" (429) As stated in the chapter *Exploring Ethical Criticism*, humans are social beings and Snowman often struggles with the reality of being alone

and not a member of a society. He looks at the Crakian 'society' with a nostalgic envy and often "[…] feels the need to hear a human voice - a fully human voice like his own." (11)

The Death and Rebirth of Divinity

The near extinction of humans in the novel and the fact that Crake has created the Crakers without a belief system seem to suggest the lack of a religious foundation. In a post-apocalyptic context, Nietzsche's claim that God is dead is, therefore, not entirely unfounded. So is God in fact dead alongside the death of civilization in this piece of fiction? According to Taylor, and as previously stated, religion is circumstantial in the sense that it follows societal changes. In times of radical change, many tend to seek stability and security through traditional beliefs and practices. In the post-apocalyptic reality Snowman is the only one with the ability to keep these traditional beliefs and practices alive. Yet, through the flashbacks of Snowman's past, we are not made aware of any religious affiliations or beliefs he might have, so as such Snowman does not seem as the perfect choice to keep religion alive in this new world.

Before the apocalypse, religion was not an instrumental part of society; in fact, the pre-apocalyptic setting in *Oryx and Crake* depicts an almost entirely secularized society where science has become the dominant belief system. However, in the post-apocalyptic world, religion is the entire foundation of the Crakers' social structure and it is up to Snowman to maintain this structure by playing fake intermediary between the Crakers and the gods. As has been described in the chapter *Following Religion*, Paul Heelas argues that postmodern religion is characterized by an individual creating its own religious reality. This is evident in the way Snowman creates a religion based on his own desires and wishes. Yet, as will shortly be elaborated, the entire novel and Snowman's constructed religion are laced with biblical references, which essentially means that Snowman is editing his culturally instilled notion of religion and adapting it to new scenarios. In view of the divide between the secularized pre-apocalyptic society and the post-apocalyptic religious rebirth, the apocalypse is both secular and biblical: Secular because of the technological and scientific ramifications leading to the apocalypse and biblical due to the transcendence of Crakes human form to that of creator and God. Consequently, the novel is a secular apocalypse turning into a biblical rebirth.

When doing a religious reading of *Oryx and Crake*, the ambiguous question of whether God made man or manmade God is unavoidable. In the novel the two are interrelated as God could not exist without man, but man cannot exist without some kind of a god, as *Oryx and Crake* inevitably shows us by making Crake create man, or manlike creatures at least, and having Snowman turn their

creator into God. This seems to suggest that, on top of a redefinition of culture, as has been discussed in the section above, the novel seek to redefine religion in a post-apocalyptic setting. This redefinition is left to Snowman, and by discussing religion with the Crakers, he unintentionally becomes the priest and the Crakers his congregation. The aforementioned pre-apocalyptic secularization and the portrayal of individualized religion are in keeping with the blurred boundaries of the postmodern tradition. However, in recent years, there has been a tendency to move beyond postmodernism and religion follows this tendency, as it is re-evaluated and reconstructed.

In Crake We Trust: Biblical References in *Oryx and Crake*

As argued in the section *Towards a Re-Sacralization*, the last couple of decades have shown signs of a re-sacralization, a return of religion in society. Even though, as Taylor argues, religion never truly left, it is possible to argue that religion experiences a revival in *Oryx and Crake,* or a kind of re-resacralizaion. In the novel, it is possible to argue that science has taken the place of religion and function as a belief system on its own, as will be elaborated on later. In *Oryx and Crake*, despite the pre-apocalyptic secularized society, religion is an underlying motif in the narrative, especially in terms of biblical references and connotations. By playing God, through his transgenic research, Crake does not only alter humanity, but the entire Story of Creation, thereby asserting himself as creator:

> "[…] and so Crake took the chaos and he poured it away […] And this is how Crake did the Great Rearrangement and made the Great Emptiness. He cleared away the dirt, he cleared room…" "For his children!" "…and for the children of Oryx, as well." (Atwood, 2004:119)

Even though the Story of Creation presupposes that there was nothing preceding the creation and Snowman's creation succeeds the old world, there are still uncanny similarities. For all intents and purposes, Snowman is the creator of culture and religion, as Crakes role as God rests on Snowman's narration skills.

The way Snowman is singled out by Crake to lead the Crakers away from the paradise dome in which they were created, and re-civilize the world, bears resemblance to the parable of Noah's ark, where God punishes man for being morally corrupt and decides to remake the world. Snowman becomes the equivalent of Noah, as he too is charged with saving the animals (and the Crakers), guide them and rebuild a perfect world in the eyes of God. Both of Atwood's sequels *The Year of*

The Flood (2009) and *Maddaddam* (2013) have biblical references, not to mention titles. The sequel *The Year of the Flood* contains less subtle references to the parable of Noah and the Flood and the last of the trilogy *Maddaddam*, besides being a chapter in *Oryx and Crake* and alluding to the Extinctathon players' society, is furthermore a reference to the biblical character of Adam. The trilogy's titles and references therefore attest to Atwood's biblical awareness.

Another biblical parallel can be drawn to the Garden of Eden from the Book of Genesis. (American Standard Version, Genesis 2-3) Crake's humanoid creations are initially named the Paradice models, and the science lab in which they are born, the Paradice dome, which calls to mind the myth of creation where God creates the perfect beings and a corresponding paradise for them to live in – the Garden of Eden. Before Crake's revelations, Snowman is living in ignorant bliss of the impending apocalypse much like Adam before the Fall. In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve live a life of innocence before they are tempted by the snake in paradise to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. As the one who robs Snowman of his innocence and makes him commit a sin by killing, Crake can be seen as the proverbial snake in paradise. After shooting Crake, which is the culmination of the death of Oryx, figuring as the proverbial Eve, Snowman has taken a bite of the metaphorical apple from the tree of knowledge. Consequently, he is evicted from paradise, doomed to live outside aware of the horrors of reality instead of living in Paradice in ignorant bliss. Paradoxically, Crake is both the snake and God in this religious allegory, as he tempts Snowman, spurred on by Oryx, to become a part of the quest for exterminating humanity and starting over – up until now, a thing only God has done.

The religious references throughout the novel help clarify the dynamic between the three characters and their (un)holy trinity. For pessimists, the trinity is an unholy alliance, since they can be seen as contributors to the end of the world. In the eyes of optimists, they are a holy alliance, because they have helped save the world from human destruction in the forms of overpopulation and depletion of natural resources. In a biblical sense, together the three characters represent the religious trio of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, by adopting the qualities of respectively God, the (adopted) son of God who spreads God's word on earth, and lastly the divine omnipresent consoler and sprit of God. However, in effect, Crake, Snowman and Oryx function as creator, prophet and nature. Snowman often struggles with his role as prophet, because he does not know how to explain things to the Crakers, as they have no reference background and everything is created anew by Oryx or Crake. The posthumous deification of Oryx and Crake depict them as respectively God and Nature. Crake does not believe in God or Nature as a deity, but he unintentionally takes on the role of God

and entrusts Oryx to fill out the role of nature and spiritual guide in the Crakian society. Yet, he believes that "Nature is to zoos as God is to churches." (Atwood, 2004:242), meaning that religion and nature need to be contained in a secure environment:

> "Those walls and bars are there for a reason," said Crake. "Not to keep us out, but to keep them in. Mankind needs barriers in both cases." "Them?" "Nature and God." "I thought you didn't believe in God," said Jimmy. "I don't believe in Nature either," said Crake. "Or not with a capital N." (242)

Crake does not wish for the Crakers to be religious in any way and believes that he has edited out the myth of God and any curiosity regarding their own creation, but even before the apocalypse, Oryx is asked who Crake is. At the time, the Crakers do not need further explanation than him being their creator. (366) Eventually, the Crakers are left in Snowman's charge and he is warned against any displays of religion or any symbolic nature:

> Watch out for art, Crake used to say. As soon as they start doing art, we're in trouble. Symbolic thinking of any kind would signal downfall, in Crake's view. Next they'd be inventing idols, and funerals, and grave goods, and the afterlife, and sin, and Linear B, and kings, and then slavery and war. Snowman longs to question them—who first had the idea of making a reasonable facsimile of him, of Snowman, out of a jar lid and a mop? But that will have to wait. (419-420)

The creation of a Snowman facsimile, the invention of an idol, means a realization of Crake's fears and is according to Crake the first step on the road to religion and destruction. Despite Crake's discouragements, the Crakers become more and more interested in their creator, and Snowman is eventually forced to use his status as an idol to nourish the Crakers' belief in Crake as God and Oryx as a deity. It is therefore the unified effect of Oryx's original account of Crake and Snowman's imagination and fictional narrating abilities that lead to a new divine power in Crake, and eventually Oryx. Snowman thereby simultaneously becomes the reinventor of fiction and religion. The rapid development in the Crakian belief system and Snowman's individualized creation of religion, symbolizes the inescapability of religion and all that follows in its wake.

As mentioned in the chapter *Following Religion,* Taylor states that in the face of societal change true believers try to recover an ideal past by purifying the present and eliminating non-belief. Crake tries to purify the present by eliminating the entire human race. His beliefs and practices may not be traditional but they do become some sort of religion and foundation for moral reasoning. This supports Taylor's statement that religion is never truly out of the social equation. In Snowman's case the fear of religious control, that has led to a previous secularization, is not relevant in a world, where there is no immediate society to be ruined by excessive religious control. As such, his need for a stable and secure environment, which his fictional religion to some extent provides him with, signifies the importance of religion in times of trouble.

The Ethics of Genetic Engineering

Religion in *Oryx and Crake* is closely linked to moral and ethical concerns, especially when looking at how we as readers respond to the compound scientists, especially Crake. By engineering humans and animals, the scientists have assumed the role of creators and have turned the myth of God into scientific aspirations. By turning creation into a game, the interconnected moral and ethical codes of conduct are not considered: "There'd been a lot of fooling around in those days: create-an-animal was so much fun, said the guys doing it; It made you feel like God." (Atwood, 2004:57). It debases the grandeur and awe that usually goes with the myth of creation, and it presupposes that most scientists have a misguided notion of the ethicality of this kind of game. This will be elaborated shortly. As the embodiment of the scientist with a God complex and as a modern Prometheus, Crake has, from his own perspective, no misguided notion of the responsibilities this entails. He is doing it to save the environment and prevent the human race from making the same mistakes repeatedly; in effect, he is trying to change human nature. Much of Atwood's religious awareness takes form as environmentalism, and in *Oryx and Crake* environmentalism constitutes a religion of its own (Howells, 2006:72) Objectively speaking, saving the environment is considered a good deed, an act of moral integrity, but in *Oryx and Crake*, saving the environment comes at the expense of humanity. By employing ethical criticism, the effects of saving the environment at such a great cost are revealed and engage the reader in a wide range of moral considerations. As a writer, Atwood often transfers her environmental awareness into her writing but also her hope of saving humanity. The idea of not saving the environment at any cost is expressed through the character of Snowman. In his solitude, we as readers sympathize with him, and through him, we feel the effects of Crake's decision to save the environment and not save humanity, but alter it entirely. The narrative makes the reader take a stand against either the environment or humanity. It is through

these kinds of extremes, that Atwood constructs opposing moral conflicts in the form of "[…] despotism vs decency; obsessive control versus the spectrum of human desire; science and art; reason and the imagination – all of which contribute to her sense of the environment". (72) Another moral dilemma that takes form in the novel is the separation of mind, soul and body, the dilemma of following one's desires, which in Freudian theory are a product of the unconscious, or exercising control.

> When did the body first set out on its own adventures? Snowman thinks; after having ditched its old travelling companions, the mind and the soul, for whom it had once been considered a mere corrupt vessel or else a puppet acting out their dramas for them, or else bad company, leading the other two astray. It must have got tired of the soul's constant nagging and whining and the anxiety-driven intellectual web-spinning of the mind, distracting it whenever it was getting its teeth into something juicy or its fingers into something good. It had dumped the other two back there somewhere, leaving them stranded in some damp sanctuary or stuffy lecture hall while it made a beeline for the topless bars, and it had dumped culture along with them: music and painting and poetry and plays. Sublimation, all of it; nothing but sublimation, according to the body. Why not cut to the chase? But the body had its own cultural forms. It had its own art. Executions were its tragedies, pornography was its romance." (Atwood, 2004:97-98)

In Freudian theory, the interconnectedness of mind and body is important, because it is that which regulates drives and instincts. Therefore, without this interconnectedness, there cannot be any control over drives and instincts, which is precisely what Snowman outlines here. The leaving behind of the mind and soul that Snowman speaks of therefore translates into a separation of human morals from bodily desires, freeing the body from 'the constant nagging and whining' of the soul. This is one of the main dilemmas in the post-apocalyptic society, as it is "When we attempt to outpace our souls, we betray and trample our nature." (Howells, 2006:84) Furthermore, Snowman speaks of the cultural and moral decay of society, and as Gregory argues; because we are social creatures, we abide by a moral code. The decline in culture and society therefore means a decline in ethicality as well.

Despite the many moral considerations of an environmental nature, the role of science is far more

complex, as it raises many serious ethical questions in the form of genetic engineering and how far scientists are prepared to go in their endeavors to play God. It is through the recurring motif of science, that Atwood raises the question of, what it entails to be human, not only biologically but morally as well. In her lecture *Scientific Romancing: The Kesterton Lecture* from Carleton University (2004a), Atwood addresses what constitutes a human being. She states that, "what we want has not changed for thousands of years, because, as far as we can tell, human nature hasn't changed either. " (Atwood, 2004; Howells, 2006:72) Up until this point, this has been the truth of human nature, but now science has allowed us to alter nature in all its forms and meddle with natural evolution. (Howells, 2006:72-73) In his book *The Future of Life,* biologist Edward Wilson states that if we continue down the path we are currently on, it is a definite possibility that scientists will someday be challenged, "[…] to create new kinds of plants and animals by genetic engineering and somehow fit them together into free-living artificial ecosystems." (Wilson, 2002:78) Therefore, in accordance with Wilson, Atwood's fictional future is a factual possibility. Yet, Wilson argues that these future creations "[…] can never be as satisfying as the original creation." (78) In Atwood's universe, these future creations would be the genetically engineered animals and the humanoid Crakers. Although the Crakers are created to be superior to humans in any way, to Snowman they are still not as satisfying to him as real humans are. Although, aesthetically pleasing, the Crakers remind Snowman of the photoshopped versions of models in magazines, fake and fabricated (Atwood, 2004:115)

To Atwood "Being human implies acceptance of the whole range of our physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual state. To deny or splice out any of that state is to amputate the self, as it has been known so far, and so to stress nature perilously." (Howells, 2006:74) The acceptance of the whole range of human complexities is what fails the novel's three characters. As previously mentioned Snowman, Oryx and Crake form only one complete character, as each only embraces one of the human states; Snowman is emotional, Oryx spiritual and Crake intellectual. But, this lacking personality, or in effect conjoint personality, is what ultimately challenges the characters' moral reasoning. They have no prerequisites for making sound decisions regarding ethicality, which results in Oryx, Crake and almost all of humanity's death and Snowman's reluctant role as Crakian caretaker.

According to Gregory, as explained in the chapter *Exploring Ethical Criticism*, we never stop being social creatures; therefore, there will always be moral judgment and consideration, when interacting with other people. Even though the Crakers are instilled with animal-like qualities, they gradually

adopt human qualities, such as Snowman's constructed version of religion. The ethical and moral implications have not, at least not yet, arisen and it can therefore be discussed whether they are natural predispositions that can be removed, as Crake apparently has done, or will develop alongside any culture Snowman constructs. Snowman's role in the Crakian 'society' is important to note since he is the one that maintains old human predisposed notions of culture and immerses the Crakers in a cultural fusion of a previous culture, and a culture of his own fabrication.

The Paradice method, used to create the Crakers is ninety-nine percent accurate, but since there are some unintended consequences, such as the aforementioned idolization of Snowman, and Oryx and Crake's divine status, it questions how many components one can remove and still be considered human: "How far can we go in the alteration department and still have a human being?" (72) Here, we return to Atwood's discussion, on what constitutes a human being, and how much of human nature is predisposed and how much is culturally dependent. As discussed in the chapter *Exploring Ethical Criticism*, a long list of philosophers and scientists have argued that we are not entirely social creations, but that we have a set of predisposed inclinations as part of our cultural heritage.

However, sociability is culturally dependent. Although previously disregarding the Crakers as a society, because they are genetically engineered, the fact that the Crakers mimic a society, or figure in some kind of social setting, is important to discuss, because they are the new dominant species.

The way the Crakers interact and seek out Snowman despite their apparent fear of him, shows that they are social animals. They might not already be part of a culture, but they are on their way to creating one. Crake has eliminated all the qualities that make it necessary to constitute a code of ethics and morality. Nevertheless, he has not factored in that ethics and morality, as previously stated, are connected to the relations between people and as the Crakers are part of a social setting, they are slowly but surely acting in a way, that will ultimately need some kind of ethicality. However, the novels timeframe only shows the infant stages of this development and Snowman is immediately the only ethical reference. As Snowman no longer has other people to relate to, his ethics and moral judgment need to be founded based on his recollection of previous social interactions. Seeing that Snowman feels estranged from the Crakers, the reader is likewise alienated from them, as the narrative is seen from Snowman's point of view. As the only human, he is whom we identify with, and the Crakers' natural behavior seems unnatural to us because we cannot identify with their strange mating rituals, eating habits etc. However, in this new post-apocalyptic world, human behavior has become unnatural.

Snowman describes the Crakers' ethnicity in terms of colors: "Chocolate, rose, tea, butter, cream,

honey." (Atwood, 2004:9) Yet, the Crakers have been programmed not to perceive their ethnical differences. By editing out this awareness, Crake is convinced that he has averted the re-emergence of hierarchy, inequality and racial discrimination:

> Gone were its [the ancient primate brains] destructive features, the features responsible for the world's current illness. For instance, racism – or, as they referred to it in Paradice, pseudospeciation – had been eliminated in the model group, merely by switching the bonding mechanism: The Paradice people simply did not register skin colour. Hierarchy could not exist among them, because they lacked the neural complexes that would have created it. Since they were neither hunters nor agriculturalists hungry for land, there was no territoriality […] (358)

Despite the fact that the Crakers do not judge in terms of race, they keep their distance from Snowman, because he is different. It may not be racial discrimination, but it is some kind of discrimination based on his appearances, his roughish looks and his wrinkled skin. As is the case with religion, by forgetting to factor in Snowman's influence on his humanoid experiment, Crake has not succeeded in eliminating the racial and hierarchal elements, which shows that the basic human traits survive, even though they are genetically engineered. Crake also states that there is no territoriality, but there is. Snowman walks in on the male Crakers urinating in a circle around their habitat, marking their territory to ward of other animals. (182) This again can be seen as Crake's failed attempts to edit the instincts of the human animal.

Constructing animals

Atwood's linguistic awareness and wordplay, such as combining animal names to form the new species piggoons (pig/baboon), rakunks (raccoon/skunk) and snat (snake/rat) and having her characters adopt fictional or extinct names of animals, adds to the morality and ethical concerns of genetically engineering animals. Atwood is often partial towards the morality of animal welfare in her works. In correlation with the fictional story of creation that Snowman recounts to the Crakers, he explains that,

The people in the chaos were full of chaos themselves, and the chaos made them do bad things. They were killing other people all the time. And they were eating up all the Children of Oryx, against the wishes of Oryx and Crake. Every day they were eating them up. They were killing them and killing them, and eating them and eating them. They ate them even when they weren't hungry. (Atwood, 2004:119)

Apart from alluding to the way human beings over-consume by eating even when we are not hungry, the quote presupposes a sympathetic attitude towards animals, an attitude supported by Atwood's protagonist Snowman. When Snowman goes to visit Crake at the Watson-Crick institute, he experiences first-hand, how they fabricate the animals and he asks himself why it is "[…] he feels some line has been crossed, some boundary transgressed? […] How much is too much, how far is too far?" (242) By questioning the lack of morality in the Watson-Crick institute and their experiments with animals, he exposes the different attitudes towards transgenic research that fluctuates in the fractioned society.

Even as a child, Snowman is not fond of burning the diseased animals within the compound to prevent an epidemic, as it does not feel right. (20) Snowman has a strong sense of what is wrong or right, but is unable to enforce his moral beliefs, unlike Crake who believes that creating the Crakers is the right thing to do, in order to serve a higher purpose. Human beings have a natural ethical disposition, not only culturally. This accounts for the fact that even though Snowman is surrounded by the scientific culture in the compound, he does not have the same moral reasoning when it comes to genetically engineering animals for society's amusement or over-consumption.

This moralistic animal code could also account for why Atwood has made Crake's creations herbivores. As the Crakers are equipped with a remarkable immune system and digestion, they are adjusted to their habitats, so in a way they adopt, as mentioned, animal-like qualities but do not violate some natural set of ethics by killing and injecting other animals. (359) Yet the Crakers are not the only animals that exhibit ethical critique. After the apocalypse, Snowman experiences a shift in animal-human interaction and the reader a shift in moral considerations, accordingly. The near extinction of humans has led to a reclaiming of animal territory and supremacy and Snowman has now become the hunted. Before the apocalypse, the reader was presented with a victimized animal kingdom, showing the moral downsides of animal experimenting, but post-apocalypse there has been a reversal. This reversal questions the reader's moral judgment, as the victims have now

become the predators, especially in the form of the intelligent piggoons, and the pre-apocalyptic moral categorization needs to be reevaluated.

Atwood's focus on ethical concerns does not stop with the construction of animals, as she also entertains the idea of genetically engineered babies. Crake states that they are creating "[…] totally chosen babies that would incorporate any feature, physical, mental or spiritual, that the buyer might wish to select." (357) By referring to the prospecting parents as buyers and turning pregnancy and fetal development into a business transaction, the reader is once again confronted with the ethical and moral implications in this scientific reality. By stating that creating babies has 'unintended consequences' (357) the reader is left to question the morality of catering babies.

The Terrific Parenting Checklist

Thus far, we can conclude that the main ethical concerns apparent in *Oryx and Crake* are related to genetic engineering. To gain a further understanding of the ethics of genetic engineering in the pre-apocalyptic society, it is necessary to look at the dynamic of Snowman's family. Both of Snowman's parents are scientists, but his mother suffers some kind of nervous breakdown, which is a direct result of her ethical and moral concerns about the state of the world. She does not approve of her husband's work at the OrganInc farm, where they experiment with growing human compatible organs in pigs. Even the name, OrganInc Farm, produces an assessment in terms of ethics. Indirectly, the ethics and morality of the father's profession are apparent through Atwood's way of arranging words and playing with connotations. One would e.g. find organ and farm in the same sentence to be morally deplorable. The obvious way of discerning the ethicality of OrganInc is through Snowman's mother. She says that by tampering with the natural development of species and organs they are "[…] interfering with the building blocks of life." (Atwood, 2004:64) and that it is immoral and sacrilegious (64). Furthermore, she invokes all ethical judgment by calling the whole organization a "moral cesspool." (64) In return, Snowman's father argues that the mother is the one with 'neurotic guilt' and that by smoking she is supporting the tobacco companies: "Think about that if you're so ethical. They're the folks who get six-year-olds hooked for life by passing out free samples." (65) The parents' conflicting morals and attitudes towards 'the building blocks of life' are a testament to the abstract nature of ethical criticism. In addition, their view on the different societal aspects establishes that science and morality in this society is corrupted.

Snowman's entire childhood is affected by his parents' dysfunctional relationship. He feels his parents are playing the role of parents and checking the 'Terrific Parenting Checklist' instead of actually being parents. Snowman says that, "It wasn't the bad stuff they did that made Jimmy so

angry, it was the good stuff. The stuff that was supposed to be good, or good enough for him." (66) Snowman feels his parents dislike him for not being a numbers person, which is paradoxical because Jimmy's mother, who leaves her life as a scientist to be a member of the pleebland resistance, should be happy that her son does not have the prospects of becoming a morally corrupt scientist. It is, no doubt, Atwood's design to raise the question of what constitutes good parents through Snowman's interaction with his, and make the reader question their parenting skills. However, as morals are largely subjective, it engages the reader's own moral judgment of parental skills. In general, the pre-apocalyptic world is one big ethical and moral ground-zero, where social interactions foster categories in which moral judgment and reasoning is at play: from the less essential ones; the dangers of smoking, regarding violence as entertainment, to the fundamental things; like parenting, friendship and love right down to the ethics of life and death like genetic engineering, and killing. All of these mark *Oryx and Crake* as a work that can be viewed through ethical criticism.

The Dangers of Atwood's Universe

Ethicality is often assessed based on what we believe to be right or wrong, but sometimes it is obscured by fear of taking action or in some cases not taking action. As discussed in the chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities*, Freud says that power and control are salient features when dealing with fear. The aforementioned relationship between Snowman and the Crakers, him being the prophet and the Crakers his followers, has created an imbalance in power. In addition, the way that Oryx and Crake are deified adds to this structure, in the sense that there occurs a hierarchal division of power between the divine, human and humanoids. This power segregation only serves to stress the ways in which the characters relate to and experience danger differently - much like in the divided compounds and pleeblands. Based on this, it is evident that, despite Crake's best attempts at eradicating it, that hierarchy has survived alongside the myth of God. Despite many of the different traits and human structures surviving Crake's deselection, fears and anxieties seem to have naturally disappeared. As the way the Crakers and Snowman perceive danger and experience fear and anxiety differ greatly, it enhances the ways in which they are set apart, opposed to the range of previously discussed similarities, such as adhering to religion and hierarchal structures.

The dangers presented in the post-apocalyptic world are strongly connected to the animal kingdom and are therefore seen as external threats. Pre-apocalyptic dangers are also present as external threats, but as the external threats are mostly created within the American society itself they manifest as internal threats and are issues of a moral nature. The events leading to the apocalypse

have therefore also provoked a shift in social fears and anxieties from internal, like the fear of a decline in human morality, before the apocalypse to external after, like hunger, animal attacks etc. Fear in *Oryx and Crake* is best discussed in terms of pre-apocalyptic dangers and post-apocalyptic dangers to see how fear and anxiety manifest collectively in the pre-apocalyptic society and the Crakian 'society', and individually in the case of Snowman. Furthermore, there will be commented on how these societal and individual fears affect the characters' sense of ontological security.

Pre-apocalyptic Fears and Anxieties

When speaking of fear and anxiety in the pre-apocalyptic reality of *Oryx and Crake*, it is important to note that dangers have a dual nature. The pre-apocalyptic, consumer driven world is divided in factions because of health and stability risks posed by the chaotic pleeblands and as a way to establish a governing elite without the risks of a governing force exploiting its subjects. However, the division of the pleeblands and the compounds also mean an unequal division of power and resources opening up a discussion of state terror anxieties.

The revolution that Snowman's mother is a part of is a testament to what can be characterized as a dystopian threat from state terrors, but as Snowman later is informed by the alleged peacekeepers, the CorpSeCorps, she has been captured and most likely killed for her treason - which entails, "Inciting to violence, membership in a banned organization, hampering the dissemination of commercial products, treasonable crimes against society." (Atwood, 2004:337) The mother's death signifies the death of the resistance against the governing elite's moral and ethical violations against nature and society. Thus, the fear of state-terrors is symbolically quelled and the fears and anxieties that are reflected in society are redirected into fears connected to health issues, such as old age and the fear of dying of illness. Nevertheless, the narrative has permeable borders between state terrors and non-state terrors, as the state, or the medicinal and scientific institutions that form something resembling a state, are responsible for the non-state terrors. By manufacturing and profiting from so called 'cures' against aging and various diseases, the governing elite exploits the fears of health related issues, thereby commodifying fear. HealthWyzer, the company that Crake works for, is the leading medicinal company in charge of curing diseases. However, curing all diseases would inevitably mean, that they would eventually make themselves obsolete, as there would be no more diseases to cure. In chapter eight of *Oryx and Crake*, *Hypothetical*, Snowman and Crake discuss this development. Crake tries to explain that when the companies are running out of diseases to cure, their new strategy is to invent new ones. Snowman does not immediately understand who 'they' are:

Saboteurs, terorrists, is that what Crake meant? It was well known they went in for that kind of thing, or tried to. So far they hadn't had a lot of success: their puny little diseases had been simple-minded, in compound terms, and fairly easy to contain. (247)

Inside the compound, fear of biological warfare is relatively small, but it is non-existent in the pleeblands, as they are not privy to the scientific knowledge that is an indoctrinated mentality in the compounds. Instead, the pleebs are manipulated into buying whatever drug the compounds prescribe. The BlyssPluss pill, promising youth among other things, is being sold as a rejuvenating drug, but it is really a death sentence as it contains the virus that Crake lets loose on civilization. The pill therefore becomes a symbol of the fear of biological warfare and underlines the permeable border between state and non-state terrors. The propaganda of this pill, conducted by Oryx, suggests that anyone who buys into the fabricated health code and morally unsound culture, is not worthy of saving. By questioning who is worthy of saving, we return to some of the novel's ethical considerations. As the mastermind behind the virus, Crake is, as previously mentioned, the allegorical God deciding the fate of the earth. Snowman, as Gods chosen one, is the gatekeeper, "[…] one of the angels guarding the gate." (178), between the worldly and divine realm. Here we also see a kind of biblical fear of being found wanting and not worthy of living, the way that Crake views almost the entire human race. By applying ethics to the doomsday equation, Crake thereby justifies the use of biological warfare to confront internal threats.

The use of biological warfare also helps fears of a political nature surface. As the American setting presupposes, many of the fears apparent in *Oryx and Crake* are associated with the United States and its relatively uncontested status as a superpower. Furthermore, as has been described in the chapter *American Fears and Terrors* the United States is the country that many people try to copy and adopt cultural structures and behaviors from. In the novel, the fact that the United States has the leading experts in the science department and are far superior to other countries help obscure the threat of biological warfare. Crake states that other countries are trying to replicate his Paradice project, meaning that the United States is the leading country within transgenic science. Crake keeps it a secret though, due to the competitive market. Crake describes the inventers as greedy and narrow-minded wanting to profit from the project as soon as possible. (357) The competitive market signifies the fear of being outmatched by other countries, and tests the scientists loyalty: "A couple were like that at the beginning. Not team players. Thought they'd take what they'd done here, cart

it offshore. Go underground, or set up elsewhere." (353) Nevertheless, the fear of scientists 'setting up elsewhere' (353) is not realized. The American elite does not approve of insurgents, and the scientists who consider taking their research elsewhere end up dead. By augmenting the American confidence and global importance and thereafter implying that the United States is the source of the events leading to the apocalypse, it questions, not necessarily America's position in the world, but certainly its future as a superpower. Therefore, there is a subtext in the narrative of collective fear of not maintaining the position as the world's superpower.

Post-apocalyptic Fears and Anxieties

As previously mentioned, in Freudian terms fear is "[…] a reaction to the perception of external danger, viz., harm that is expected and foreseen. It is related to the flight reflex and may be regarded as an expression of the instinct of self-preservation." (Freud, 1920:340) This notion of self-preservation is especially important to note when looking at how Snowman experiences dangers in the post-apocalyptic reality. Fear can manifest itself as both neurotic and real, neurotic fear being external dangers manifested as internal conflicts, and real fear being the fear of eminent external dangers. So in effect, it is a perceived sense of danger vs. real prominent danger. In Snowman's case, he experiences both kinds of fear, as the world in which he now lives, heightens his instinct of self-preservation.

In many ways, Snowman is a slave of the climate changes and change in engineered wildlife. In the daytime, he is enslaved by the increase in temperature forcing him to seek refuge in the shadows and at night, he is enslaved by his fears of the wildlife. Already in the first chapter, we learn that he is checking for 'scales' and 'tails' before descending the tree, he has made his bedroom. (Atwood, 2004:4) The way that Snowman perceives danger to be everywhere in the form of wild animals, alludes to the fact that he lives in a constant state of fear. It is therefore the recognition of dangers that adds to Snowman's fears and anxieties. As a contrast, the closest the Crakers come to perceiving danger is in Snowman, whom they observe with curiosity. Often there is fear of that which we do not understand and as such, the relationship between Snowman and the Crakers is one of mutual distance. Snowman's role in the Crakian society is not only that of the sage old man, but also that of the unstable village idiot: The Crakers respect his wisdom, but at the same time, they find his habits and language strange. In many ways they are - ironically enough considering the reasons for the apocalypse - treating him like an infectious disease: The scientific part of them finds him fascinating, but the part of them that is still human, knows that the infectious disease demands respect, and they should keep their distance. Throughout the novel, it is made clear that there is an

absence of neurotic fear in the Crakian society.

According to Freud, the ways in which we experience fear and anxieties differ, depending on sex, age and mental state. Snowman's age, which is unspecified, but can safely be assumed well above the age of twenty, as he graduates collage, finds a job and then works for Crake before the apocalypse is set in motion – means that he has some life experience. He has experienced the old world and its dangers and even though he is only now learning the dangers of a different reality, his previous experiences have given him a reference point that makes him recognize dangers. Knowledge of the outer world makes Snowman powerful in the Crakian society, but since he has no control over it, it diminishes his power in his own view. Even though he can manipulate the Crakers, he cannot control the external world, and control over the external world, in Freudian reasoning, is important in order to feel secure.

In comparison, the Crakers are like children, since they do not recognize dangers. They are familiar with the notion of danger, but only in theory and as such, the Crakers live a carefree life, sheltered from the dangers that Snowman fears. The way in which the Crakers experience fear is much like the way children, according to Freud, experience fear. Children are usually relatively fearless when facing the world and its obstacles, as they have not yet experienced the dangers that through knowledge of the world turn into fear. The Crakers are ignorant of the dangers that their surroundings present, and the dangers that they are aware of, such as animal attacks and bodily dangers, are warded off by sheer instinct and not through a distance because of fear. An example of this can be seen by the Crakers marking their territory in a circle around their habitat to ward off animals like Pigoons and Wolvogs (182) While fear is often directed at that which we perceive to be dangerous, the Crakers do not seem to have this philosophy. Although previously alluding to the Crakian animalistic features, they also possess a child-like innocence. The Crakers have been created by Crake shortly before the apocalypse, and so at this stage the Crakers are like children, young and fearless in so many ways. Although only a speculation, the way in which religion gains a footing in their society, might suggest that fear and anxieties could experience a similar rebirth. Thus, in Freudian logic, the Crakers' level of fear through the risk of danger would develop with aging, so that when they grow they grow more fearful, and when they acquire more knowledge, they are also made aware of the perceived dangers of the world. However, in the short amount of time after the apocalypse, they remain more curious than afraid. As their lifespan is only 30 years it may also be that evolution, or Crake, has sped up their learning process, which alongside the presence of Snowman, would explain the rapid growth in religious awareness. By reducing their

lifespan compared to an average human, Crake intends to spare the Crakers the anxieties of old age. But, since the Crakers in the novel's timeframe, have not yet experienced death amongst themselves, they have yet to experience the consequences of death, such as loss and grief. Supposedly, these human emotions are not part of the preselected qualities in the Paradice models, but as has been proven, the ways they act are not only predisposed. Therefore, the fact that they have no anxieties about death can be founded on their inexperience with it, and not their natural disposition. By creating a race that is not aware of its own mortality, at least not yet, and thereby not fearing it, Crake has created temporarily immortal beings:

> Immortality,' said Crake, ' is a concept. If you take 'mortality' as being, not death, but the foreknowledge of it and the fear of it, then 'immortality' is the absence of such fear. Babies are immortal. Edit out the fear, and you'll be... (356)

The Crakers have no anxieties about death, because as mentioned, they have never experienced it before. An interesting question is then if the Crakers will be instilled with fear when they experience death and are confronted with their limited timespan. Although creating hypothetical immortal beings, Crake believes that we are not meant to be forever young, which is why he creates the Crakers not to outlast the age of thirty; after that they simply collapse and die. If there is no old age there will be no, or at least less, vanity, there will be no weakening of the mind due to the wearing down process. Unlike the Crakers, human beings are afraid of dying, as they can imagine it but simultaneously believe that they are indestructible: "How do you account for that?" said Jimmy. "Imagination," said Crake. "Men can imagine their own deaths...human beings hope they can stick their souls into someone else...and live on forever." (139) Imagination is also expressed in relation to desire. In the chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities* it has been stated that desires are unconscious and are directed into social goals, which in turn are subjected to rules and repetitions. Snowman's unconscious desires of returning to his past take the form of an imaginative Oryx. His neurotic fear is evident on many occasions, when he envisions Oryx guiding him and nursing his loneliness. His interaction with the apparition of Oryx is subjected to repetition, as Snowman uses it to maintain something resembling social goals in the form of teaching the Crakers. Furthermore, there is an underlying theme of unconscious desire throughout the novel on a collective scale, as; "The tide of human desire, the desire for more and better, […] would take control and drive events, as it had in every large change throughout history." (348-349) However, the notion of history has experienced a break down, as history is being kept alive through the memories of only one human. The Crakers have no knowledge of the concept of history and as a result, Snowman is the only one haunted by

history and the past, which consequently turns into neurotic fear. The lack of a history in the Crakian society is however contested by their names. Crake has named each of the Crakers after a historically relevant person, such as Napoleon, Abraham Lincoln and Simone de Beauvoir, and by doing so he is recreating history. (190) This form of historical continuity helps to create a sense of security and stability for Snowman by recapturing glimpses of the past.

Feeling Safe in an Unsafe World

To return to the notion of ontological security as explained in the chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities*, all the changes happening, make us want to feel secure, but in order to have a sense of ontological security, there is a need to have stability and security. In *Oryx and Crake* there is a subtext of security, safety and stability versus danger and instability. Post-apocalypse the two factions, respectively the pleeblands and the compounds, raise the questions on where the dangers lie. The compounds are constructed to keep out the chaos of unstructured pleeb mentality and to keep in the structured ingenuity of the scientists. Thus, the privileged compounds portray all that is routines, repetitions and stability, and the outside world of the pleeblands are portrayed as the reservoir of chaos, anarchy and instability.

The Crakers seem to have the same strive towards a sense of ontological security, as they want repetition: "The Paradice models weren't stupid, but they were starting more or less from scratch, so they liked repetition." (Atwood, 2004:363) The repetition may just serve as a motivator for learning something new, but having knowledge also helps to serve as a stabilizer. This can also be seen in the Crakers' wish to hear Snowman explain things over and over again. Even though he hates this, the repetitions add to his sense of ontological security as well and in a way the Crakers become his stabilizer; his daily routines and repetitions, because "It is the strict adherence to daily routine that tends towards the maintenance of good morale and the preservation of sanity," he says out loud." (5)

As stated in the beginning of the chapter, temporality is a main motif in the novel and it offers an insight into how fear is expressed in the novel, as the past is often a source of fear and instability. The recurrent flashbacks throughout *Oryx and Crake* present the reader with a distinct dystopian society where instability is a part of the dysfunctional society. After the apocalypse, the novel turns into a distinct post-apocalyptic narrative, where instability is rooted in Snowman's traumatic dealings with his past, present and future. The presence of both a dystopian and post-apocalyptic reality makes the novel even more complex and interesting in terms of social fears and anxieties. In the three remaining post-apocalyptic novels of this dissertation, the past is only alluded to in terms

of nostalgic reminiscing. In *Oryx and Crake* the past is more elaborate. The past does not figure as an arbitrary recollection of an ancestral past life, but is the protagonist's immediate past. Although the past is narrated through flashbacks, it is a strong presence in the narrative, more so than in most post-apocalyptic narratives. The break in temporality means that there is no stability or continuity.

One of Snowman's only belongings from the old world is a watch, which acts as a talisman. It is a cultural symbol turned into a religious symbol by means of communicating with God, but it is also a constant reminder of the idea of time, a useless token from the past where time had official meaning: "It causes a jolt of terror to run through him, this absence of official time. Nobody nowhere knows what time it is." (3) The watch furthermore functions as a way to stabilize the discontinuity of time, because by constantly checking it, he turns the absence of time into a repetitive action and hereby tries to regain a sense of ontological security.

The fears connected to temporality are also closely linked to religion because, as already stated in the chapter *Following Religion*, there is a duality between holding on to religious beliefs to re-conjure an ideal past and to disregarding religion because the present or future seems unfulfilled. Moreover, Taylor states that in times of societal change, there is a tendency to seek stability and security through traditional beliefs and practices. In Snowman's case, he seeks stability and security through his own reanimation of traditional beliefs and practices and through his constant dealings with the past. Snowman's fears about the future are expressed by his recurrent mental return to his previous life and his constant nostalgia and despondent feelings towards the future:

> The prospect of his future life stretched before him like a sentence; not a prison sentence but a long-winded sentence with a lot of unnecessary subordinate clauses, as he was soon in the habit of quipping during Happy Hour pickup time at the local campus bars and pubs. He couldn't say he was looking forward to it, this rest-of-his-life. (221)

Like in her novel *Surfacing* (1972), Atwood often lets her characters revisit their pasts. In *Surfacing*, the protagonist revisits her childhood place, where she is forced to embrace old memories. (Howells, 2006:78) In *Oryx and Crake,* Snowman is haunted by his past, and ultimately is forced to face it by going back to the Paradice dome where the last remnants of his past had been, quite literally, laid to rest with the death of Oryx and Crake. The notion of time is a constant source of fear for Snowman. As described in the chapter *American Fears and Terrors*, repetitions can be a way to cope with traumatic events that have been buried in the unconscious. The trauma of the

apocalypse has disrupted Snowman's entire foundation, and therefore he needs structures in the new world to reclaim a sense of security. He is aware, that the trauma of the past, present and future is a real issue that has manifested itself in the unconscious: "He doesn't know which is worse, a past he can't regain or a present that will destroy him if he looks at it too clearly. Then there's the future. Sheer vertigo." (Atwood, 2004:173) By this, it is clear that the apocalypse is not the only onset for his trauma, but that temporality presents a trauma of its own; especially the past, since it is the source of his fixation. This fixation is seen through flashbacks in the readers view, but for Snowman, they are memories or dreams, which according to Caruth can appear quite literal in the face of traumatic events. In keeping with Caruth's notions of trauma, as discussed in the chapter *American Fears and Terrors*, trauma can be expressed through repetitive actions, dreams and hallucinations. Snowman's recurrent hallucinations of Oryx signify that there is a trauma manifested in his unconscious. By recollecting his memories as some kind of memoir, the reader is allowed to take part in Snowman's trauma and adopt it, and the trauma in turn becomes part of a collective trauma memory. Being relatively alone, Snowman has no one to whom he can recount his traumatic experiences. The Crakers do not figure as suitable companions, seeing that they are a mix between animals and children, and are therefore not qualified listeners to help Snowman deal with the events of the apocalypse. As a result, the reader is drawn further into the narrative as an active listener and as a substitute for other survivors. Yet, as narrating trauma is a coping mechanism and Snowman is in many ways prevented from narrating his trauma, it is expressed through his hallucinations, which gives him a sense of stability. Returning briefly to Mamzer and her paraphrasing of Giddens' idea of modern ontological security being contingent upon the external world, in a postmodern context ontological security must come from within. In Snowman's case the internal world is even more turmoil than the external world and as such, he does not have any feeling of stability or continuity. However, when he embarks on a journey to revisit his former home, the Paradice dome, he ends up on a soul-searching journey for stability, unconsciously trying to sort out the internal world. This leaves the reader with hope of Snowman regaining some sort of stability and continuity. Following this analysis on *Oryx and Crake*, there will now be a section to sum up the main points.

Concluding Remarks

As mentioned in the introduction, the structure of the analysis is a deliberate one. As Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* is the novel that most resembles dystopian fiction, it has been an obvious vantage point. Through the events of Atwood's apocalypse, a divide is created between the pre-apocalyptic

dystopian society and the post-apocalyptic non-existing society or non-human society. Through Snowman's solitude emerges a re-sacralization through an individualized approach to religion, as he extracts the main points from a past religion and inserts them in a new post-apocalyptic context. This re-sacralization takes form as the trinity of Crake, Snowman and Oryx as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the newly created Crakian religion. Henceforth, religion figures in the narrative as a constructed entity dependent on former cultural norms and the fabricated instant needs of Snowman. Thus, *Oryx and Crake* confronts the postmodern re-sacralization and extrapolates it by using the cataclysmic events as an onset for a new version of re-sacralization. Before the apocalypse in Atwood's fictive universe, science and religion has become infused and the God-like status of scientists shows a return to religious idolization. Post apocalypse, the pre-apocalyptic scientific religion is substituted for an entire restructure of religion that is in keeping with the postmodern notion of hybridization. The way the narrative uses hybridization beyond the ideas of postmodernism is through the memories of Snowman. The reader is confronted with the pre-apocalyptic society through fragmented flashbacks and is confronted with a culture and history not unlike their own. Yet, in the aftermath of the apocalypse, Snowman's previous religious and historical memory is nullified by the Crakers' untainted memories.

 The ethical concerns in the novel are related to the dynamic between religion and science. The ethical concerns of constructing animals and humanoids are questioned and this is where Atwood's own voice resonates in the narrative. The pre-apocalyptic society, where the god-like aspects of creation is seen as a game and a way of life, perish and as such suggests that such a society is not sustainable and not only portrays Atwood's own attitudes but evokes the reader's moral reasoning as well. Consequently, the shift from pre-apocalyptic dystopian society to post-apocalyptic rebirth of social structures also signals a shift from science as a religion to religion as a science. By constructing his own religion, Snowman meddles with religious structures and plays God, not unlike what Crake does with constructing animals and humans. The degradation of God's status as creator and the way science runs amok, evokes the readers own stance and moral code towards the role of science in society. Thus, *Oryx and Crake*'s ethicality incorporates the reader, author and the novel's characters alike and presupposes that the novel figures in interaction with external forces. The novels interaction with the author's and readers' own ethical and moral judgment, also means that the characters fears and insecurities gain new life through the author's and readers' own involvement of real-life pre-existing issues. In the analysis of *Oryx and Crake* it has been made clear that Snowman's daily routines and hallucinations of Oryx becomes an expression of the

traumatic apocalyptic events but simultaneously that there is a need to overcome the trauma by trying to establish a sense of ontological security. By applying the theories on trauma, described in the chapter *American Fears and Terrors,* it has been made clear that the construction of religion in the novel becomes a trauma coping mechanism for the novel's main character Snowman. Throughout the analysis, it became apparent that temporality is a main motif in the novel as it relates to the trauma of past events and the fears and insecurities about the future. Thus, it pinpoints the credo of the post-apocalyptic genre by extrapolating fears into a future setting, which is exactly what post-apocalyptic fiction does.

In conclusion, the way in which *Oryx and Crake* shows a distinct dystopian society pre apocalypse and a complete degraded society after the cataclysmic events help us to understand the function of post-apocalyptic literature and how societies can recover from traumatic events.

After having analyzed *Oryx and Crake*, the dissertation now continues with an analysis of *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand*, as examples of post-apocalyptic literature that deals with rebuilding society after different cataclysmic events.

Analyzing *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand*

In this chapter there will be an analysis of the novels *The Pesthouse* by Jim Crace and *World Made by Hand* by James Howard Kunstler. As already discussed in the main chapter *From Caution to Confrontation,* the two novels figure together, because they share traits that can be analyzed and discussed within the same framework. This does not rule out an individual analysis of each novel, but for the purposes of this dissertation the novels will be analyzed within the same chapter.

To begin the analysis, a short introduction to each novel will be made, in order to present the characters and setting of each novel. After this, the novels will be analyzed with reference to the concepts and theoretical methods presented in the main chapter *Framing an Ethical America*. A connection between the religious context of the novels and ethical criticism will be made, while fear and anxiety will be used to gain a deeper understanding of the societies and characters that the readers are presented with.

Mapping out *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand*

Crace's *The Pesthouse* is set in a distant, post-apocalyptic future, where the United States of America no longer exists as a nation, and the country is presented as harsh and scarcely populated. Old, withered structures from the past bear witness to the former greatness of the country, but people have forgotten their past, which is only alluded to in old stories told by grandparents who remember their grandparents telling them of the times before. The actual event that has caused the country to digress into a state of almost medieval living is not explained explicitly in the novel, giving the reader ample opportunity to imagine how and why the old world ended. The hope of salvation lies, according to popular belief, across the sea, which is an ironic reversal of the history of immigration that the United States is built upon. Margaret, sick of the flux and confined to a pesthouse, and Franklin, a gangly young man, meet under unlikely circumstances as Margaret's home Ferrytown and its population meet with an unfortunate end, as the poisonous gasses following a landslide kill the entire community. The two team up in their endeavor to reach the coast and hopefully board a ship to salvation across the sea. They join a group of travelers, which include an elderly couple called the Boses and their baby granddaughter. When a band of roaming bandits and slavers attacks the traveling company, Margaret and Franklin are separated, as Franklin is captured and Margaret is left behind with the Boses and their granddaughter Bella, who Margaret ends up adopting as her own, when she is separated from the Boses. Margaret and Bella spend the winter with the Finger Baptists, a religious group of people who abhor metal. By pure luck, Franklin and Margaret meet again, escaping the slavers and head out to find a ship together. However, the dream

of crossing the ocean becomes an increasing nightmare and the couple decides to return to Franklin's hometown, deep within America and create a new life for themselves instead of faring across the sea. Thus, they return to a broken land as Adam and Eve-like characters that are ready to begin anew. The hardships that Frank and Margaret meet on the journey to the sea create an image of a primitive, harsh America that has gone back to rural times in order to survive. This regression is also visible in the other novel in focus in this chapter, namely *World Made by Hand*.

World Made by Hand is set in the "not so distant future" (Kunstler, 2008), in the small town of Union Grove, New York. In this post-apocalyptic world, a mixture of nuclear wars, epidemics, climate changes and terror attacks have changed the United States, depriving it of modern conveniences. The novel introduces various groupings, with the focus being on the people of Union Grove and the narrator Robert. Union Grove is in the beginning described as a decaying, neglected community, where people try to get by day to day without aspiring to rebuild or change their situation. As the novel progresses, Union Grove, with Robert as clear evidence, changes and experiences an awakening, when the community realize what they can accomplish by working together.

Kunstler's tale focuses on how humanity reacts after an apocalyptic event and shows differing ways of coping within new social structures. The different groupings presented in the novel all represent ways of coping with life in the post-apocalyptic setting of *World Made by Hand*. The main groupings are respectively the people of Union Grove, the New Faith Brotherhood Church of Jesus, landowner Stephen Bullock with his self-sufficient farm with workers, and Wayne Karp, leader of the gang set up in what is known as Karptown. Throughout the novel, the communities struggle to find a balance amongst themselves and each other, culminating in a violent incident involving almost every group presented in the novel. The groupings represent differing views on how society can be organized after having experienced the end of the world and the beginning of an entirely new social structure. In contrast to *The Pesthouse,* the characters in *World Made by Hand* remember the world before it was changed for good and thus, a majority of the people in the novel has experienced both pre- and post-apocalyptic times.

With this short introduction to the novels, it has been made clear that they both belong within post-apocalyptic literature and focus on how society has moved on from the apocalypse that has changed the world. In *The Pesthouse* the events leading to a regression of American society into a harsh, rural environment are only alluded to and not explained explicitly. The events of the novel takes

place many years in the future, which is also why the event has been forgotten. Why the world has changed is not what is important though. How it has changed is what is in focus.

We the Saviors, We the Saved

Both *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand* present the reader with different religious symbols and contexts. The allusions to religious practices and traditions are numerous and recur throughout the novels. In this section, the focus will be on the two religious factions, or sects one might argue, that are presented in the novels, respectively the New Faith Brotherhood Church of Jesus and the Finger Baptists. These two factions will be used as indicators of how religion functions in the post-apocalyptic America that is described in each novel. By focusing on these two groupings, the analysis will form an understanding of how religion is understood and used in the novels and how it speaks to both moral and ethical issues. The two religious factions give insight into a world that readers may have difficulties identifying with, because of the estranged and extrapolated setting. Furthermore both the New Faith Brotherhood and the Finger Baptists raise awareness of the moral and ethical codes and standards that people have to navigate in post-apocalyptic America. Even though the two factions do not share a common belief system, they are comparable in the way they use religion as a means to understand the post-apocalyptic world they are a part of. Both religious factions claim, in one way or another, to be saviors of mankind and also to be saved by God himself. However, the post-apocalyptic world of fear and doubt may not agree with this assessment. As such, the analysis will focus on each group and their interaction with their surroundings.

Have Faith

The New Faith Church is described in a way that makes them stand out as being both approachable and mysterious. The first meeting with Brother Jobe, the head of the Brotherhood, leaves the narrator Robert Earle, Loren Holder, who is minister of the First Congregational in Union Grove, and the readers speculating. Brother Jobe comes off as confident and strong, describing in short terms the troubles that he and his congregation met during their travels. He is almost condescending in his dealings with the two men from Union Grove and has an almost sarcastic, jokingly manner of speaking. When brother Jobe invites Robert to join a service at the old high school, his description of their service is worth noticing:

"We'll be starting a regular service soon in that old school auditorium. Maybe you'll come by sometime." "I'm in his outfit," I said, cocking my head at Loren. "We put on a hell of a show. Hymns and preaching. I got a 1930 Schwimmer pump organ. It's like the old-timey times." (Kunstler, 2008:10)

The way Brother Jobe describes the service as being "a hell of a show" does not immediately translate into it being a religious event. Instead he seems to be describing some form of entertainment that anybody at any time would be welcome to watch. His reference to the "old-timey times" alludes to the gospel song *Give Me That Old-Time Religion* and makes it sound like the New Faith Brotherhood is capable of bringing back the past, acting as savior for the people of Union Grove. As is revealed later in the novel, and also commented upon later in this dissertation, the New Faith Brotherhood is highly interested in collecting new members for their congregation and they have a firm belief in God. During the first encounter, Brother Jobe makes it clear that he and his congregation intend to stay in Union Grove and become part of the community there. Their presence functions as an awakening of the lazy, paralyzed community and further establishes the New Faith Brotherhood as a form of saviors and the community of Union Grove as the saved. In addition, it indicates that religion in post-apocalyptic times is a social matter. As has been described in the chapter *Following Religion*, Taylor argues that religion is a cultural construct, which is also made clear in *World Made by Hand,* when Robert reflects on the possible positive outcome of the New Faith Brotherhood's presence:

There would also be new blood in town, people with new skills, maybe some good musicians among them, perhaps even an eligible woman […] I supposed that this outfit was a covenanted sect and you'd probably have to sign on with them to meet a woman, and no doubt they had a lot of special rules of behavior, and for all I knew, maybe they followed celibacy like the old Shakers had. (33)

As such, Robert attributes his own preconceived notions of religious congregations to the New Faith Brotherhood, drawing on his experience from the past. This is an example of how religion is a social and cultural construct in *World Made by Hand,* and it also deals with the contradicting feelings of Robert himself, as he tries to stay positive by viewing the New Faith Brotherhood as a form of saving presence. Yet, he ends up judging the New Faith Brotherhood, not wanting to be

saved by submitting to special rules. The fragility of the society in the novel and in this, the need to be saved by a religious faction, is also made clear in the way that the community of Union Grove interacts with the New Faith Brotherhood throughout the novel. The community of Union Grove holds their own sermons and has their own traditions regarding religious practices. This, on more than one occasion, clashes with the New Faith Brotherhood and leaves the Union Grove community disgruntled. An example of this is the funeral of Shawn Watling, who is killed in Karptown. Here, differing views on God and religion clash, as Reverend Loren cites a psalm reflecting the gratitude of the living, while Brother Jobe chooses to cite a psalm focusing on God as a judge that will remove the ungodly and the sinners. (66) This naturally creates tension between the two factions, but their team efforts in combating various crimes and in building a functioning society end up forcing an alliance between the two. This too underlines the argument that religion in the context of *World Made by Hand* is a social and cultural construct, reflected in different factions. Also it alludes to the role of savior that the New Faith Brotherhood wants to achieve through cooperating and almost manipulating the townspeople of Union Grove.

Naturally, the differing views on religion create an atmosphere of doubt and contemplation, both for the characters in the novel, but also for the readers, as questions of the will of God comes into play. The New Faith Brotherhood carries certain symbols and rituals that give life meaning for the members of the congregation. The focus on community and belonging that they can offer the individual in post-apocalyptic America is what draw some people to them at the same time as it repels others. As previously stated, according to Mark C. Taylor religion can give life meaning, but it also disrupts and dislocates. If people are not open to feeling a certain way or being guided, religious beliefs often comes off as imposing and judgmental. This is what happens in *World Made by Hand* where people, and especially Robert, feel that the New Faith Brotherhood imposes on their private thoughts and actions. Religion in this case disrupts Roberts' life and he has to reconsider his own stand, in order to separate himself from the New Faith Brotherhood. The role of savior is questioned and Union Grove ends up being reluctantly saved, as they struggle to maintain their own identity. Thus religion taps into the moral and ethical viewpoints that are imbedded in the individual and make the person question these. This becomes even more evident in a post-apocalyptic setting, because the known world has ceased to exist and new cultural and social norms have been or are being formed.

Righteous Faith

Turning to the Finger Baptists in *The Pesthouse*, there are certain similarities that make it possible to compare them to the New Faith Brotherhood. The Finger Baptists are not the main focus throughout the novel; however, they do encourage a religious reading of the novel and help understand the post-apocalyptic society that the novel presents, as they too see their way of life as right and act as saviors in more than one way. They are saviors insofar as they shelter the immigrants staying for the winter and are spreading the word and will of God.

The first mention of the Finger Baptists is made by a traveler advising Margaret to seek refuge for the winter at the ark, "'Did you say *ark*?' she asked. She didn't recognize the word. 'The Blessed Ark. It's where the Finger Baptists live. It's safe at least. You'll not be touched." (Crace, 2008:179) Margaret's ignorance of the ark, signals that she does not even have a basic knowledge of religion, or in this case the Old Testament, because she does not know the word ark, which is a reference to the biblical Noah's ark. This bears testament to the world Margaret is a part of, a world that has moved so far beyond what used to be America that a huge part of the population cannot identify and decode traditional Christian symbols. Furthermore, the Finger Baptist's community lets the reader understand that there still exist religious factions within this post-apocalyptic narrative, and by their name, they are identified as Christians. When Margaret arrives at the ark, it becomes clear that the Finger Baptists and their beliefs have been influenced by the downfall of America, both as a nation and as a country. They have set themselves up as judges, trying to "save" as many as possible, from what they deem the devils work. A requirement for entering the Blessed Ark and thus receiving shelter from the oncoming winter is to dispose of all metal. According to the Finger Baptists,"Metal is the Devil's work. Metal is the cause of greed and war. In here we are like air and water, without which none of us can live, the enemies of metal." (184) Their uncompromising view on metal and its negative properties aligns the Finger Baptists with fundamentalism and characterizes the way they understand religion. They are a mirror image of the values that Taylor has assigned to some religious factions of the twenty-first century, using an either/or mentality to decide whether people are worthy of protection. In a post-apocalyptic world, which is characterized by a survival of the fittest mentality, the Finger Baptists stand out as they shun the very thing that people in general seem to cling to, namely metal in form of tools and weapons. They have regressed even further than the world they are a part of, seeking a past that in their opinion was purer. The religious beliefs of the Finger Baptists are not shared by the emigrants they give shelter to, however, the strict codex that condemns metal as the Devil's work and that set the tone for the evening sermons is followed nonetheless, and dictates the lives of everyone living inside the Blessed Ark. Thus, the immigrants

are being saved, although most of them are unwilling to accept the belief system of their saviors. The Finger Baptists are aware of their role as both saviors and saved and they use this to their own advantage by acquiring cheap labor and people to sermonize. The following quote further underlines the abovementioned points and also alludes to the belief system that the Finger Baptists have created:

> They're not allowed to use their hands. The hands do Devil's work. The Devil's work, Margaret soon found out, included not only fighting and stealing, both of which indisputably required dishonest hands, but also art, craft, cooking, working, and the age-old and best-forgotten practices of technology for which all metal was the chilling evidence. The Helpless Gentlemen had set their minds and bodies against the country's ferrous history. Wingless and with withered arms, they'd earn their places at the side of God. (192-193)

The Helpless Gentlemen consist of twenty men that have dedicated their lives to not using their hands for anything, which in turn makes their arms and hands so weak that they cannot even move them. The Finger Baptists believe that the Helpless Gentlemen belong at the side of God and will be saved by divine intervention because of their piety and sacredness. Thus, they function as the ultimate savior symbol.

Following the line of argument that is presented in the chapter *Following Religion,* the Finger Baptists are an example on how people act in times of difficulty and change. They live by a strict set of moral and ethical codes that determine their interactions with the surrounding world. Through their religious belief, they alienate themselves from society in an attempt to obtain salvation. Even though they do not demand that all should join their ranks, they look down upon those who cannot see the logic of their ways. To the Finger Baptists, hope of salvation from post-apocalyptic America does not lie across the sea, but in shunning the things that they believe brought on the apocalypse. In other words, their hopes of salvation lie in a heavenly pardon from God and not in an actual place beyond the sea. The eventual downfall of the Finger Baptists is led by the very thing they abhor, namely metal, and the irony of this is not lost to either the characters in the novel or to the reader. Just like Ferrytown, the Finger Baptists are victims of the post-apocalyptic reality of America. When metal eventually destroys this community, the ethicality created by the Finger Baptists disappears and only God knows whether the Baptists actually achieved salvation.

Post-apocalyptic fear and anxiety drives people to return to past virtues in terms of religion. This is depicted through The Finger Baptists and they are an excellent example of how an ever-changing world causes some people to seek a deeper meaning in life while trying to escape from the dominant emotions of fear and anxiety.

Two of a Kind

As has been previously stated, the two religious factions that have been analyzed in this chapter share some common traits that mark them as comparable. According to Mark C. Taylor, religion consists of a certain schemata of feeling and acting, that gives purpose to the person or group affiliated with it. This is directly applicable to both the New Faith Brotherhood and the Finger Baptists. Both groups have a certain set of norms and codes that they live by and find meaning in. Their beliefs help them cope with the post-apocalyptic reality of their everyday lives, although in widely different ways, since the New Faith Brotherhood seeks to become a part of the world they are living in, whereas the Finger Baptists isolate themselves and is devoted to preach damnation. The sense of unity and common goals that exist in these factions are important elements in coping, and the belief in a higher power, simultaneously moves some of the responsibility away from the members and onto the chosen deity. Whether they use God as a source of damnation or as divine help, they place their feelings and hopes into the hands of God. Furthermore, both factions set themselves up as saviors to their surroundings, trying to "save" people by having them join their community. No matter how reluctant people of both novels are, they all at some point seek the aid of these factions, letting them become the saviors and the common people the saved.

Both novels are set in an American context, which is significant when addressing the issues that arise in a society after an apocalyptic event has taken place, but also in relation to the religious symbols and contexts that are explored. As Taylor argues, religion and God in the twenty-first century has become commodified and this trend is also a part of both *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand*. The Finger Baptists treat their system of beliefs as a commodity in the sense that they trade sanctuary for labor. In order for people to stay in the Blessed Ark, they have to do hard labor and serve the Finger Baptists. Moreover, people have to submit to the strict moral code of the Baptists, leaving all metal outside. The daily sermons proclaiming metal as the Devils work and promising doom for non-believers are likewise a part of the deal people have to take if they wish to stay in the Blessed Ark. In this way religion becomes a commodity that can be traded for other goods.

Also the New Faith Brotherhood reflects the commodification of religion in the sense that they mix work with religious symbols. An example is the opening of a barbershop in Union Grove, where the New Faith Brotherhood offers haircuts for free. Even though the haircuts are supposedly for free, the New Faith Brotherhood uses the shop to further their religious beliefs. The community of Union Grove is reluctant towards the New Faith Brotherhood and the barbershop is a way to disguise their intent of influencing the town, which is made abundantly clear when Robert questions the motives behind the New Faith Brotherhood opening a barbershop and planning on opening a men's clothing store:

> "You want us all to dress up like you?" "Well, what's wrong with that? The New Faith Look is clean and upright." "So, none of us townies would have to sign on with your outfit officially. You just get us all looking the same and soon it's a fait accompli." (Kunstler, 2008:234)

At this point in the novel, Robert is aware that the Brotherhood is trying to sway the town and even though he does not like it, he still admires the New Faith Brotherhood for trying to re-awaken Union Grove and to stabilize the societal structure.

Religion as a commodity is a theme that goes well with the post-apocalyptic atmosphere of the novels. As the world as we know it has ended, new rules and codes apply, and here religion becomes a commodity that is valuable for its qualities of being a unifying and an easily applicable element in people's lives, as is seen in *World Made by Hand.*

A Past in the Future

As the apocalypse turns into the reality of living "post-apocalypse", religion follows the changes that society and culture undergoes in both *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand.* As has been made clear through the analysis of the two religious factions presented in each novel, religion never ceases to exist, at least not in the fictive America that both Kunstler and Crace have created. In fact, religion seems to matter more than ever, as people strive to find meaning and hope, maybe even salvation, in a world that has turned against them. As has been described in the chapter *Following Religion*, the twenty-first century is being pulled towards a reversed secularization and this can be seen reflected in the novels. The strong presence of religious thought in the structure of both narratives is an indicator that both Crace and Kunstler ascribe meaning to religion. A turn away from secularization is evident in *World Made by Hand* where the activities of the townspeople of Union Grove are often affiliated with the church. They are all part of the same congregation, with

Loren Holder as acting minister and as Robert puts it "... the church had become our get-together place in a way churches had ceased to be for generations." (Kunstler, 2008: 13) A further evidence of the turn from secularization in the depicted post-apocalyptic society is the fact that the children all go to church school. Religion permeates society and has become a built-in presence that allows people to unite, while at the same time it offers comfort and familiarity. In times where society has reclaimed its local borders, religion and the influence of religious beliefs seem to be thriving, whether people practice a devout form of religion or just uses religion as a way of coping with the difficulties of life. *The Pesthouse* shows a different form of religion than *World Made by Hand*; here religion has turned towards a more open spirituality with local variations. What we would call superstition, they turn to as a belief system, examples being that red-haired people are an ancient omen of disaster and that the flux must be cleansed from a person by removing all body hair. (Crace, 2008: 53-57) In *The Pesthouse* religion is highly localized and for many people, there is not one defined belief system that they are willing to pledge themselves to. Naturally, this does not include the Finger Baptists and they can be seen as fundamentalists in this world of differing beliefs. In post-apocalyptic times, the world often regresses into a shadow of its former self, thus giving way for a seemingly simpler form of life. In that context, the idea of a re-sacralization does not seem far-fetched for, as Taylor has stated, religion can function as a unifier and a way of adding meaning to life. Thus, the internal structure of the narratives invites the reader to believe in and put emphasis on religion, making the novels a part of the re-sacralization of culture that is ongoing.

Whether a savior or saved; willing or unwilling, religion plays a part in the reality of the post-apocalyptic America depicted in *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand*, and by extension also in the two other novels at play in this dissertation. As the reality of life sets in, people seek meaning and purpose in order to cope with the threatening, changed world they are a part of.

Important to keep in mind is that the plot of *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand* have been extrapolated far into the future and the remnants of the American society that we know in the early years of the twenty-first century are hard to come by. In the harsh and unforgiving post-apocalyptic America, religion has survived, although not in a traditional sense. Society persists, however, it is scattered in small enclaves and no overarching government has the final say. The focus on small local communities is not dissimilar to the early medieval ages. Superstitions and religious beliefs differ, depending on location and religion has thus, increasingly, become a private affair.

Religion acts as both a comforter and a guideline as it speaks to the ethical and moral values of society, creating a need to belong to social groups in order to survive. The religiosity behind the

post-apocalyptic communities in both novels are thus connected to ethical criticism in the sense that they both adhere to people as social beings, functioning as guidelines for people in times of danger. In the next section, ethical and moral values will be in focus as we explore the ethical aspect of *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand.*

Post-apocalyptic Re-evaluations

As has been explained in the chapter *Exploring Ethical Criticism*, ethical criticism has to do with the moral and ethical values that are found within art, and in this case literature. In order to apply this to the novels in question, the focus will be on the specific narratives and the characters within them. Thus, the analysis of *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand* will focus on some of the ethical and moral questions that both the characters and readers experience through the narrative. As has been made clear throughout this dissertation, ethical criticism functions as an overall guideline for the project, with religion and fear and anxiety pulling it towards a less abstract set of ideas.

The two novels offer, with their verisimilitude, a look into a future that has been influenced by the choices made by the present. *World Made by Hand* cleverly begins with the words "Sometime in a not so distant future" (Kunstler, 2008) placing the novel in the future in relation to any reader, be it 2008-readers or 2014 readers. Crace uses a similar technique in *The Pesthouse* where the narrator explicitly states: "This used to be America, this river crossing in the ten-month stretch of land, this sea-to-sea. It used to be the safest place on earth." (Crace, 2008:7) Even though there is no direct allusion to the actual time, it is clear that America as we know it has ceased to exist. The extrapolated, yet familiar setting of the novels help to form an understanding of the surroundings and the characters that are being presented.

Living Post-apocalypse

When analyzing *World Made by Hand*, it quickly becomes obvious that certain ethical structures and standards are at play, which is clearly shown through the first person narrator Robert. As a character, Robert reflects the uneasiness and difficulties of living in post-apocalyptic America, with all the memories of what once were. His moral and ethical codes are still in many ways set to the life before the fall of America, which makes him vulnerable and easily susceptible. However, he tries hard not to live in the past, for as he tells reverend Loren Holder, "It's not healthy to obsess about the past." (Kunstler, 2008:2) Contradicting this sentiment, Robert still keeps his radio turned on for when the short intervals of electricity comes around, and this can be seen as Robert actively clinging to a past that he does not want to realize is gone. Also, this alludes to a need for familiar,

repetitive actions which will be commented on later in this analysis, where the trauma of the apocalypse will be in focus. This conflict within the character follows him throughout the novel as he, reluctantly, is elected mayor of Union Grove and thus feels he has a responsibility towards the townspeople.

An example of when Robert's ethical standpoint causes problems can be seen in his handling of the arrest of Wayne Karp. Throughout the novel, the people of Karptown have been described as being tough, hard thugs that only adheres to their own set of rules, which can be seen when Robert and Loren try to carry out justice in Union Grove by bringing in Wayne Karp and his accomplices for the murder of one of the Union Grove men. When Brother Jobe offers some of his men as protection, Robert and Loren refuses:

> "We'll go up to Karptown later today," he [Loren] said. "You're a couple of brave boys." "The object is to inform them that the law is back in business here," Loren said. "They got a lot to answer for." "You know I've offered my men to the mayor here." "I'm aware of that," Loren said. "Thanks. If necessary, we'll take you up on that." (254)

This conversation suggests that both Loren and Robert believe that they can talk rationally with the people in Karptown, which implicitly indicates that they believe the people of Karptown has the same ethical and moral values as them or at least recognize the values that Union Grove adheres to. This is not the case however, and they both end up being captured and tortured by the people of Karptown, for trying to impose on their jurisdiction. To the reader, the naivety of Loren and especially Robert seems astounding, yet it reflects the idea of believing the best in people, even in post-apocalyptic times.

As Gregory has argued, ethical and moral considerations will always be a part of society and of being human, because ethicality is inherently a social matter. The choice of socializing is ours to make and thus it is also our choice to follow certain ethical codes. In the encounter with Karptown, it is clear that there is a rift between the ethics and moral values that each community, and person, ascribes to. As Robert and Loren seek to reason with Wayne Karp, they try to make him understand that allowing them to arrest him is the right thing to do. However, as Wayne Karp does not share the same understanding of right and wrong, their attempts are meaningless. As Robert and Loren are captured and publically tortured, it becomes clear that Karptown, as a community, want nothing

to do with the laws and government that Union Grove has established. This is an example of how, as described in the chapter *Exploring Ethical Criticism*, ethics and morality are directly connected to relations between people. The clash of values in *World Made by Hand* lead to what the Karptowners see as justice, while the Union Grove community looks upon it as a crime.

The differences in ethical and moral codes are also clear when looking at the different groupings that exist in or near Union Grove. The townspeople adhere to one set of ethicality, although, as Robert describes it "The authority in town was a lot less clear-cut, to put it mildly, with the population so diminished and no money to do anything..." (32-33) What Robert alludes to here is the fact that the community of Union Grove is not under the influence of any authority. Officially, they may have elected a mayor, a constable and even a magistrate, but these titles are more ceremonial than factual and people go about their business without having to confer with the 'authorities'. The ethical mindset of the community of Union Grove is, however, alike and as the narrative progresses, they become increasingly aware of the need to stand together, if they want to obtain and maintain a functioning society that at the same time can protect itself from outsiders. Union Grove ends up creating its own laws and government that reflect the ethical viewpoints of the society as a whole. This once again underlines the fact that ethical considerations are connected to sociality that in turn creates an atmosphere of unity and common goals. Karptown stands in direct opposition to the ethical and moral values that the Union Grove community wishes to live by, as has already been stated, however, two other groupings are likewise distinguishable, that is the New Faith Brotherhood and Steven Bullock's community. These two groups are different from the Union Grove community, however, their core ethical values, their notion of what is right and wrong, are much alike. This means that they are able to work together, first to find some of Stephen Bullock's men, who has been taken prisoner in Albany and secondly to bring justice to Wayne Karp, even though proving difficult.

The different communities within *World Made by Hand* create an image of how life transpires after the apocalypse. It relates to the survival instinct of man and focuses on the notion that human beings are initially social creatures that function best within a group dynamic. The correlation between different ethical codes within the novel is interesting, even more so, when readers impose their own ethical opinion into the narrative. This will be discussed in the main chapter *From Fiction to Reality*, where the interdependent relationship between reader, author and novel will be commented upon in order to relate these fictional worlds to the reality of today.

The Rules of the Land

Turning to Crace's *The Pesthouse*, some of the same ethical and moral considerations as were found in *World Made by Hand* appear when analyzing. There appears to be two differing focuses for the population of this post-apocalyptic America: Either you are set on reaching the ships, which can take you overseas to an alleged Promised Land, or you choose to stay and make the best of living in the harsh and difficult land that once was America. Those who choose the latter have very differing views on what 'making the best of the situation' entails. Examples of this dual focus can be seen in the people of Ferrytown, who makes a profit of those who seek the ships, the roaming bands of bandits who pick people off on their way to the ships and turns them into slaves and the Finger Baptists who seek salvation through damnation. These groupings all have differing ethical codes that they adhere to, which sometimes create problems in their dealings with other people, especially those seeking to board the ships.

Looking at ethical and moral values within the narrative, it is interesting to look at Ferrytown and how it functions. Emigrants coming to Ferrytown must pay to be shipped across the lake to the other side, which is the only way to reach the ships. Ferrytown makes a profit on the emigrants as they buy food, shelter and other necessities before paying for the crossing. The rule is that people may cross from Ferrytown, but they cannot come back, if they seek to return after having crossed the water. Margaret attempts to explain the situation to an uncomprehending Franklin by focusing on the function of Ferrytown itself,

> The town was geared to take in paying emigrants from the west, help them part with some of their wealth, then ferry them out eastward as speedily as possible. Any westward refugees who made it back to Ferrytown would not be paying guests but 'beggars and schnorrers'. (Crace, 2008:113)

The refusal of refugees from the West seems cruel and unnecessary to Franklin and while Margaret knows that it is cruel not to let people back after experiencing whatever horrors the way towards the ships has brought them, she is not sorry: "We couldn't let them cross. It's unkind, yes. I know it's unkind, but that's the truth of it." (113) The ethical and moral codes of Ferrytown prohibits any returning emigrants and even though Margaret's own individual values may be in opposition to this, she still abides by the town rules. This is an indication of the social character of ethics, which Gregory highlighted in his article *What It Is and Why It Matters*, further supported by Franklin not understanding the rules, since he is not from the same social group as Margaret. In this ethical

reading of Ferrytown and its population also lies a religious allegory. Ferrytown functions as an allusion to the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were destroyed by God for their sins. As such, it can be argued that the narrow focus on making a profit and not helping anyone from outside their own community has corrupted Ferrytown, leading to the destruction of the town and all its inhabitants. This is a strong religious allegory, which at the same time alludes to the ethical themes of the narrative. Because of the moral decay of Ferrytown, it is destroyed and the only one spared is the character that they themselves had ostracized because of the flux.

The question of who decides the fate of other people carries both ethical and moral values that are reflected by the social context. The decision of not letting anyone back West at the Ferrytown crossing is made to benefit the townspeople, without thinking too much on the consequences this might have for the emigrants. The same can be said about the ships that sail East. Even though emigrants of all ages and gender travel eastward in hope of gaining passage over the sea, in reality, only three types of people are allowed on the boats;

> 'That's pretty girls, for one, girls who haven't got a husband or a child, girls that they can marry on the other side, or sell. Families that have valuables to bribe themselves some berths, is two. Men that are fit enough to put to laboring, or men with skills. That's three and that's all, as far as I could tell. Everybody else can go screw themselves.' (256-257)

Just like in Ferrytown, an unspecified someone has decided who should be allowed on the boats and in doing so they have also made themselves the masters of the boats. Apparently, it is not a question of lack of space on the boats, which could, to some extent, have justified the selection process. In focusing on how families are torn apart and peoples' hopes of leaving the post-apocalyptic wasteland that America has turned into are being extinguished, the reader engage in a sort of relationship with the narrative, thus triggering certain reactions that can be ascribed to the ethical and moral values inherent in the reader, as Gregory has explained.

Inner Struggle in Times of Trouble

Just as is the case with Robert from *World Made By Hand*, Margaret as a character signifies some of the ethical and moral difficulties that arise in a post-apocalyptic society. As a citizen of Ferrytown, she is a part of the ethical and moral codes that the town lives by in order to survive. Thus Margaret shares the same superstitions and convictions as her fellow town members and is

quick to follow those guidelines. This is evident when she becomes ill with the flux and is left in the pesthouse to fend for herself until the sickness has either killed her or disappeared. She sees nothing wrong with this treatment and almost welcomes the pesthouse when she is taken to it. A change is apparent in the character of Margaret, when she is forced to leave Ferrytown and eventually has to take care of herself. The ethical guidelines that have been a part of the social setting of Ferrytown become impossible to keep up and Margaret has to find new ways to legitimize her choices, most of all to herself. The foremost ethical struggle that Margaret has to deal with is the baby she ends up caring for. As circumstance would have it, Margaret is left to take care of Bella without the Boses and this gives her a new perspective on life:

> Margaret, though - could she ever admit it to herself? - was not inclined to hurry after Bella's grandparents. [...] the thought of stealing Bella away might have stained her daydreams briefly. But Margaret would never actually have done it. It would have been wicked. She would have felt guilty to her grave. (Crace, 2008:174)

She transfers her own hopes and dreams onto the child, and finds a reason to keep going because of her obligation to Bella. As the quote above illustrates, Margaret would never have directly stolen the child away from the Boses, since that would have gone against her own ethical and moral values. However, she does delay in following them, which signifies her wish to keep the child. This inner struggle can be ascribed to Margaret's ethical position. She believes that kidnapping is wrong, however, because of her own circumstances she has to convince herself that she did not steal Bella for her own selfish reasons, but that she only ended up with her because of chance. Margaret's inner struggle forms a significant part of *The Pesthouse* and highlights the difficulties of ethically navigating this post-apocalyptic reality. As the narrative progresses, Margaret slowly comes to terms with her choice of becoming Bella's new mother, or Jackie as she later renames her. The joy and sense of purpose that the child gives her is what drives her forward and when she and Franklin are finally reunited, her dreams of a family have come true. Margaret is a victim of the post-apocalyptic America that Crace maps out and she finds herself trying to navigate the differing norms and traditions that she meets on her journey to the ships. Fear of the past, present and future follows her wherever she goes and is an important part of both her personality and of the society that she is a part of, as will be analyzed later in this chapter.

Both *World Made by Hand* and *The Pesthouse* deal with how society may function after the end of the world as we know it, although within different timeframes. Looking at both novels, they share the common notion that being a part of the post-apocalypse makes some people justify any sort of behavior, thus making 'right' and 'wrong' two concepts that are easily mixed up. In *World Made By Hand,* the stress and constant fear that follows the survival of the end makes for a society that needs to place blame and it does this by reviving old stereotypical enemies, as explained by one of the New Faith Brotherhood:

> "There's grievances and vendettas all around at every level. Poor against whatever rich are left. Black against white. English-speaking against the Spanish. More than one bunch on the Jews. You name it, there's a fight on. Groups in flight everywhere, ourselves among them." (Kunstler, 2008:149)

The quote illustrates how the world has turned to internal struggle between factions of the population, almost as a reiteration of history. The nation that united them before has disappeared and left a void that is being filled by small, localized communities instead. These communities all holds to different ethical and moral values, which naturally creates problems as more and more people seek to settle down and resume their lives. In *World Made by Hand* the events that lead to the fall of America as a nation is not many years in the past and most people still remember life with a government and modern comforts. This recollection of a lost past influences people's lives, making them want to fight for a return of past virtues.

Unlike *World Made by Hand*, the people presented in *The Pesthouse* have not experienced the ruin of America as a nation, first hand. They live many years in the future, with only stories to remind them of the past. However, people in this world also have differing notion of 'right' and 'wrong', depending on the ethical and moral values they adhere to. Furthermore, the world is changing as the novel progresses, which Margaret also notes when she is trying to find food for the child:

> If this had been a village in the America that Margaret and the Boses had been born into, she could have expected a smile, a little curtsy from the girl. Her father would have reached the door not with a stick but with the immediate offer of a bench to sit on and a cup to drink from. In small communities like this, [...] passing guests could expect dozen offers of a bed for the night. (Crace, 2008:143)

As the quote states, the hospitality of people has changed, which may be ascribed to the many emigrants seeking the sea. However, it is still an image of how the values of people change in post-apocalyptic times and how each individual judges who is worthy and who is not. In Crace's America, the Ferrytowners feel justified in charging money for every action, no matter how small, and being the ones to deny people access if they want to return to the West. The slavers that capture Franklin likewise feel justified as they steal and sell people to make a living.

Consequently, both *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand* deal with ethical and moral issues, which become even more complex when adding the ethical values that the reader puts into the narrative, as will be discussed further in the chapter *From Fiction to Reality*.

From the two novels it is possible to distinguish a certain pattern of living. The post-apocalyptic America described by Kunstler and Crace is not completely destroyed, as is the case with for example McCarthy's *The Road* and this further underlines the sociality behind ethical issues. In a time when people's moral and ethical codes are being challenged, different opinions on how best to survive are sure to exist. However, what they all have in common is fear. Fear for the future, fear about the past and fear of surviving. In the next section, the notions of fear and anxiety will be used in relation to both novels to further analyze society post apocalypse.

Reflections of Fear

The fears and anxieties that permeate American society in the time of Crace and Kunstler are influenced by uncertainty of the future, where there used to be a stout belief in the indestructible nature of America as a nation. This has been explained in the section dedicated to American society and culture, and is relevant to this section on fear and anxiety as well. The realities of what Kunstler and Crace have created can arguably be said to be influenced by contemporary time. As depicted in the novels, living in a post-apocalyptic world naturally affects the level of fear among the remaining population. Having experienced the apocalypse itself, as is the case with most characters in *World Made by Hand* or living in the aftermath of an unknown catastrophe as they do in Crace's *The Pesthouse* take its toll and affect society as a whole. Fear of the unknown is an integral part of being human and in Kunstler's and Crace's post-apocalyptic America, fear and anxiety are ever-present and in many ways they control the lives of the remaining population. As has been explained in the chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities,* fear arises when people feel powerless and the external world no longer caters to the need and demands of the population. The feeling of powerlessness is omnipresent in both *World Made by Hand* and *The Pesthouse* that gives fear and anxiety a chance to dominate both the individual character and society as a whole.

Together in Fear

Looking at Kunstler's novel, fear and anxiety may not be what is immediately brought to mind. It begins with two men walking home after a day of fishing and the reader is immediately brought in by Robert's sentiment "...and I couldn't remember a lovelier evening before or after our world changed." (Kunstler, 2008:1) The description that follows has nothing to do with a threatening, ruined wasteland. Rather, nature is described as having reclaimed much of the land while old manmade structures wither away due to lack of maintenance. In this America, professions such as farming and carpentry have become essential in order to produce the necessary commodities for people to survive.

The first clue pointing towards people actually living with constant fear is in relation to reverend Loren Holder's reaction to the New Faith Brotherhood buying the old high school and settling down in Union Grove. He is overly suspicious of them and, with only having met brother Jobe once, already sees them as a threat to the stability of Union Grove. This is an image of the fear and anxiety that people, in this case Loren, live with, for when something or someone from the outside disrupts the relative peace of Union Grove people get anxious. The apathy and mistrust towards newcomers are not unique for Loren but encompasses almost everyone in Union Grove. In Kunstler's America, collective fears are all around, represented by the local communities. Thus, fear and anxiety becomes a social construction, just as religion and ethical contemplations, and it reflects how the post-apocalyptic times in *World Made by Hand* are highly focused on small local societies. Rather than being governed from afar, the community of Union Grove has created their own local government that functions as a reminder of a well-functioning society. This point is made clear by Robert in the following:

> It seemed to me that the federal government was little more than a figment of the collective memory. Everything was local now. We liked to think the worst disorders were behind us, that we came out on the other side of something. But the truth was we didn't know what the truth was anymore. (15-16)

Robert is clearly commenting on the localizing tendencies and how people try to convince themselves that the worst is behind them. However, with his last sentence, Robert points towards the overarching problem of living post-apocalypse; truth is no longer what it used to be. This is an important sentiment when dealing with societies that have suffered traumas, since the truth has always been something to strive for and to hold on to. If people no longer know the truth, then

society as a whole is in danger of becoming destabilized and demoralized. This is also what happens when people live in constant fear of tomorrow, and that is why the local communities in *World Made by Hand* have an effect on the individual's sense of security.

The fears and anxieties present in Union Grove start out as being merely day to day concerns about having enough to eat and getting along with everyone. The fear of local sustainability is present in Union Grove, since there no longer seems to be any uniting national entity that caters to people's needs. Readers are presented with tangible concerns about the absence of electricity, about the water getting backed up and how people generally have to do without what they used to consider basic needs. The community of Union Grove seems to be living life without much variation, holding on to the idea that things might return to normal at some point. However, underneath the surface, the community and the individual people within are all afraid in one way or the other. The appearance of the New Faith Brotherhood seems to awaken the society, a necessary action for as Robert states "Among us survivors were many who were confused and despondent." (21)

The communal fear that is found in *World Made by Hand* is in some sense also present in *The Pesthouse*. Arguably, the whole country lives in fear, which is reflected in the emigration towards the Promised Land across the sea:

> The wayside east was already littered with melancholy camps and the shallow graves – soon to be torn up by wolves – of those whose bodies couldn't take the journey […] those who had been crushed between the fears of going forward and the dread of going back. (Crace, 2008:9)

This quote illustrates how fear is the ruling emotion in this post-apocalyptic image of America. People are traveling East in a desperate attempt of escaping the impoverished, ominous country that once was considered the world's superpower. Ironically, this escape mirrors the escape that thousands of Europeans made when they migrated to America in hopes of finding happiness and wealth across the sea. Thus, history is reversed and the fear and plight that once drove Europeans to call America the Promised Land are now in effect in this future image of America. In the novel, society is feverish with fear, which the following quote clarifies, "But, in a sense, they [travelers] all already had a fever just as murderous and treacherous: emigration fever. It was burning them up and driving them on." (83) The analogy of a feverish land agrees with the sentiment that people are governed by fear and anxiety.

The land has become harsh and unbending, lending strength to the fears and anxieties that grow among the population, for, as has been made clear in the chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities,* fear and anxiety comes from external dangers. The external world is no longer able to provide people with stability and security, and has instead turned into an image of the fears and anxieties that govern the country. Even though communities in *The Pesthouse* seem to be scattered and few, it is still a sense of communal fear that plagues the land. People seek refuge across the sea in hopes of regaining or rebuilding a community, finding safety in being a part of a social group rather than wandering alone in the world. Thus, community is important to the population of this future America, although many seem to have abandoned the idea of creating a safe, secure society on American soil.

In Sickness and in Fear

Both novels share a common fear that permeates society and influences the behavior of the character's in the narrative; the fear of sickness. In the post-apocalyptic realities described in both Crace's and Kunstler's novels, illness has become a menace that threatens the unstable societies presented. With no access to modern medicine or treatments, people are at the mercy of natural recovery. A common cold or a broken leg are able to cripple or kill a person, which naturally triggers fear, both in an individual sense and in society in general. Illness in both *World Made by Hand* and *The Pesthouse* becomes an image of how the world has regressed and how little power individuals or a community have. With the sense of power being robbed, it is only natural to give in to the fears and anxieties that come from not being able to heal or cure certain illnesses. Seen in contrast with the world the reader is familiar with, the thought of living in a world without basic medicinal help seems a frightening prospect. In contemporary time, most diseases and illnesses can be treated or cured by modern medicine or technology, and while there is still a fear of getting sick, the opportunities of recovery reduce that fear. In the post-apocalyptic setting, the hope of getting cured by medicine or technology has virtually disappeared, leaving room for fear to grow.

As has been explained in chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities*, the way danger is perceived is highly specific to the individual, but through social interaction and comparisons, fears and anxieties exist in a collective sense as well. This is interesting when looking at the role that fear of disease and illness plays in both the novels. In *The Pesthouse*, sickness is a key element in the narrative, since Margaret and Franklin would not have met without the fear of illness. Margaret is ostracized from society because of her catching the flux, and in an attempt to save her, her family forces her into isolation at a pesthouse, after having cut all the hair from her body in an attempt to rid her of

the disease. No remedy or cure is available for Margaret, only time will reveal if she is strong enough to survive; a feat her own father did not manage to do. Also Franklin suffers from the lack of tolerance towards illness, in his case an inflamed knee. His brother Jackson is annoyed at Franklin for being unable to walk properly and leaves him behind to scout out Ferrytown. Ironically, the fear of illness ends up being the savior of both Margaret and Franklin as they are outside Ferrytown, when it is hit by the poisonous fumes that kill the entire community. This alludes to the idea that, even though sickness is indeed terrible, it is possible to overcome it. The fear of being sick and weak is crippling society and inhibits people's social interaction. Suspicion and fear toward illness are ever-present in Crace's narrative, underlining the fear that society itself has constructed. Within a post-apocalyptic world such as this one, only the strong is able to survive, and the weak and sick will only slow down the healthy. The fear of illness is in this case an integral part of civilization and it is organized accordingly. The inability or unwillingness to care for sick people illustrate how the post-apocalyptic reality has changed society and can even be seen as a critique of present day issues, where healthcare in America is a constant source of debate.

In comparison, *World Made by Hand* does not share the same relentless focus on illness and disease, although it is present in the narrative. Robert's wife has died from an outbreak of encephalitis, while his daughter is taken by the flu. (Kunstler, 2008:14) Furthermore, the fear of sickness is reflected in the fear of dogs carrying rabies, which is the case when Sam Watling is killed in Karptown. In this post-apocalyptic world, they still have a doctor who does his best with the means at hand. However, the supply of modern medicine has gone and the doctor has to rely on what can be made from various plants found in the area. The novel does not deal with direct outbreaks of disease, such as *The Pesthouse*, however it does explain, how viruses sometimes appear, killing off entire communities without there being anything to do about it. People in *World Made by Hand* seem less worried about the prospect of an outbreak. Yet, the knowledge that at any time, a virus might gain foothold without there being a cure for it, makes for a society that lives with constant fear.

Sickness thus becomes an overarching source of fear and anxiety in both novels, alluding to the fact that people develop fear, when they feel powerless, as explained in the chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities*. The fear in both narratives is likewise strengthened as readers put their own context into the novels, creating a relationship between the extrapolated future America and the present day world. The ethical and moral values of helping the sick and less fortunate is questioned in the post-

apocalyptic societies depicted by Kunstler and Crace, which in turn generates fear; a fear of the world turning into an inherently evil place where law and order no longer abides.

To Flee or Rebuild

Another interesting aspect when working with fear and anxiety in *World Made by Hand* and *The Pesthouse* is the decision whether to stay in place or to run from the fear-provoking elements. The two novels differ greatly on this subject matter, although it can be argued that the ending of both novels share common traits, which will be elaborated later.

According to Freud, fear is related to the flight reflex, which is especially relevant in relation to *The Pesthouse*. America has become a harsh and unwelcoming country where fear and anxiety rule society. Every decision made centers on surviving in the post-apocalyptic reality and although the novel takes place many years in the future, it is made clear that the land is slowly decaying. When reading the novel, it is also made clear that emigration seems like the only hope for a large part of the population, especially those living inland. When Margaret and Franklin discover how all of Ferrytown have perished under, for them, mysterious circumstances, they do not even discuss their options. Their first instinct is to prepare for the journey towards the ships and as Margaret wakes up from her feverish ride away from Ferrytown, she acknowledges this:

> Her family were ancestors. Her home was ash. Any chance she had was in the east, beyond the ocean. Most of her countrymen and countrywomen had already realized that. Her journey there had already begun. That was clear, and non-negotiable. She'd have to make the best of it. (Crace, 2008:102)

For Margaret there is no alternative to making the journey towards the ships. She sees it as her only salvation, the only way she can find safety. As such, Margaret is running from her fear, into what she perceives as safety. To put it in Freudian terms, Margaret's ego reacts to what she perceives as dangerous, creating a neurotic fear of staying behind. She is spurred on by fear that can be said to manifest internally. However, since Margaret is a part of a population where fear of the country itself is ingrained, she is also influenced by outside factors through her socializing with other people. The fear that Margaret experiences is thus a form of a collective fear that has taken over the country and relates to every single individual, whether they choose to stay or flee. As has also been explained in chapter *Social Fears and Anxieties*, the characters in post-apocalyptic fiction often

become paranoid, experiencing neurotic, inner fear as real fear. This becomes evident in their fear of open spaces, which Margaret exemplifies by saying,

> 'That road makes me nervous now we're close to it.' [...] 'It's just too bare. I don't know what it is but... it's open ground. You know, *exposed.* There's not a tree on there to hide behind. I feel we shouldn't even step on it. Not one single toe. We have to find another way. We have to hide ourselves.' (111)

Margaret suffers from agoraphobia, and thus fears the openness of the highway and even though there is nothing visibly wrong with the road, her inner self protest against being exposed in such a manner. In a world where everyone is left to fend for themselves, the thought of being unable to take cover triggers the inner fear of survival and gives an insight into the kind of world that both Margaret and Franklin are a part of. The first instinct in this world is not to stay and rebuild, but rather to run and hopefully make it to the ships that will carry one to safety across the sea.

In contrast to the desire of leaving America in hopes of a better future, *World Made by Hand* takes a different approach. In Kunstler's post-apocalyptic image of America, people are not running from the land, rather they stay and try to rebuild, what they have lost. The apocalyptic events that led to a collapse of the old world are either still ongoing or fresh in memory, together with the life that went before. This makes for a different approach to the fear that exists among the remaining population. While Margaret is running from her fear, seeking the ships, Robert in *World Made by Hand* is at a standstill. He seems almost morose in his assessment of the new world order, which he explains by saying: "We used to call people like her "depressed," but we dropped those clinical locutions because despair was a spiritual condition that was as real to us as the practical difficulties we struggled with in everyday life." (17) From this quote it can be derived that the community of Union Grove, and by extension also the population of America, is in a constant mode of depression originating from the aftermath of the apocalypse. The fears presented in Union Grove are, as stated before, focused on having enough food and not getting sick. Society as a whole seems to have survived the apocalypse, although they are traumatized by the events. Here, Cathy Caruth's ideas of a collective trauma come into play, as the community of Union Grove all have suffered the same trauma, in this case the end of American society. The trauma of the apocalyptic events that lead to the decline of the United States has survived as a collective memory that keeps the trauma alive and close at hand. Furthermore, as Caruth states, repetitions function as stabilizers, which is made clear

through the daily rhythm of the community. An example of this is Robert's need to always keep the radio on, even though there is rarely any power. The comings and goings of people on the radio barely registers with him, however, he finds a sort of peace in listening to the ranting on the radio. Also, Robert explains how people have a hard time forgetting old habits: "Living by the clock was an old habit that dies hard. Not much that we did required punctuality, but people still wanted to know what time it was." (20) Thus, unconsciously, keeping the radio turned on and keeping track of time have become repetitive actions that allude to Robert's, and in extension the societies', inner desire of coping with the trauma of the apocalypse. This is proof of how repetitions give people a sense of security and keeps the traumatic event from overpowering their lives, yet simultaneously asserts the presence of a trauma.

In Crace and Kunstler's novels, the decision to flee or rebuild is influenced by the characters' sense of ontological security. As has been described in the section *Ontological Security*, ontological security reflects a perceived sense of control and stability. In *The Pesthouse* all sense of control and stability has been removed from Margaret and Franklin and they desperately seek a new sense of security that they, for the most part of the novel, strongly believe are to be found across the ocean. Their fear and anxieties are a part of the reality they live in and in lacking ontological security they, and many of their fellow travelers, see fleeing as their only choice. Most communities presented in *The Pesthouse* end up destroyed, except for the one with the lawless highway robbers. Even the peaceful, religious society in the Ark is not able to survive. As such, the only functioning society is the highway robbers, which is run by fear. Neurotic fear is thereby enhanced by external dangers, such as murder, starvation and the likes. As previously mentioned power over the external world means having ontological security, but most of the characters are powerless, victimized and therefore lack a real sense of security. There are power and security in numbers, but it also means deferring you own morals and adapting to others at times. In *World Made by Hand* the sense of ontological security is lacking, which in turn, as Hanne Mamzer argues, makes it difficult to project their hopes and dreams into the future. That is why the community of Union Grove seems despondent and rooted in place, with no greater goals in life.

The focus on fleeing in *The Pesthouse* comes to an abrupt end as the novel draws to a close. Despite all their efforts in reaching the coast, Margaret and Franklin decides to seek happiness within the borders of America, instead of boarding a ship. This is a new beginning for them and also signals a new beginning for the population of Crace's post-apocalyptic world. The will to rebuild has become stronger than the fear of staying, and Margaret and Franklin in many ways retrace the American

dream: "They could imagine striking out to claim a piece of long-abandoned land and making home in some old place, some territory begging to be used. Going westward, they go free." (Crace, 2008:309) This ending lines up with the ending in *World Made by Hand,* where life after the apocalypse holds meaning again in the eyes of Robert, as he has to take care of his new love Britney and her daughter. The despondent mood that characterized Robert has given way for a more practical, even hopeful tone of voice, which the last sentence of the novel proves, "And that is the end of the story of that particular summer when we had so much trouble and so much good fortune in the world we were making by hand." (Kunstler, 2008:317) Thus, both novels end on a positive note, with hopes for the future within the borders of what was once America.

Fear of Hope

Although, hope is seen in both novels, another mutual theme is a general fear of the future. As has been made clear, characters in both narratives are preoccupied with constantly adjusting to the circumstances of living in a post-apocalyptic reality. People are generally suspicious of each other and tend to hold to their own groups in order to find some simulated security. Also, people feel powerless and are thus robbed of their ability to act, as exemplified in *World Made by Hand,* or they give up and flee as is the case in *The Pesthouse.* Therefore, it is plausible to say that fear and anxiety govern the two populations in the novels, although on differing levels according to the social group. Ontological security as a perceived sense of control and stability does not exist in the communities presented and what threatens stability also threatens ontological security. By being robbed of their sense of security, people feel powerless, which is why fear and anxiety become prominent features in the post-apocalyptic worlds of Crace and Kunstler. In other words, and in continuation of the lack of ontological security, the people and societies in the two novels are ultimately living in and influenced by Beck's notion of a risk society. In living after the apocalypse, people are confronted with the failed attempt to control both nature and society in general, while living with the knowledge that the apocalypse to some extend was self-inflicted. This creates a feeling of constantly living with the risks of repeating past mistakes, and the future thus becomes a frightening unknown element.

Fear of the unknown is present in both narratives; however in some way the characters fear the known even more. In *The Pesthouse* the fear of the known, i.e. America, outshines the fear of the unknown, symbolized by what lies on the other side of the ocean. Thus, people flee the known in order to reach some unknown land, where everything they know about it is based on rumors. Their sense of ontological security is threatened to such an extent that they create a place of safety within

themselves and project it onto reality. They are convinced that salvation lies beyond the sea, because they have created a fantasy of the world that they cling to in order to survive. This enables them to move past their fear in hopes of a better future. As people are concerned with the future, they also fear to hope for better times, which create a dichotomy between hope and fear. As people both hope for and fear the future, they seek security and stability in order to create a place where they both feel safe and can live out their hopes.

In *World Made by Hand*, the community of Union Grove seems to have a relatively safe community, although the population has been pacified by the fear that followed the collapse of their known world. External dangers from, for example, epidemics and harsh weather are constant fears in this community; however, they do not seem to affect the people much. They have lost the motivation and drive to keep developing the community and seem satisfied by maintaining the status quo. The passivity of Union Grove can be ascribed to a fear of hope, as they see no way out of their current situation and have no motivation to try and change it. The one thing that forces a reaction and ultimately produces change is the arrival of the New Faith Brotherhood and the crimes of the Karptowners. The community of Union Grove fears that outsiders will disrupt their relatively peaceful and quiet existence and this makes them fear for the future. Their sense of security is disrupted by outside groups and fear takes a hold of the Union Grove community and forces them to act. Thus fear in this case functions as motivation to create a more secure, safe environment in Union Grove and at the same time create a well-functioning town.

Both novels represent how difficult it is to navigate in these post-apocalyptic settings and how fear and anxieties often figures in the same setting as hope, which acts as a motivator for social change. In order to further underline the analysis, the following section will sum up the main points made in the abovementioned chapter.

Concluding Remarks

As has already been accounted for, *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand* has been analyzed within the same chapter as they in many ways function alike in the context of this dissertation. The analysis of the novels brought an understanding of how they function as post-apocalyptic narratives and, in relation to this, also how they function within the scope of this dissertation. Both Crace and Kunstler's imagined worlds play with the restructuring of a society that has been traumatized by either a non-specific apocalypse or a wide range of different issues which ultimately resulted in a collapse of the American society. The effect that the apocalypse and its aftermath have on society and the characters presented is obvious, reflected especially through the insecurity and

instability that dominates both narratives. As the analysis unfolded, it became increasingly clear that the notions and theories presented in the main chapter *Framing an Ethical America* helped create an understanding of the novels' dispositions and further highlighted the areas in which particularly ethicality had a role to play.

By exploring the religious tendencies in the novels, several biblical references were discovered, alluding to the less than hidden religious influence and affiliation of both *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand.* They both represent a religious thinking that goes beyond traditional religion, focusing more on the need of the individual, be it the individual person or the individual community. Furthermore, religion in these post-apocalyptic worlds function to a large degree as stabilizing structures as the religious factions that the narratives present attempt to create unity and social security in a tumultuous world. While not everyone in the narrative wishes to adhere to a particular religion, spirituality still carries import in dealing with the reality of a distraught society. Thus, religion in the worlds presented by Crace and Kunstler both function as attempts at stabilizing structures, while it is also an ethical marker. The dilemmas and questions that the characters inevitably face in an America that struggles to either gain its footing or simply survive have a strong affiliation to ethicality. When the world as we know it has seized to exist, new structures and ways of living are bound to appear, sometimes conflicting with the predominant ethicality of a certain group or community. The analysis suggests that ethical and moral attitudes are influenced by the social setting that one adheres to and that differing views on how to cope with life post apocalypse may create tension, but also unity as exemplified through the community of Union Grove and the New Faith Brotherhood. As everyone struggles to find their own way through the changed American settings, ethical notions of right and wrong are challenged. This led the analysis to focus on the fear and anxieties that are constant underlying currents in both *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand.* What the analysis brought to light was that the apocalypse creates insecurity and instability, which is reflected in how people cope with living post apocalypse. Just as is the case with ethical criticism and religion, fear and anxiety often show themselves through social constructions, alluding to a communal fear that is shared by the inhabitants of the threatening post-apocalyptic America. The question of whether to flee or rebuild, ethical in its nature, becomes an image of the fear that permeates the societies of both novels and further relates to the lack of security. As was made clear in the analysis, fear is a constant presence, whether it is felt as a direct external fear or an inner fear that guides the characters and the communities presented. However,

both novels present a dichotomy between hope and fear, as people both hope for and fear the future, as they have no control over it.

The analysis of *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand* show that post-apocalyptic imaginings of a future America have the potential to trigger certain ethical and moral considerations that are often represented through religious allusions or characterized by a deep-rooted fear of the future. The novels further function as examples of how post-apocalyptic fiction relate to the reader, which will be made clear in the main chapter *From Fiction to Reality*. By analyzing the novels within the same chapter, it will be possible to make interesting and intricate comparisons without losing sight of the main objective, namely using the novel within the framework of religion, ethical criticism and fear and anxiety.

After having analyzed both The Pesthouse and World Made by Hand, the dissertation now moves on to the analysis of The Road, which is an example of post-apocalyptic literature, where the cataclysmic event has left no hope of ever rebuilding a society, due to the level of destruction.

Analyzing *The Road*

In this chapter, there will be an analysis of the novel *The Road* written by Cormac McCarthy. To begin the analysis, an introduction to the novel, its main characters and subsequently its themes is in order. The main part of the analysis will deal with the novel according to the concepts and theoretical methods described in the main chapter *Framing an Ethical America*. The aim of the analysis is to look at the American context of the post-apocalyptic genre, by looking at how religion, fear and anxiety can help explain the society and characters that the reader is presented with in the novel, all the while maintaining an ethical critical perspective.

The novel *The Road* is set in future America, several years after an unspecified apocalypse has destroyed not only civilization, but almost all living things. The plot is unfolded through a third person narrator following the two main characters, an unnamed father and his young son who are referred to as the man and the boy. The father and the son are moving through a dark landscape, which is almost completely scoured of any form of vegetation and living animals. The two are living their lives on the brink of starvation and freezing to death. As a result, the man is coughing up blood and is trying to come to terms with the fact that he is dying. In search of better living conditions and a better future for the boy, they are travelling south, along empty roads in order to reach the sea, carrying all their belongings in their knapsacks and in a supermarket cart. Throughout their journey, the man is constantly assuring the boy that they are the good guys who are 'carrying the fire'. Many of the remaining human survivors have joined together in groups, scavenging the land for human flesh, having resorted to cannibalism, which leaves the man and the boy in constant fear of being exposed and attacked throughout the narrative. Because of this fear, the revolver with only two rounds that the father is carrying becomes an important motif, as the son has been told, to use the gun on himself if necessary rather than be captured and eaten by the cannibals. On their journey, the man and the boy manage to survive by occasionally finding food and by trying to avoid any other humans. At one point, encounter a man whom they end up seeing as a threat, forcing the father to use one of the bullets to kill him, and consequently have to abandon almost all of their possessions in order to flee from the remaining members of the dead man's group. The man and the boy eventually reach the sea, but as this does not improve their living situation, they head back inland. However, the man is shot with an arrow and dies of a combination of blood loss and his longstanding illness. On the third day after his father's death, the boy encounters a man who says he has been tracking the pair. The man, who is with a woman and two children, convinces the boy that he is one of the good guys, and takes him under his protection.

In *The Road* McCarthy is exploring post-apocalyptic visions by depicting an American wasteland that is incompatible with the contemporary reader's America. Already on the first page, the novel depicts a harrowing landscape, which is deprived of color and life, and in which even the human race is having a difficult time surviving the conditions that they themselves have created; "Nights dark beyond darkness and the days more gray each one than what had gone before. Like the onset of some cold glaucoma dimming away the world." (McCarthy, 2010:1) It becomes explicit throughout the novel that the apocalypse is somehow manmade and most likely takes its beginning in a nuclear disaster:

> The clocks stopped at 1:17. A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions. He got up and went to the window. What is it? she said. He didn't answer. He went into the bathroom and threw the lightswitch but the power was already gone. A dull rose glow in the window-glass. (54)

By not focusing on the actual event, but rather the events that follow the apocalypse, McCarthy has created a novel whose main theme is what happens after the end of the world. It is difficult to imagine that religion plays a vital part in an uncivilized world, and in the beginning of the novel, the country is also described as "Barren, silent, godless" (2). However, in spite of the country being described as godless, religion is a highly significant theme in the novel.

The Road to Salvation

As already mentioned the novel's setting is described as cold, barren and gray and it leaves both the characters of the novel and the readers feeling hopeless and estranged. Since the apocalyptic event has left a world of total destruction where nothing has survived except what seems like a few people, one might argue that what has happened in *The Road* is in fact a biblical apocalypse, as described in the chapter *Following Religion*. From a religious perspective, the apocalypse signals a final battle between good and evil, which in turn marks a clear categorization of the two. In *The Road* there is a clear distinction between who is good and who is evil, both from the characters own perspective, but also from the readers perspective. Throughout the novel, it becomes clear that the man and the boy represent the good guys and the reader relates to them as such. The man and the boy are also considering themselves to be the good guys, which is reflected in the following conversation between the two:

He turned and looked. He looked like he'd been crying.

Just tell me.

We wouldn't ever eat anybody, would we?

No. Of course not.

Even if we were starving?

We are starving now.

You said we weren't.

I said we weren't dying. I didn't say we weren't starving.

But we wouldn't.

No. We wouldn't.

No matter what.

No. No matter what.

Because we're the good guys.

Yes.

And we're carrying the fire.

And we're carrying the fire. Yes.

Okay. (McCarthy, 2010: 136)

During the novel, it is repeatedly explained, that what separates the man and the boy from the bad guys, is the fact that they are "carrying the fire". In a world of all-encompassing destruction, darkness and fear, the fire can simply be a symbol of hope, but also a symbol of civilization, as fire provides some of the basic means of survival like heat and the ability to cook. However, when considering that what has happened is in fact a biblical apocalypse, the fire can be analyzed as having yet another meaning. In the bible, fire is most often used to represent the very presence of God and as a means of communication from God to the people, like in the image of the burning bush from which God spoke to Moses. (American Standard Version, Exodus 3:2) Other than representing the presence of God, the imagery of fire is also used as a sign of God's anger and judgment. In the New Testament, fire is most commonly associated with the judgment of hell, or with the destruction of the old heaven and earth in preparation for the new, which stresses the idea of *The Road* depicting the aftermath of a biblical apocalypse. The abovementioned quote further shows that the good guys are the ones who have the presence of God; however it also shows what distinguish them from the bad guys. In *The Road* the bad guys are the ones who do not feel any

relation to God and furthermore only adheres to their own understanding of moral and ethical values, if they even consider it. According to Taylor, in times of struggle people often turn to or from religion. In this novel, the people who have turned away from religion and from the moral and ethical codes that follow, have become almost sub-human as they only follow basic instincts. These people are willing to prey on the weak, by keeping other people as slaves, and even turning to cannibalism in order to survive. In this sense, the bad guys are deciding who is going to live and who will die and are thereby they act as Gods in their own right. This is an important notion in the analysis of the religious perspective in *The Road*, because even though religion has become a hybrid in the postmodern age, it still adheres to certain moral and ethical codes that, if crossed, end up estranging not only the good from the bad, but also the reader from the text.

During the novel, McCarthy maintains a clear distinction between good and evil, by making the man and the boy flee from any potential meetings with the bad people. However, when the man and the boy meet one of the bad guys, who ends up threatening them, the boundaries between good and evil become blurred. The man ends up shooting the bad guy, which can be seen as an act of self-defense. Although McCarthy has created a fairly distinct line between the good guys and the bad guys, this act signifies the man's shift into the bad guy category because of his act of violence. This also represents a question of ethical concerns, as it questions when it is acceptable to kill another human being, and if such situations even exist, which will be elaborated later. However, it is not so much the actual situation where the man kills the bandit that vilifies him, but rather the conversation after between the man and the boy. Here the boy questions if they are in fact still the good guys, but also it also describes the man's own thoughts on the episode:

> This was the first human being other than the boy that he'd spoken to in more than a year. My brother at last. The reptilian calculations in those cold and shifting eyes. The gray and rotting teeth. Claggy with human flesh. Who has made of the world a lie every word. (McCarthy, 2010:79)

It seems strange to refer to the man, who has just threatened him and his son, and thereby forced him to act violently, as "My brother". However, this quote is a good representation of what happens to people when all ethical and moral codes disappear from a society. By calling him brother, the man is somehow connected to the bad guy, but at the same time he is dissociating himself from him by giving him animalistic features. This quote is a clear example of how confused the man is, and

the reason for his confusion is found in the last line of the quote: "Who has made the world a lie every word." This line explains a world where all moral and ethical reasoning is gone; where there are no rules and no consequences. This episode thereby becomes a sign of the man being ruined by this post-apocalyptic world order. Because of this crucial need to survive and protect his son, he is having trouble with keeping the moral and ethical codes that comes with being considered a good guy. It is also a sign of McCarthy playing around with the terms and connotations of good and bad, by relating to the ethical and moral values of the readers themselves.

Throughout most of the novel, the man is the only character present that has experienced the world before the apocalypse, and, as stated, who is still considered one of the good guys. The relationship between the man and religion is difficult to pinpoint, as he tends to shift between being a believer of God and cursing the very idea of a god.

> Then he just knelt in the ashes. He raised his face to the paling day. Are you there? he whispered. Will I see you at last? Have you a neck by which to throttle you? Have you a heart? Damn you eternally have you a soul? Oh God, he whispered. Oh God. (10)

As mentioned in the chapter *Following Religion*, postmodern religion is a question of people drawing on their own individual experiences in order to create their own religious reality, which means that they are no longer defined by traditional religious practices. As people draw on what they find useful in their particular situation, different religious hybrids occur, meaning the religious and the non-religious are found within the same framework, created by the individual. In *The Road*, McCarthy has created a universe that combines the traditional set of Christian beliefs, with a setting that is so cruel and destroyed that it is difficult to imagine the role of God. As the man is the only adult left who still lives by most of the basic ethical and moral codes, he takes it upon himself to uphold moral values and in a sense creates his own religion in order to protect against the ethical and moral decay he experiences within the post-apocalyptic world of America. Important in this regard is the fact that the man knows that he is dying and he therefore believes that the future, and thus his new religion, lies with his son, which is a part of the reason why he utters the following statement: "My job is to take care of you. I was appointed to do that by God." (80)

During their journey, the man and the boy meet Ely, who seems to be one of the good guys, but the man does not trust him. However, Ely has an interesting idea of what religion has become in this post-apocalyptic setting, as he says: "There is no God and we are his prophets." (181) In the

beginning of the novel, the man wakes up from a dream, which contributes to this idea of the survivors being prophets:

> He pushed away the plastic tarpaulin and raised himself in the stinking robes and blankets and looked toward the east for any light but there was none. In the dream from which he'd wakened he had wandered in a cave where the child led him by the hand. Their light playing over the wet flowstone walls. Like pilgrims in a fable swallowed up and lost among the inward parts of some granitic beast. (1)

This dream could easily be a reference to the biblical story of the prophet Jonah and the whale, where Jonah is given an assignment from God, but chooses to disobey God and ends up being swallowed by a whale for three days and three nights until he changes his mind. (American Standard Version, Matthew 12:40) In this quote, McCarthy is creating a religious hybrid as he combines a biblical story from the Old Testament with a complete non-religious setting. At the same time, he is stressing the idea of the biblical apocalypse being the result of disobedience of God's will. This has led to the point where the two main characters are now treading through a world of darkness and hunger, just like Jonah experienced in the belly of the whale. The man could, therefore, easily be seen as a prophet, also because he himself believes that he has been appointed by God to take care of the boy. Although the man does not seem like a very religious person, it is in fact religion that motivates him in the destroyed world, as protecting the boy has become his prophecy.

The truly go(o)d

In many ways, the boy becomes the focal point of the novel. Both the man and the boy are considered to be the good guys, however, the man is having more trouble existing in this moral-less world, probably because he has experienced the world before the apocalypse, and thereby has a clear understanding of what it means to be good and to be bad. However, throughout the narrative it is explained that the boy is born into this post-apocalyptic world and therefore does not know the world that used to be. This likewise means that he has a natural innocence and naivety.

Throughout the narrative it is made clear that the man is dying, which is shown by him continually coughing blood. To the reader it is clear that the man knows that he is dying and thereby will not be able to keep "carrying the fire" with the boy. The boy therefore becomes the only symbol of hope, but also the only symbol of something undeniably good because of his innocence and naivety in this new world. The man knows that the boy has a special meaning, and that he represents something

otherwise unseen in the post-apocalyptic world: "He knew only that his child was his warrant. He said: If he is not the word of God God never spoke." (McCarthy, 2010: 3) The man turns his son into a moral guideline, and attempts to make everything his son says into something sacred. He gives the reader and the remaining world in *The Road* an idea of how important it is for him to protect the few things that are still pure in this heavily burdened world, but also of his need to remember the earlier features of humanity that are now gradually disappearing. The man is turning his son into a personification of God, by accepting him as a symbol of all that is left of goodness, innocence and guidance. The boy's goodness is a combination of his innocence because of his age, the fact that he has not experienced any other world than the one they are currently living in, and the man's own ethical and moral codes, which he passes on to his son as they travel the road. In this dark and cruel world it seems that the only thing truly good lies within the boy and his connection to God and divinity. However, for the reader it seems impossible to imagine a world of such destruction ever having a bright future, and the boy shares this concern when he realizes that his father is dying and he is on his own:

Do you remember that little boy, Papa?

Yes. I remember him.

Do you think that he's all right that little boy?

Oh yes. I think he's all right.

Do you think he was lost?

No. I dont think he was lost.

I'm scared that he was lost.

I think he is all right.

But who will find him if he's lost? Who will find the little boy?

Goodness will find the little boy. It always has. It will again. (300)

The boy is obviously talking about himself and his fear of being left alone in this specific conversation between the man and the boy. Considering that this dialog is at the very end of the

novel, McCarthy makes sure to stress that no matter how awful the world looks, there will always be a distinction between what is good and what is bad. At the same time, he manages to underline the importance of the boy as a character in the novel, as he is the only true imagery of goodness, and thereby the only sense of hope in a destroyed American setting. Thus, the novel deals with the issue of goodness, which is personified by the boy seeing that he is the only one who is pure of heart and willing to help everybody else despite them taking and abusing. However, it is at this particular point in the novel, that the question of good and evil becomes especially interesting, seeing that the battle between the good and the bad, as the biblical apocalypse prescribes, becomes solely based on survival. As such, the novel deals with how goodness can survive in a world where all signs of civilization and societal norms have disappeared and been replaced by a Darwinist perspective of survival of the fittest. *The Road* not only functions as a narrative that deals with the destruction of the world, but more importantly it is a tale of what happens to the human race when all ethical and moral systems are taken out of the equation.

The End of the World - And then what?

The Road is a novel that represents the end in many different aspects. Overall, it represents the very end of the world, as we know it, where God has disappeared and left the sinners on earth. After a long journey, the man and the boy finally reach the end of their destination which is the coast, only to discover that there is not much more to gain here than the land they have just passed through. At the end of the novel the man dies, signifying the end of the special relationship between father and son that through the novel has been the only contrast to the otherwise depressing setting. The end of the novel also represents the end of the biblical apocalypse, which the novel is based on. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the biblical apocalypse is signified by the final battle between good and evil in which good prevails. It is the end of the known world and signals the coming of a new age where the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be judged. The distinction between the biblical and the secular apocalypse creates differing ways of moving past the momentous event, into the post-apocalyptic. When dealing with the biblical apocalypse, the idea of life after the apocalypse is dependent on the will of God. If the words of Ely are in fact true, and God is dead and the survivors are prophets, there is not much hope left in the novel. However, throughout the novel, McCarthy stresses the importance of the boy as a character, by referring to the child as "the one" (McCarthy, 2010: 277) and as a "Golden chalice, good to house a god." (78) Against all odds, the boy is still alive at the end of the book, which shows that in a biblical apocalypse, it is in fact good who wins, and that the life after the apocalypse is dependent on the

will of God. God in the traditional sense is dead, but the boy acts as a personification of God as he represents all goodness and the divine. By ending the novel with the boy finding what appear to be other good people on the road, McCarthy has created a godless setting of hope and spirituality, making *The Road* an example of how religion functions in a post-apocalyptic world.

Fear of the Road

This part of the analysis will focus on the fears and anxieties of the man and the boy as they are considered the good guys, and therefore evoke certain ethical and moral feelings in the reader.

As has already been established, *The Road* is a novel that deals with the aftermath of an apocalypse, which has left the whole world destroyed and covered in ash. It depicts a world where all moral and ethical codes have been broken down, and humanity is fighting for basic survival. Society and all means of communication have vanished from the world, and been replaced with a natural fear of the new surroundings and what the future will bring. As mentioned in the chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities*, in post-apocalyptic fiction fear and anxiety come from external dangers and from the uncertainty of the annihilation of most things familiar. In a world where it is every survivor for themselves, the thought of being unable to find shelter for the external dangers triggers the inner fear of survival and gives an insight into the kind of world that both the man and the boy are a part of. The first instinct in this world is not to stay and rebuild, but rather to keep moving on in the hopes of finding food or shelter. As such, the man is running from fear of the world in which he and the boy live, into what he perceives as safety. To put it in Freudian terms, the man's ego reacts to what he perceives as dangerous, namely staying too long in the same place due to exposure that in turn creates a neurotic fear of staying still. He is urged on by fear that can be said to come from within himself. However, the two main characters are a part of a population where fear of the country itself is ingrained, as everyone who has been left behind are struggling to fulfill even the most basic needs for survival. The fear that the man and the boy experience is therefore a form of collective fear that has taken over the country and relates to every single individual, whether they are considered to be one of the good guys or one of the bad guys.

In *The Road* fear and anxiety are represented through the man and the boy and their fight for survival in a completely devastated world. As stated earlier, McCarthy never fully explains how the apocalyptic event came to be. However, at one point in the novel, the man says: "On this road there are no godspoke men. They are gone and I am left and they have taken with them the world. Query: How does the never to be differ from what never was?" (McCarthy, 2010: 32) This presupposes that with the apocalypse everything that was right with the world is gone and that someone forgot to

care about what effect their actions would have on future generations. The barren, cold and destroyed setting of *The Road* is therefore to be understood as a predictable consequence of the struggle in uniting new technologies with old ideologies. By not explaining the specific reason that led to the apocalypse, McCarthy manages to implicate many different fears and anxieties in contemporary society, and thereby uniting the reader with the two main characters on the road. The novel deals with many different aspects of fear and anxiety because it is an end-of-the-world narrative, where the focus lies on the collapse of the social and ethical values that before the apocalypse made human beings the dominating species.

How to survive

Throughout the novel, it is very clear that the biggest fear lies within the basic need for survival. In a world where basic resources like water, food and security are hard to come by, a natural fear of not being able to survive emerges:

> Two more days. Then three. They were starving right enough. The country was looted, ransacked, ravaged. Rifled of every crumb. The nights were blinding cold and casket black and the long reach of the morning had a terrible silence to it. (McCarthy, 2010: 136-137)

As dealt with in the chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities*, Freud states that power and control are both significant feelings when dealing with fear. The situations and objects which cause fear are related to the knowledge and feeling of power towards the world that surrounds us. Therefore, fear and anxiety arise when the external world no longer operates according to our basic needs and our knowledge of the world becomes obsolete, leaving us feeling powerless. The man and the boy find themselves in a world where they have absolutely no power or control. Everything similar to a society and civilization has broken down, and it is therefore the whole world that evokes fear and anxiety. There is no security because there are no places or situations where the two main characters have the slightest control over a situation. This destroyed new world is no longer a place of life, no longer a society where the individual has, at least to some extent, control over one's own destiny, which leaves the survivors feeling estranged to the whole world:

> He walked out in the gray light and stood and saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world. The cold relentless circling of the intestate earth. Darkness implacable. The blind dogs of the sun in their running. 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. (138)

This passage clearly shows why it is easy to feel fear in this post-apocalyptic setting. The earth is described as being "intestate", which is a word used to describe a person who dies without leaving behind a legitimate will. What is really being said here is that the world is dead, and no possible future or means of survival or guidance for the survivors have been left behind. In this world of total darkness, the life-giving sun has vanished. The survivors have no control or power in this world as it is described as "borrowed", meaning that there is limited time and no future. Every day is therefore a fight for survival, and a fight for power and control in order to minimize fear and keep on going. As the man has experienced the world before the apocalypse, he has therefore also experienced a world where he had a certain amount of power and control. However, as already mentioned, the boy has not experienced anything other than the destroyed world that they are travelling in. According to Freud, it is the power to recognize dangers that makes us fearful, meaning that children are often unaware of surrounding dangers, due to lack of experience with dangers. This is clearly shown in the difference between the man and the boy's attitude towards strangers, as seen when they meet the old man Ely:

> I see, the man said.
>
> The boy turned and looked at him.
>
> I know what the question is, the man said. The answer is no.
>
> What's the question?
>
> Can we keep him. We can't.
>
> I know.
>
> You know.
>
> Yeah.

All right.

Can we give him something else?

Let's see how he does with this. (174-175)

The boy is more fearless throughout the novel than the man is, because he has never experienced what civilization feels like. As such, he never experienced what it feels like to be secure, not only in connection to dealing with the bad guys, but also secure in the way that you know where your next meal is coming from and where you are going to spend the night.

One of the main reasons of the man's precautions is not only that he has a memory of a world that is a complete contrast, but also because he has experienced the actual apocalypse and is traumatized. The man is repressing his traumatization by never talking about the pre-apocalyptic world. The man has a need to share the memories of the pre-apocalyptic world with the boy, but "he could not construct for the child's pleasure the world he'd lost without constructing the loss as well [...] That he could not enkindle in the heart of the child what was ashes in his own." (163) The man cannot bring himself to tell the boy about what once was, because it is a complete contrast to the present situation they are finding themselves in, and the hope for rebuilding what once was is non-existing. As the reader of a novel with as depressing a setting as this, one might expect that the man would think back on the pre-apocalyptic world with a sense of longing and desire. However, the man is so focused on the survival of him and the boy that he sees positive dreams as a sign of weakness, and that they have given up:

> One night the boy woke from a dream and would not tell him what it was.
>
> You dont have to tell me, the man said. It's all right.
>
> I'm scared.
>
> It's all right.
>
> No it's not.
>
> It's just a dream.
>
> I'm really scared.
>
> I know.

The boy turned away. The man held him. Listen to me, he said.

What.

When your dreams are of some world that never was or some world that never will be and you are happy again then you will have given up. Do you understand? And you cant give up. I wont let you. (201-202)

The man truly believes that in order to survive they need to stay in the present and stay closely related to the reality they are living. Dreams and hallucinations about a positive past or future are therefore not considered positive, as they have nothing to do with the devastated world in *The Road*.

A sense of security

In a post-apocalyptic wasteland where fear and anxiety are constant companions, the man and the boy try to find safety and a sense of ontological security through daily routines and repetitions. As already mentioned in the chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities*, ontological security is measured in terms of stability and continuity in individual experiences, which means that ontological security is not contingent upon the external world. Throughout the novel, the man and the boy try to follow the same pattern of travelling, in order to create some sort of security. They have to avoid open spaces, never stay too long in the same place and stick together - all routines of basic survival. However, routines and repetitions only create a perceived feeling of ontological security. In *The Road*, the man and the boy try to attain this through routinely wandering the road in search of a better future, but searching for change negates the search for ontological security as change challenges stability. By constantly moving through different locations because it is too dangerous to stay in the same place for too long, the man and the boy do not have any chance of finding stability as they are being pushed around by external dangers like the cold temperatures, the lack of food and the risk of the bad guys finding them. The boy and the man live from day to day, drifting around the countryside, aiming for the South and the coast, without really knowing if reaching it will make any difference regarding their living situation. At one point in the novel, the man and the boy find a shelter under the ground, which seems like it has been made as a preparation for any kind of devastating disaster. This shelter is a refuge from the dangers of the outside world, as it is filled with canned food, water, warmth and new clothing; however, the man does not feel comfortable staying there too long, as he believes that the bad guys will eventually find them:

We'll just have to take what we can.

Do you think somebody is coming?

Yes. Sometime.

You said nobody was coming.

I didn't mean ever.

I wish we could live here.

I know.

We could be on the lookout.

We are on the lookout.

What if some good guys came?

Well, I don't think we're likely to meet any good guys on the road.

We're on the road.

I know.

If you're on the lookout all the time does that mean that you're scared all the time?

Well. I suppose you have to be scared enough to be on the lookout in the first place. To be cautious. Watchful. (McCarthy, 2010: 160)

The one place they find where they have food and a chance at security, they have to leave for fear of discovery. Fear can therefore be seen as the driving force that keeps them moving forward, although the man knows that they will never find a safe place in this post-apocalyptic setting; "The child had his own fantasies. How things would be in the south. Other children. He tried to keep a rein on this but his heart was not in it. Whose would be?" (55)

The fear of Cannibalism

In *The Road*, one of the shared fears between the man and the boy is the fear of open spaces. As stated in the chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities*, the characters of post-apocalyptic fiction tend to be afraid of open spaces due to the perception of real dangers thriving in these spaces, and *The*

Road is no exception. The man and the boy must travel the road in order to reach their destination, however they know that they are not the only ones travelling this road:

> An army in tennis shoes, tramping. Carrying three-foot lengths of pipe with leather wrappings. [...] The phalanx following carried spears or lances tasseled with ribbons, the long blades hammered out of trucksprings in some crude forge upcountry. [...] Behind them came wagons drawn by slaves in harness and piled with goods of war and after that the women, perhaps a dozen in number, some of them pregnant, and lastly a supplementary consort of catamites illclothed against the cold and fitted in dogcollars and yoked each to each." (McCarthy, 2010: 96)

These other survivors who are travelling the road, and who earlier in this chapter have been described as the bad guys, are the reason why the two main characters fear the open spaces, as they increase the chances of being caught. The constant fear of meeting the wrong kind of people has made the man paranoid, which according to Freud is what happens when neurotic fear is experienced as real fear. The man fears that they will meet other people on the road, because he questions if there are any other good guys on the road besides him and the boy. The world has turned into a place where hopes and dreams are shattered and the main focus is on basic survival. The man knows that these other people on the road will do almost anything in order to survive, meaning that all ethical and moral codes have vanished along with any sign of civilization. As mentioned, the destroyed world, and the unforgiving landscape in *The Road* proves to be a big challenge for the two main characters. Yet, the thing that really makes them consider giving up is the fact that the few other human beings that they come across, have lost all sense of humanity, turning on each other by keeping slaves and resorting to cannibalism. This means that beside having trouble staying alive due to the few resources left in the world, the man and the boy must usually hide or escape in fear of being enslaved or eaten by these cannibals of the new age.

According to the chapter *Social Fears and Insecurities*, fear and anxieties can be experienced both individually and based on a common socialized ground. As fears and anxieties are fundamental parts of civilization, civilization is an important notion in post-apocalyptic narratives. In *The Road* there is no society and the closest thing resembling a civilization are the groups of thugs who are driven by hunger and lust, and have perfected all sorts of terrifying skills to satisfy their basic instincts. Remembering Frank Kermode's statement that societal transitions lead to anxiety, especially the man's fears are well founded, as he has experienced this transition from society and

civilization to a wasteland without any ethical and moral codes. The breakdown of civilization and rejection of ethical considerations among the bad guys have resulted in uncertainty and mistrust, leaving the man constantly paranoid of running into other people on the road, with good reason:

> He'd seen it all before. Shapes of dried blood in the stubble grass and gray coils of viscera where the slain had been field-dressed and hauled away. The wall beyond held a frieze of human heads, all faced alike, dried and caved with their taut grins and shrunken eyes. They wore gold rings in their leather ears and in the wind their sparse ratty hair twisted about on their skulls. The teeth in their sockets like dental molds, the crude tattoos etched in some homebrewed woad faded in the beggared sunlight. […] The heads not truncheoned shapeless had been flayed of their skins and the raw skulls painted and signed across the forehead in a scrawl and one white bone skull had the plate sutures etched carefully in ink like a blueprint for assembly. (94-95)

In *The Road* McCarthy puts a lot of effort into showing exactly how dehumanized and pitiless humans can become with each other in a post-apocalyptic setting. He not only pushes the man's perception of being human, but also the reader's. By exploring the fears and anxieties associated with the degradation of human kind, like when the man and the boy come across "a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit" (212), McCarthy forces the reader to consider what ethical and moral codes are worth discarding when it comes to the survival of oneself and one's child. Cannibalism can be seen as one of the most despicable crimes and also speaks highly to ethical stands; therefore this will be elaborated on later in this analysis.

On the Road to the Future

In the post-apocalyptic setting of *The Road*, one of the biggest fears is fear of the future. As the world has become a wasteland and society and civilization have collapsed, it leaves almost no hope for a somewhat bright future:

> 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 white of tooth and eye carrying charred and anonymous tins of food in nylon nets like shoppers in the commissaries of hell. (McCarthy, 2010: 192)

Based on the man's knowledge of the world he knows that rebuilding a world that is as degraded as this one, is not a real option. The boy, however, has not experienced the world before the apocalypse and therefore has a naive perspective on the future, which is seen through the following conversation between the man and the boy:

> He looked at his father. What are our long term goals? he said.
>
> What?
>
> Our long term goals.
>
> Where did you hear that?
>
> I dont know.
>
> No, where did you?
>
> You said it.
>
> When?
>
> A long time ago.
>
> What was the answer?
>
> I dont know.
>
> Well. I dont know either. Come on. It's getting dark. (170-171)

The fact that there are no long-term goals, because there is no future to plan for, is a fear that predominates the entire novel, and especially the man's mindset. The man's illness and the threat of his impending death is a great motivator for him, since he fears leaving his son alone to fend for himself in a world with no future. Furthermore, despite the fact that the man knows the world will never be the same as it was before the apocalypse, he still tries to define and implement moral and ethical values in his son, by refusing to abandon all belief. This is not an easy task in a world where simple basic needs like warmth, food, water and safety are difficult to obtain. The man repeatedly fears that his ambitions towards the future will end up alienating his son from him, as the boy was born after the apocalypse and therefore is unfamiliar with almost all the references that the man uses;

He turned and looked at the boy. Maybe he understood for the first time that to the boy he was himself an alien. A being from a planet that no longer existed. The tales of which were suspect. He could not construct for the child's pleasure the world he'd lost without constructing the loss as well and he thought perhaps the child had known this better than him. (163)

The fear of leaving his son in a futureless world is further aggravated by the ghost of his late wife. The mother of the boy did not think of them as survivors, but rather "walking dead in a horror film." (57) She saw no way of escaping this cruel world of destruction and decided to commit suicide and leave the man and the boy alone in a world of despair. Her choice to take her own life is especially influenced by her fear of the day the bad guys would catch up with them, as she anticipated that such an encounter would end up with her and the boy being raped, killed and eaten. The mother's pessimism has made an impact on the man's way of keeping hope alive in the boy. The mother would have preferred to kill the boy too instead of exposing him to this dehumanized world:

I'd take him with me if it weren't for you. You know I would. It's the right thing to do. [...] We used to talk about death, she said. We don't any more. Why is that? I don't know. It's because it's here. There's nothing left to talk about. (58)

The father's inability to surrender to his circumstances and the fact that the more terrifying things he encounters on the road adds weight to his wife's arguments, attest to the man's unwillingness to give into his fears. The man sometimes thinks about following his wife's advice to kill the boy so that he does not have to experience the harsh reality of the world, and the man does not have to worry about the boy being captured by the bad guys. However, the man chooses to hang on to the frail hope that out there somewhere there will be a better future for his son, meaning that he can prove his wife wrong in believing that giving in to fear is the best solution.

The feeling of fear that the man feels in leaving his child behind in a world of cruelty, is directly connected to McCarthy's own fear. In a famous interview with Oprah Winfrey, McCarthy admitted that the inspiration to *The Road* came when he was staying at a hotel room in El Paso in Texas with his young boy, at that time about the same age as the boy in *The Road*. While his son was sleeping in the middle of the night, McCarthy looked out the window while he wondered how the view would be in 50 or 100 years, while thinking about his little boy. (Conlon, 2007) Both the man and

McCarthy himself live and write under the pressure of knowing that they will not be able to protect their child forever. This forces them both to preserve hope and faith in a future that is difficult to picture because of how the world of both *The Road* and reality are perceived. As such, McCarthy and the man both attempt to find hope despite a deep-rooted feeling of desolation, while wanting to protect human decency when all ethical and moral values are collapsing. By identifying with a father and son who try to save the world from complete annihilation, the reader faces the fears and anxieties of both the world in *The Road* and in contemporary time. The novel deals with many ethical considerations, especially when it is morally correct to fight for survival or save yourself by dying, which is why the next section will look at *The Road* in connection to ethical criticism.

The Ethical Road

According to the chapter *Exploring Ethical Criticism*, it is almost impossible for the reader of a fictional text to part himself from the ethics and morality in the real world, while reading the book, because the same moral categories which are encountered in real life are also applied to the fictional characters. Ethical criticism therefore tries to form a relationship between the reader and the specific piece of fiction. This section of the analysis of *The Road* will focus on some of the moral and ethical considerations that both the reader and characters experience throughout the novel. This will be done by keeping in mind that one of the aims of ethical criticism is to make the reader understand that they are ratifying real ethical values within themselves, but also ratifying ethical values within the story by identifying with the fictional characters. As has been made clear in the main chapter *From Caution to Confrontation*, ethical criticism functions as an overall guideline for this dissertation, with religion and fear and anxiety used as analytical tools in order to comment on post-apocalyptic fiction. This last part of the analysis of *The Road* will therefore be a recapitulation of the main points of the analysis so far, only elaborated to include the ethical and moral considerations of both the characters and the reader, in order to obtain a sense of ethical criticism. Just like the three other novels analyzed in this project, *The Road* can be analyzed as a narrative that moves beyond being a cautionary tale, as it has progressed from warning against the potential dangers in the future, to dealing with the time after the cataclysm. McCarthy shows a destroyed world sometime in the future, which is highly influenced by the choices made in the present. The choices made in contemporary time have created a vision of a future landscape where the past is so far from reality that it is somewhat painful to remember:

Sometimes the child would ask him questions about the world that for him was not even a memory. He thought hard how to answer. There is no past. What would you like? But he stopped making things up because those things were not true either and the telling made him feel bad." (McCarthy, 2010: 55)

Despite the fact that the post-apocalyptic setting presented in *The Road* does not seem to have any connection to contemporary society, it is a tale of America, and because the two main characters are still living by certain moral and ethical codes, it is possible for the reader to identify with the two.

Good or bad?

The main theme of *The Road* is what happens to us as human beings, and especially what happens to our ethics in situations where the only solution is basic survival. Unlike other post-apocalyptic novels like *World War Z*, *The Road* does not deal with a catastrophe, which in some way has been caused by external forces like aliens or zombies that threaten the survival of the human race. As already argued earlier in this chapter, the end of the world in *The Road* comes from social and ethical values collapsing. The startling, terrifying setting of *The Road* is highlighted even more because McCarthy does not need to make use of other-worldly creatures like aliens in order for him to depict the degree of decay, as it is the decline of humanity that helps create this effect. As mentioned in the section on the religious aspect of *The Road*, McCarthy spends a fair amount of time in the novel on the notion of what it means being one of the good guys or being one of the bad guys. Seen from an ethical point of view, the differences between the good guys in form of the man and the boy, and the bad guys in form of the bandits travelling the road in large groups are in fact not that distinct. The man and the boy do not eat other humans, nor do they kill other people unless it is a matter of self-defense. However, the man still kills another man when the boy is threatened, they scavenge, they steal and they try their best to avoid other people because the man does not trust them. From an ethical point of view, the line between being good and being bad seems to vanish when it comes to a setting based on pure survival. Judging the characters of *The Road* as being either good or bad, is therefore left to the subjective opinion of the reader, as it becomes a matter of identifying ethical considerations within the reader, and thereby be able to identify with the characters.

In the novel, McCarthy also depicts how individual ethical and moral codes will eventually break down in a world where these codes are not being practiced in a civilized and social context. As the novel progresses, the reader senses how the man is slowly digressing alongside the unethical events

that he experiences along with the boy. At the end of the novel, the cart, which the man and the boy have been pushing along with all their belongings, is stolen. When the man and the boy manage to find the cart and the thief, the man completely loses his moral stance, because he knows that the cart holds the key to their survival. He forces the thief to take off all his clothes, leaving him to a sure death:

> Put the clothes in.
>
> He bent and scooped up the rags in his arms and placed them on top of the shoes. He stood there holding himself. Dont do this, man.
>
> You didnt mind doing it to us.
>
> I'm begging you.
>
> Papa, the boy said.
>
> Come on. Listen to the kid.
>
> You tried to kill us.
>
> I'm starving, man. You'd have done the same.
>
> You took everything.
>
> Come on, man. I'll die.
>
> I'm going to leave you the way you left us. (McCarthy, 2010: 275-276)

The only thing that really separates the good from the bad in *The Road* is that they do not indulge themselves in cannibalism, not matter what. The idea of a world where few survivors of a seemingly global cataclysm turn on each other in order to secure their own survival is so unethical that most readers will feel estranged from this group of people, and classify them as indeed; the bad guys. The unethical aspect lies in the notion of suddenly thinking of one human as less worthy of survival than another. It is not only the reader that feels estranged to this idea of sacrificing humans in order to survive, but also the two main characters. This is evident in the scene where the protagonist discovers a cellar where he finds a group of naked people who are held captive and being slowly dismembered by their captors, to provide for their next meal:

Christ, he said. Oh Christ.

He turned and grabbed the boy. Hurry, he said. Hurry. He'd dropped the lighter. Not time to look. He pushed the boy up the stairs. Help us they called. [...]

Hurry. For God's sake hurry.

He shoved the boy through the hatch and sent him sprawling. He stood and got hold of the door and swung it over and let it slam down and he turned to grab the boy but the boy had gotten up and was doing his little dance of terror. (116-17)

However, as if the idea of cannibalism is not difficult enough to cope with for both the reader and the man and the boy, it is also made clear that some of the women being kept as slaves are pregnant. At one time in the novel, the two main characters stumble upon a "charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit." (212) The boy then asks his father where the bad guys have found the baby, to which he does not answer, probably because he cannot find the words to explain to his son that the baby comes from the pregnant woman they had seen the night before. These bad guys that also travel the road are breeding babies in order to keep themselves alive. As previously mentioned, in the post-apocalyptic novel *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood also plays with the idea of breeding, as animals are being crossbred in order to supply organs for human transplants, and the Crakers are created in an attempt to create the perfect being, free of human weaknesses. According to the chapter *Analyzing Oryx and Crake*, this form of breeding is unethical because creation is turned into a form of game, without thinking of the consequences. However, in *Oryx and Crake* the breeding that takes place is meant to be beneficial for the society as a whole, trying to secure the survival of civilization. In *The Road* the idea of impregnating the women in order to provide a meal, is only beneficial for the individual or small group of marauders, and not society as a whole. *The Road* is generally not a tale of the hopes of trying to rebuild society after an apocalyptic event has occurred, but rather how many ethical and moral codes these survivors can reject in order to secure their own individual survival.

What about the others?

The fact that there seems to be a general idea of securing individual survival means that the man and the boy rarely meet other people on the road. However, it is crucial for the field of ethical criticism to deal with the notion of how to relate to others, as the idea of ethical criticism survives on the fact that we never stop being social creatures, as stated in the chapter *Exploring Ethical Criticism*. In *The Road* there is a need for isolation, as the different groups try to avoid each other

unless it is for unmoral reasons. Yet, the need for sociality is seen through the bond between the man and the boy, but also through the fact that they never abandon hope of there being other good guys out there somewhere:

> There are other good guys. You said so.
>
> Yes.
>
> So where are they?
>
> They're hiding.
>
> Who are they hiding from?
>
> From each other.
>
> Are there lots of them?
>
> We dont know.
>
> But some.
>
> Some. Yes.
>
> Is that true?
>
> Yes. That's true.
>
> But it might not be true.
>
> I think it's true.
>
> Okay.
>
> You dont believe me.
>
> I believe you. (McCarthy, 2010: 196)

The man is paranoid, and does not trust anyone other than his son. His horrible experiences has made him untrusting of all other people travelling the road, even an old and weak man like Ely, whom the man fears is a decoy placed by the bad guys.

In order to obtain a truly ethical relationship, it is necessary to judge a person as being good or at least not bad in any fashion, through moral features. However, the paranoia of the man becomes a

hindrance between the reader and the other survivors, as the reader never gets the chance to make any ethical judgment of these people, because the man will not allow them to come close. It is partly the man's traditional ethical considerations and experience in this new world that makes him extra cautious towards the other survivors. However, while these precautions can help by making sure that the man and the boy does not run into any bad guys, they can also prevent that the man and the boy ever meet the other good guys. Despite the fact that the world has been destroyed, and the only thing that really matters is the basic survival of the individual, the man still tries to instill some moral and ethical values in the boy, namely the old traditional moral values that he carries with him from the pre-apocalyptic world. The man's paranoia almost convinces the reader that the two main characters are the last good guys left in this post-apocalyptic world. However, as mentioned earlier, shortly after the man dies, the boy is actually approached by a small group of people who seem to be good people. It thereby seems like the boy has the perfect combination of old traditional moral values, mixed not with paranoia like his father, but an innocence and curiosity, which is required to survive in the post-apocalyptic wasteland.

To further comment on the concept on ethical criticism in relation to *The Road,* according to Gregory, human beings have a natural need to be part of some sort of grouping. In addition, ethical and moral considerations will always be a part of the social constellation of being human, because our idea of sociability is chosen and cultural dependent. In a world where most of the ethical and moral considerations have vanished due to the mere fight for survival like the one portrayed in *The Road*, this idea of being a part of some sort of grouping becomes even more important as it is crucial in order to survive:

> The one thing I can tell you is that you wont survive for yourself. I know because I would never have come this far. A person who had no one would be well advised to cobble together some passable ghost. Breathe it into being and coax it along with words of love. Offer it each phantom crumb and shield it from harm with your body. (59)

It is the man's wife that speaks these lines just before she leaves them and commits suicide in order to be released from the cruel, destroyed world. The point of this last discussion between the man and his wife is McCarthy's way of pointing out the significance of the relationship between the man and the boy. In order to survive the post-apocalyptic world, it is essential to have love for another

human being. Anyone who does not have this is advised to "cobble together some passable ghost", in order to create the feeling of not being alone. The man's wife describes that this ghost then should be protected against any dangers and offered "each phantom crumb", which is exactly how the man treats the boy. He does what he can to protect him against all the dangers on the road, be it bad weather or bad people, meanwhile constantly offering him whatever hope and scraps of food he might find. In return the boy becomes what reminds not only the man, but also the reader, that even in a world where everything known has been destroyed, it is still possible to hold on to your own moral and ethical values. The boy signifies the purest form of living, namely that which is directed morally and ethically, reminding the man and the reader that there is more to life than physical survival. The man's ethical and literal survival thereby depends on being concerned for the boy.

When to Live and when to Die?

In *The Road* McCarthy tries to show how it is to be human in an inhumane world, through the relationship between the man and the boy, and their sense of ethical responsibility. The strong bond between the man and the boy is ultimately what keeps them alive. Through the man it is stated, "That the boy was all that stood between him and death." (McCarthy, 2010: 29) meaning that the man would probably not have survived for long if he did not have the boy's survival in mind. However, despite the fact that the boy is a source of hope, McCarthy creates a setting so devastating that the man throughout the novel is constantly debating whether it is more sensible to protect his son against the evil elements of the post-apocalyptic world, or kill his son in order to spare him a fate worse than death. McCarthy stresses the level of destruction and the crucial conditions of this post-apocalyptic world, by raising the moral question of when it is time to fight for survival and when it is time to simply give up because death is a better option than living. The suspense of the novel grows alongside the characters' fight to stay alive. However, the real suspense comes from whether the man will eventually use the last bullet that remains in his gun to kill the boy in order to keep him from growing up in a ruined world.

> They lay listening. Can you do it? When the time comes? When the time comes there will be no time. Now is the time. Curse God and die. What if it doesnt fire? It has to fire. What if it doesnt fire. Could you crush that beloved skull with a rock? Is there such a being within you of which you know nothing? Can there be? Hold him in your arms. Just so. The soul is quick. Pull him toward you. Kiss him. Quickly. (120)

As the storyline progresses, and the man's health declines rapidly and marks his impending death, the boy begins to realize that the death of his father will leave him alone in this cruel world. As the boy has never experienced anything other than the post-apocalyptic setting, and the company of his father, following his father into death seems more appealing than being alone:

> Just take me with you. Please.
>
> I cant.
>
> Please, Papa.
>
> I cant. I cant hold my son dead in my arms. I thought I could but I cant. (298)

In this last scene between the man and the boy, the man cannot fulfill his promise of not leaving his son behind. The man knows that in the face of the post-apocalyptic world, the moral thing to do would be to kill the boy and save him from an uncertain fate. However, the man is affected by the pre-apocalyptic set of ethical codes, meaning that he cannot kill his own son, despite the fact that it means that he is leaving him fighting for survival in a world where you cannot make it alone, as mentioned above.

Throughout the novel, there is a theme of general fear for the future. The man is fighting to adjust to the new circumstances of the post-apocalyptic world, while trying to impose some morality in the boy. This general fear of the future makes the remaining survivors suspicious of each other, and creates a fear of the unknown future, but even more a fear of the known in the sense of the cannibals travelling the road, making the two main characters continue towards the coast and the unknown. The man fears the future because he believes that it is non-existing; "There is no later. This is later." (56) Although the future seems non-existing, thinking or talking about the past is not a possible substitute and the reader gets very little information on the pre-apocalyptic world during the novel. The man does not want to dwell on positive memories of the past, as he needs to focus on the current situation in order to secure the boy. However, another reason as to why the man does not want to talk too much about the past, is because he feels a form of guilt. It can be seen as natural for people that are a part of a post-apocalyptic world to feel guilty and worry about the chances of whether or not the apocalypse had actually happened, if certain measures had been taken to prevent it. Thus, the notion of Beck's risk society, as explained in *Social Fears and Insecurities,* also becomes effective, as it deals with the consequences of previous social ventures. Ethically, the man has even more reason to feel guilty, as he has not only inflicted the horrible fate on himself but also

his son, who has been born into a world without much hope. The idea of people experiencing guilt because they adhere to a "what if" mentality, is further stressed when the man and the boy meet Ely:

> I just keep going. I knew this was coming.
>
> You knew it was coming?
>
> Yeah. This or something like it. I always believed in it.
>
> Did you try to get ready for it?
>
> No. What would you do?
>
> I dont know.
>
> People were always getting ready for tomorrow. I didnt believe in that. Tomorrow wasnt getting ready for them. It didnt even know they were there.
>
> I guess not.
>
> Even if you knew what to do you wouldnt know what to do. You wouldnt know if you wanted to do it or not. (179)

If McCarthy had placed the story of the man and the boy closer to the actual apocalypse, or had used many pages to explain exactly what went wrong, *The Road* would be considered a cautionary tale. Yet, because McCarthy is focusing on the post-apocalyptic element of the story, the novel has moved beyond being a cautionary tale and is instead a tale of what to do when the disaster has happened, and not a tale of trying to prevent this disaster, which explains the depressing mood of the novel.

Concluding Remarks

To conclude the analysis of *The Road* the following section will sum up the main findings in relation to the framework presented in the main chapter *Framing an Ethical America.*

In this dissertation, *The Road* has been analyzed according to the theoretical framework of ethical criticism. Like *The Peshouse* and *World Made by Hand*, *The Road* does not offer insight in a specific apocalyptic event, meaning that McCarthy manages to connect with the reader by tapping

into a variety of contemporary fears. It is in relation to fear that the reader can relate to McCarthy, not only as an author, but also as a human being of the pre-apocalyptic world, as *The Road* is a direct depiction of his fear of the future for his son. In *The Road* fear is the driving force that motivates the man and the boy to keep fighting for survival, as their total loss of power and control have left them in a world without any sense of security. In order to restrain some of the fear of the post-apocalyptic world, the man must not lose his traditional ethical values, but at the same time survival is a question of not lingering on the past, as any positive memories will create a loss of concentration on keeping the boy alive. Through the element of fear, McCarthy manages to illustrate the extent of human degradation in times of crisis.

In *The Road* McCarthy depicts the aftermath of a biblical apocalypse by offering the reader a clear distinction of good and bad. However, as the novel progresses the line between good and evil becomes dissolved as the fight for survival collides with the pre-apocalyptic set of moral and ethical codes. In a cold, destroyed landscape, the road that the man and the boy are travelling is described as godless. Although religion does not seem an obvious factor in *The Road* , as all moral and ethical conscience have been replaced by the fight for basic survival, it is in fact religion that keeps the man moving on as he figures as a prophet and the boy his prophecy. McCarthy has created a world, where the only way the man obtains salvation, is by protecting the only truly good thing left in the world, which is the boy because of his innocence compared to the immoral post-apocalyptic world. In a world where God has given up and left the sinners to die, the man puts all his faith into the young boy, giving him the status of a moral compass, or even a personification of God. In a true biblical apocalypse, good will prevail, which is also the case in *The Road*, as the boy manages to survive and find other good guys in the end. The boy becomes a symbol of there being more to life than physical survival, by representing the moral and ethical mindset of the pre-apocalyptic world, thereby giving the reader the chance to identify with the boy.

The Road depicts a post-apocalyptic setting where focus lies in securing individual survival and not collective survival. McCarthy thereby eliminates all sense of civilization, however, still stressing the importance of being in a loving relationship as seen through the man and the boy. *The Road* moves beyond being a cautionary tale by dealing solely with how human kind moves on from the end of the world, through the ongoing discussion of when it is time to fight for survival and when it is time to spare yourself the pain of being a part of a dissolved world.

Consequently, the analyses of the four novels have proven that there are differing ways in which people deal with the aftermath of a fictive apocalypse. The analyses will be used in the following discussion as a means of relating fiction to reality.

From Fiction to Reality

The aim of this chapter is to form a discussion based on the findings in the main chapters above, namely *Framing an Ethical America* and *Facing Post-apocalyptic Narratives*. When dealing with a corpus as extensive as this dissertation does, it becomes important to look at both the depth of the corpus, as has been done in the analysis, and at the bigger picture. Therefore, the four novels, respectively *Oryx and Crake, The Pesthouse, World Made by Hand* and *The Road* will be contextualized with ethical criticism and contemporary America in order to comment on how fiction and reality intertwine in post-apocalyptic narratives. The three analyses of the four novels have previously been relatively isolated from each other, focusing on a close reading of each novel in relation to the three directions of respectively ethical criticism, religion and fear and anxiety. It is the intention to compile the findings from the analyses and thereby be able to discuss the novels and their relation to reality.

The framework of ethical criticism triggers certain contemplations that relate to the fictional work and its transition into reality. Whether the novels presented are products of a certain culture or they themselves create cultural expectations is difficult to answer, however through ethical criticism it becomes possible to comment on the relationship between author, reader and novel while at the same time taking into account the ethical and moral values that are triggered in each novel. Given the extent of the corpus, it is important to acknowledge both the similarities and the differences that exist between the novels. In the main chapter *Facing Post-apocalyptic Narratives*, the four novels have been discussed individually within the frame of ethical criticism focusing especially on the presence of fear and religion, but now the focus will be on the novels as a unit, representing post-apocalyptic fiction in general.

United we Fall

Finding similarities between the four novels in mention is not a difficult task, however, some of these need to be highlighted in order to discuss what sets the narratives apart as well. Besides the American setting, an overall common theme in the four novels is the death of civilization or societal degradation. Although society is reborn as exemplified in *World Made by Hand* or totally destroyed as in *The Road*, the old world dies in favor of a new order that is influenced by the traumatic, catastrophic events that lead to the apocalypse. Consequently, this feature is what places the novels within the frame of post-apocalyptic fiction and thus binds them together. Worth noticing too, when

dealing with the similarities of the four narratives is the American setting. Although they are set within different timeframes, they all occur within the borders of what we today know as the United States. Thus, figuratively, the man and the boy tread the same road as Margaret and Franklin, while Snowman travels the same forest as Robert Earle walks in. They may belong within different temporalities, but their point of departure has been the same, namely America. This is a strong indication that all the novels belong within the same range of literature and that there is a foundation for using these novels within the same framework.

Although the attitudes towards certain ethical issues differ with each novel, a common feature is the strong presence of morality and ethicality. They all, in one way or another, comment on the ethical nature of humanity and how ethical and moral issues are brought to life in post-apocalyptic realities. This is a common feature in the novels, however it is also what sets them apart, as they have differing ways of commenting on and relating to the ethical choices that people make in the wake of an apocalypse. Naturally, the ethicality of the novels has to be seen in light of ethical criticism, which we use in this dissertation to gain an insight into the novels and how they can be read. The narrative in itself and the literary terms of character, plot and theme are ubiquitous and fairly simple to define. However, dealing with reader responses to the novels grants access to a new dimension where the readers themselves are co-authors of the narratives by inserting their own moral and ethical values.

The idea that it is the entire American civilization that falls, apparently without ever seeking or receiving help from other nations, further stresses the similarities between the novels. This may be a reflection of the nationalistic tendencies that lie deep within the American consciousness. Being the almost non-contested superpower of the twentieth century has left its mark on the American mentality, as has been commented on in the chapter *American Fears and Terror*. Furthermore, each novel has been written in the aftermath of September 11, and thus, willingly or not, reflects the trauma of the event. Even though the novels differ in the directness of their commentary, they are all distinctively commenting on American society and culture. Here it may be prudent to say that whether the novels function as cautionary tales or something beyond that is debatable and will be commented on later in this chapter. Suffice it to say for now is that Atwood, Crace, Kunstler and McCarthy have created post-apocalyptic narratives that transgress the borders of fiction and permeates into reality. The settings and scenes of the novels are eerily similar to what is imaginable for people in contemporary time and this is what triggers the response as a reader. The authors make use of the known in a way that both haunts and excites the reader, but at the same time they all, in

one way or another, play with the reader's imagination. They do this by only alluding to the actual disaster that brought on the apocalypse, which makes the reader wonder and guess how the world suddenly turned into the post-apocalyptic reality of each novel. *Oryx and Crake* stands out in this connection, as the reason for the death of humanity is explained in detail through Snowman. However in the flashbacks it is made clear that the United States is unstable and divided even before Crake administers the BlyssPluss pill that ends up destroying the world. The reason for the instability is never fully explained, although it is made clear that genetic research carries some of the blame.

Undoubtedly, the four novels share numerous features that all link them to post-apocalyptic fiction. The decline of human morality, the religious allusions and the sense of danger that leads to an increased fear and decreased sense of security, evoke insecurities about the future, both within the narrative and in the readers themselves. How readers react to the post-apocalyptic setting of the novels will be discussed shortly, however the differences that exist between the novels will be in focus first, as ethical and moral questions are challenged when looking at the differing ways that each novel handles the apocalypse and its aftermath.

Differing Roads from Hell

As has been made clear through the analyses, each novel has an individual approach as to how the apocalypse affects society. Whether society as an entity has been almost completely eradicated, as is depicted in *The Road* or it has survived, albeit in a modified constellation as is depicted in *World Made by Hand*, there still seems to linger an overall question: How can we, mankind, handle the rebuilding of society and are there limits to the damages that we are able to repair? This question can be asked of each of the novels and they will each present a different attempt at answers. The novels enter into a discussion about the outcome of a given apocalyptic event and each proposes a vision of a future that can be read and interpreted by the reader. It is precisely in the different visions that the strength of the corpus chosen for this dissertation shows, as it becomes possible to discuss various outcomes of the apocalypse. To return to the aforementioned question, the first part of it can be answered differently, depending on the novel in mind. Referring to both *World Made by Hand* and *The Pesthouse* the answer seems fairly straight forward. Mankind rebuilds society by creating local communities or by entering into small bands of people that share common ground and, to some extent, protect each other from outside harm. In doing this, the world may regress into a state of being that is similar to pre-modern times: however, it survives as a unit. This way of rebuilding society naturally presupposes that the apocalyptic event has not completely destroyed the

world and human kind. This is especially where *Oryx and Crake* and *The Road* stand out from Crace and Kunstler's novels. In these post-apocalyptic settings, the rebuilding of society is impossible due to respectively the supposed destruction of human kind, with only Snowman as a lone survivor, and the near total devastation of the American continent. As the Crakers are humanoids, they do not count as an actual rebuilt human society, which makes Snowman the only human left to carry on society. Arguably, the man and the boy in *The Road* form their own community, but the destruction of the land forces them to keep moving, never settling anywhere. The notion of a home is completely obsolete in these narratives, further underlining the impossibility of rebuilding a functioning society. The second part of the abovementioned question dealing with the limits of the damages that can be repaired, is far more difficult, since the answer to a great extent is left to the reader's interpretation. The question also depends on the understanding of the word repair, since there is a great difference in rebuilding something to make it exactly as it was or create a new beginning. Here, the reader's understanding of how the world ought to behave after an apocalypse becomes especially important, linking this question directly to ethical criticism. The subjective opinion imposed by the reader interferes with the message of the novel itself and further underlines the difficulties in both analyzing and discussing these novels. The despondent, yet somewhat functioning society presented in *World Made by Hand* seems to hold to the idea that it is possible to rebuild society and that the new society that rises from the ashes of the old one may be better in many ways, as it focuses on familiarity, unity and belief. The hope that emanates throughout this novel is in stark contrast to McCarthy's vision of the future. *The Road* seems to suggest that there are indeed limits to what we as human beings can repair, both physically and in spirit. *Oryx and Crake* and *The Pesthouse* lie in the middle of these two attitudes, suggesting that a rebuilding of society is possible: however, it is a different sort of society that has nothing to do with the way society is structured in contemporary times.

Thus, the novels present different answers as to how a society is rebuilt, which also relates to the actual apocalyptic event. While *The Road* represents an apocalyptic wasteland where any ideas of rebuilding are made impossible by a raging climate that threatens the lives of everyone left on the continent of America, *The Pesthouse* represents a world where the apocalyptic event lies a thousand years in the past. In this America, the climate too is harsh and unwelcoming, however this has been a long time coming, developing over an unknown number of years. Therefore, an increasing wave of emigrants has sought transport across the ocean into what they believe is a better life. Those who do not wish to leave have formed different variations of societies, depending on their ethical and

moral standings. The world may not be repaired from the apocalyptic event that destroyed contemporary American society, however new structures of life have taken over, creating a more or less functioning population. The all-consuming notion in *The Pesthouse* is the drive to board the ships and sail across the sea. Even though not everyone seeks to abandon America, they make a living off of those who do. Society is thus controlled by the urge to emigrate and although evidence of previous technological prowess alludes to the grandeur of the former America, people are not reminiscing or wishing to bring back the times which the great structures and metal heaps are a witnesses of. A supplementing question arises when discussing the (in) ability to rebuild: that is, should we even rebuild? While a majority of people in Crace's narrative seem to want to escape from America, not rebuild it, *Oryx and Crake* offers another point of view, reflected in Snowman's desperate attempt to remember words from the past and the past in general. While the novels may differ slightly on the question, they all project a desire for wanting to rebuild or at least wanting to survive. In *The Road*, even the man, who seems to be of the opinion that the state of America is hopeless, has a hope that things will somehow get better. As such, there is no straight answer to the question if we should rebuild society and the novels leave the interpretation of this in the hands of the readers. However, it can be discussed whether or not the authors are suggesting their own opinion through the narratives and thus influences the reader one way or the other.

Beyond Salvation?

To continue discussing the novels and their differing takes on post-apocalyptic living, another question comes into mind: namely, are we beyond salvation? The use of religion and religious allegories in the novels suggests that we are not, but the answer differs, depending on the novel in question. In *The Road* it has been analyzed that good wins over evil, but the bleak setting and the destruction of all sustaining life forms make it difficult to imagine a positive outcome. As has been mentioned before *The Road* stands out, which is also the case when discussing whether salvation of the human race is possible or probable. The characters and setting that McCarthy has created is facing an imminent resource depletion, which threatens to destroy every life form left in America. Thus it is difficult to imagine how civilization and society can be saved in the face of extinction. The only hope that is present takes the form of the reader's identification with the main characters. Hope therefore lies in the man's salvation and the boy's survival and not in the survival of society. The decisively bleak and depressive setting of *The Road* makes it difficult as a reader to imagine any form of salvation. Mankind has been judged and found wanting, left to struggle in the post-apocalyptic wasteland. The degradation of the land almost mirrors the downfall of mankind as

people resort to murder and even cannibalism to survive. This dark portrayal of a near future is contrasted by the post-apocalyptic reality in *World Made by Hand*, where society is being reformed to fit the new realities of the world. The society that is being rebuilt in Union Grove is in many ways portrayed as being better than what preceded it. The rush and stress of modern America has been removed and replaced by a more relaxed attitude. Without the threat of total resource depletion, people are able to carry on their everyday lives, even enjoying their newfound freedom. Therefore, it is possible to argue that salvation in *World Made by Hand* actually lies in the apocalypse itself, and even though people experience hard times post apocalypse, they manage to create a strong community based on familiarity and trust. Mankind is not beyond salvation in Kunstler's narrative and actually we are saved twice-over; once by the apocalypse itself and another time by forming new communities to help weather the storm.

The presence of religion in both narratives cannot give us the answer as to whether mankind is beyond salvation, however it alludes to the belief in a higher power. Even in the dark, bleak reality of *The Road*, the man finds some comfort in believing in God, despite all the hardships. He often contemplates how the boy represents God himself and by doing this he transfers his own hopes of salvation onto the innocence of a child. Even though religion in a traditional sense may not be present in the post-apocalyptic reality of *The Road,* spirituality is everywhere and in every action that the man does. He strongly believes that the boy is pure and good, and thus deserves salvation. As such, despite all the horrors of McCarthy's world, humanity is not beyond salvation and hope is retained in the boy and the family he eventually joins. However, as a reader it is nearly impossible to imagine a positive outcome because of the depleted state of the setting. The future of the boy is thus uncertain, but it does not change the fact that salvation is still in one way or another obtainable, even though it may not be equated with actually surviving. This poses an interesting point of discussion, as the term salvation, much like repair in the first question of this chapter, can be understood differently. Salvation may mean survival in a physical sense or it may allude to a spiritual salvation, where the ethical and moral codes of the character are being honored and thus salvation is at hand, although survival may not be. What is salvation then? Is Snowman in *Oryx and Crake* experiencing salvation as he survived the apocalypse or is he simply a survivor that has no chance of reaching salvation? Does Margaret in *The Pesthouse* feel closer to salvation when she stays with the Finger Baptists, than she does when she is with Franklin? As is clear, salvation can be interpreted and used in different ways, depending on the character and the novel, but also to a large degree on the recipient and the author.

The questions that have been asked in this chapter all rely heavily on reader response and authorship. They are ethical questions that force us to relate to the novels in question and thus make our own judgment of them. Ethical criticism sheds light on the relationship between author, novel and reader, while at the same time looking at the ethical and moral issues that can occur in for example literature.

The similarities and differences in the four novels mark that there are different takes on what constitutes an apocalypse and its post-apocalyptic societies, but the important thing to remember is that it is contingent on the reader engaging in the narrative and applying their own ethics.

Author, Reader, Novel: A Symbiotic Trinity

The decision to use ethical criticism as a tool for analyzing, understanding and discussing the main corpus has paved the way for a discussion of the relationship between respectively the author, the reader and the novel. These three units share common ground and feed off each other in a way that makes it possible to discuss the relation between them. As has been stated previously, ethical criticism has often been criticized for merely being a way of administering censorship on different works of art. However, as has been made clear both in the chapter *Exploring Ethical Criticism*, where ethical criticism is explained through Booth and Gregory, and in the analyses of the four novels, it is our opinion that ethical criticism is useful when dealing with literature and adds another dimension to the analysis and discussion of literature in general. To comment on reader response and the triangle of author, reader and novel is to tread on unsteady ground due to the subjective nature of the answers given. This is where ethical criticism function as a way of understanding the reader's response while at the same time acknowledging both the author and the novel in itself.

Readerly Responses

In post-apocalyptic narratives, ethical decisions and visions are often highlighted and have important roles to play. Common for these novels is the vision of a future that has radically changed from what the reader is familiar with in contemporary time. As the analyses have showed, differing ethical beliefs are reflected in the post-apocalyptic realities of the four novels, but what has not been discussed in depth is the reader's response to the novels' ethical and moral codes. As has been stated in the section *The Aims of Ethical Criticism*, literature invites the reader to respond, but cannot force a reaction without the reader being aware of it. Ethical criticism functions as a guide to the readers' understanding of the moral criteria of a given text and thus alludes to the judgment that a reader inevitably performs when reading fiction. If we then assume that a reader always makes

judgments when reading literature, how is this significant when dealing with post-apocalyptic fiction?

Post-apocalyptic narratives transport the reader into a future, near or not, that has been destroyed by an apocalyptic event and thus functions outside the norms and regulations of the readers' own time. As such new ethical and moral codes are often in place to accommodate to the new order of the world. These new ethical codes have been put there by the author, who has created this new world of the future. The author thus functions as a creator and instigator, however it is only through the readers' experience that the narrative is given life and is accepted as a fictional truth. The reader response to a post-apocalyptic novel becomes especially interesting when looking at the ethicality behind it. Firstly, the novel has to speak to the reader in terms of believability. Thus, the reader has to accept that the world has ended due to known or unknown factors. Secondly, the reader must relate to the reality created by the author of the novel and then it becomes possible for the reader to make judgments based on his or her own viewpoints. Through the post-apocalyptic novel, the reader is confronted with the uncertainty of the immediate future because the apocalypse is being brought close by the novel itself. In accepting the premise of the novel, the reader is forced to buy into the possibility of an apocalypse actually happening and in doing so, knowingly or unknowingly employ their own ethicality onto the novel. Following Gregory's concept of readerly responses, by engaging with the novel, the readers automatically employ their ethical viewpoints into the narrative and the way they react to the story might well cause a reaction in real life as well. If a reader repeatedly accepts certain ethic schemata presented in a novel, it will likely result in a change in how the reader reacts to the real world as well. As such, reader responses to literature coincide with their own reality and can therefore be said to affect the reader's perception of life. To further explain this by looking at the novels of this dissertation, it is possible to draw parallels between the fictional apocalypses and a reader's opinion on where the world is headed. Readers that tap into Atwood's or McCarthy's reality might well adopt the fear of a total collapse of American society. They will relate to the ethical and moral questions that inevitably occur when reading the novels and form responses to these that can be transferred on to reality.

Based on the four novels analyzed in this dissertation, ethical criticism and in continuation hereof also reader response can give an insight into the workings of post-apocalyptic fiction. When readers take in the post-apocalyptic realities of America, they relate to the characters and settings in accordance with their own ethical and moral values. Thus, the reaction to the post-apocalyptic society that has risen, or not risen, in the aftermath of the apocalypse may differ a great deal. While

one person may abhor the Ferrytowners and Finger Baptists for taking advantage of other people in *The Pesthouse*, others may deem it necessary actions in order to survive. Judging what is right and wrong is a highly subjective matter, yet a reader is constantly doing so. Keeping Gregory's notion of readerly response to moral criteria in mind, it is possible to claim that when deciding upon who is good and bad within a narrative, in reality the reader is confirming ethical judgments within themselves. Thus, by categorizing the Karptowners in *World Made by Hand* as bad because of their actions, the reader is actually making an ethical judgment that can be transferred directly into reality. The ethical judgments that readers apply to narratives is often guided by an identification with certain characters, for as a reader engages in a story a form of identification with the fictional characters is bound to happen. The identification has the potential to carry meaning in the reality of the reader and this transposition between the readers and fictional characters has an important ethical significance. It can be discussed whether all readers make the connection between their own life and the fictional reality of a character, however in one way or another readers make judgments based on their own ethical mindset.

In discussing readerly response in relation to ethical criticism, the question of right and wrong and how these are perceived is fundamental. Following this line of thought, it seems plausible that post-apocalyptic narratives invite readers to create their own notions of right and wrong in a prebuilt society that already consists of several layers of ethical and moral codes. In this context, the narrative itself functions as a guide to the future; an image of what will inevitably happen at some point. The reader is in this case a central figure that re-configures the narrative to fit their own standards. This is in accordance with the idea that we live in a world moving away from postmodernism, into an uncharted future where the individual plays a vital role in creating fiction. However, the reader cannot stand by itself and is influenced by, and influences, both the novel and the author in question.

Authorship and Readers

Dealing with the relations between the author, the reader and the novel, the role of the author is questioned. The stance of an author can be fairly clear, as is the case with McCarthy and Atwood, which has been commented on in the main chapter *Facing Post-apocalyptic Narratives*. As representatives of post-apocalyptic fiction, their novels are marked by their own attitudes towards both contemporary times and the future, which is made clear through the novels. While it is possible to read *Oryx and Crake* without knowing anything about Atwood, the voice of Atwood is clear if you know where to look. Her stance on especially the environment shapes *Oryx and Crake* and is

reflected in the portrayal of the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic America. McCarthy is another example of an author who has a clear voice that is represented in his narratives. His explanation of how he was inspired to write *The Road* alludes to him being an active participant in his own fictional world. In many ways, he is equated with the man and his visualization of the future thus becomes an image of his own fears for the future. Thereby not saying that *The Road* is a direct image of what he believes will happen, but rather it is an enactment of his deepest fears regarding the future. As such, both Atwood and McCarthy are present within the two novels in question, leaving the question whether the narratives convey the author's opinion or whether the author is simply forming a story. In any case, the author sets the tone of the novel and even though it might not be possible to say that the narrative is a direct reflection of the author's own viewpoint, it is still interesting to discuss in relation to the ethicality of a text. Looking at Kunstler and his contribution to post-apocalyptic fiction, his attitudes towards American society are made abundantly clear through the apocalyptic chain of events which has led to a return of agrarian communities. In this sense, he shares the stage with Atwood and McCarthy in staying true to his own character and employing his own views on the future into the narrative. However, the interpretation is largely left to the reader and the author thus functions as a stage-manager that sets the tone for the narrative, but leaves it open for interpretation. Whether it is the reader, the author or the novel itself that creates the message is difficult, if not impossible to answer, since it depends on the individual experience in reading the novel. However, each author writes from their own unique point of view and that affects the narrative as well.

Finding Answers

When dealing with authorship in relation to post-apocalyptic fiction, it is also worth mentioning that the reader may have certain expectations regarding the relationship between the author and the novel. Some readers have a tendency to draw parallels between the author and the novel, projecting the author into one of the characters in the story. In relation to our thesis, these readers will find similarities between for example McCarthy and the man, and Snowman and Atwood. Furthermore the characters in a novel often invite the reader to identify with them, placing themselves within the framework of the narrative. They experience the loneliness of Snowman and the fear of Margaret as she travels the tumultuous post-apocalyptic world and as such connect with the novel on a personal level. Another way to read a novel is for the character to take on its own life and thereby become real in the mind of the reader and the author. By giving a character life, the reader and the author extrapolate the character to reality and impose the same feelings and reactions on the character as

exist in reality. These differing views on how to read a novel and how to relate to the author and the novel itself allude to the interrelationship between fiction and reality. With the reader as mediator, the fictional world of the author has the potential to be transported into reality and thereby function as a cautionary tale. However, it would seem that post-apocalyptic fiction goes beyond being cautionary tales, which will be discussed shortly.

As can be deduced from the discussion above, the relationship between the reader, the author and the novel is complex and diverse. They form a symbiotic relationship that is highlighted through an intricate system of input and output that depends on the ethicality of reader, author and novel. With ethical criticism in mind, it has merit to argue that the answer to a question is not as important as the road to it. Since ethical criticism takes pride in not performing censorship when dealing with fiction, the "right and wrong" of reading fiction becomes obsolete. Thereby, the stage is open for people to insert their own views and opinions in order to understand the ethical and moral codes of a piece of fiction. By using this logic, it becomes difficult to say whether the author is a spokesperson or not, and whether the reader holds power in a narrative. However, we argue that the symbiotic relationship between author, reader and novel in post-apocalyptic fiction create mutual dependencies and underline the close alignment to ethical issues. Furthermore, it is important to remember, that post-apocalyptic fiction lies within the scope of speculative fiction and thereby it almost forces a reaction. Post-apocalyptic fiction being read travels a fine line between fiction and reality as readers insert their own moral and ethical codes into the narrative, projecting their inner feelings while also adopting some of the novel's viewpoints.

Real Ethical Concerns

Working with ethical criticism, it is important to note that ethical issues arise based on real relatable issues. The fact that fictional issues are something that readers relate to is due to the ethical foundation we as human beings possess and are inclined to impose on the text. Ethical criticism deals with how literature includes the reader in the issues at hand. As such, the reader is charged with an important task, since the reader becomes the judge of the characters and the world in which they reside as has been discussed previously in this chapter.

Ethics are currently under a lot of pressure because the Western world presents its societies with freedom and opportunities, which in turn create more consequences in need of ethical considerations. This profusion of ethical events is overwhelming and seeps into contemporary literature, such as post-apocalyptic fiction. The four novels in question are laced with ethicality built

on events questioning the characters' moral reasoning, which has been revealed in previous chapters of this dissertation.

In contemporary society, ethical issues are abundant, as ethical concerns develop alongside general changes in the world. Today, many political and societal tendencies are connected to science and environmentalism and as such, this is where many of the ethical issues manifest. Previously, our ethical convictions were, to a large extent, inspired by religious contexts: that is to say the bible has acted as a religious ethical guidebook telling us how to act and feel about certain elements of life. However, the increasing focus on secularization, has contributed to a turn of the ethical focus. This also serves to underline that it is not only religion that can act as a basis for ethical convictions, but that environmentalism or science can serve the same purpose as well. In the four novels, religion is, as previously discussed, still present, but is mostly expressed through half-hidden intertextualities taking form as biblical references. The individualized approach to religion that we see in the novels presupposes not a discontinuation of ethics but a redefinition. As religion in a post-apocalyptic context focuses on that which is close at hand instead of God, it signifies that ethical concerns are connected to cultural trends and societal issues.

Heed the Warnings

The emphasis on ethics is largely shown through the media, where societies are made aware of ethical concerns on a global scale. This also attests to the transcendent nature of literature and its ability to capture readers cross-culture. Therefore, the predominant post-apocalyptic American setting does not necessarily exclude readers seeing that the fundamental ethical issues are universal. To further discuss ethics in today's world, parallels can be drawn to a wide range of areas in culture and society in general. An example could be the debate concerning global warming and the focus on how we as human beings have a responsibility to preserve the earth. In this debate, ethical issues are at the center, as people have different notions on both the seriousness of global warming and on how to deal with it. This is a subject that preoccupies people from governments down to the individual and it puts pressure on ethics by people relating to global warming differently. While some find it ethically wrong to keep polluting the world and therefore do everything in their power to stop it, others renounce their responsibility, for example by claiming that their efforts are futile in the grand scheme of things. This is but one example of an issue where ethical concerns influence the debate and furthermore highlight the differing views of people in general. Global warming as a threat is an issue that seems to draw closer, also to the United States as natural disasters of destructive proportions, such as hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the hurricane that hit New

York City in 2011, happen more often. Combined with literature that predicts the end of the world due to environmental changes, the ethical discussion of global warming is under pressure. Global warming is but one example of issues that illustrates the pressure of ethics. Another that is worth discussing is disturbances related to political issues. Here, the ongoing disturbances in Ukraine can be seen as an example of how ethics are under pressure. The situation in Ukraine developed rapidly, with the United States and Russia placing themselves on opposing sides, almost as a small-scale reenactment of the Cold War. In this conflict, ethics became important as the public had to relate to the situation and judge it accordingly. Questions of different countries' interference in Ukraine, the degree of involvement and the right to interfere preoccupied the Western world, while an World War seemed only steps away. The situation in Ukraine revealed the fragility of the so-called globalized world and alluded to the looming threat of war. Furthermore, the conflict serves as a trigger for imagining the end. As tensions between nations rose, it was not difficult imagining a future where war could potentially destroy the world. With this example, it is possible to argue that political apocalypses are being refocused by events happening in life and that ethical and moral considerations are being used to navigate the world at large. The pressure on ethics is further illustrated by the fear of a breakdown in politics, which could lead to war. Thus people seek to justify or condemn certain actions, depending on what they believe to be right or wrong.

In continuation of the discussion of the pressure on ethics, it is possible to draw parallels to everyday life. Through the media we are confronted with our own moral inadequacy, in the sense that Western societies have every convenience in the world, yet we act carelessly and destroy the environment and corrupt human morality. Thus, we are pressured to be better and to act better; at least better in the understanding that we as human beings wish to preserve the world in which we live. But, why are we confronted with it now? In the form of for example global warming, deforestation and resource depletion we begin to see the consequences of the failed attempts to heed the warnings of societal degradation, as seen dealt with in dystopian cautionary tales.

The misuse of science and technology has a strong presence in post-apocalyptic literature, either as a direct source of the apocalypse, illustrated in *Oryx and Crake* and *The Road* or as an underlying past issue, as in the *The Pesthouse* and *World Made by Hand*. The way all four authors have chosen to let technology and science play a role in the apocalypse in one way or another can be seen as a reflection of the fears that permeate contemporary American society. Technological and scientific advances open opportunities of both beneficial and destructive character. This has been reflected time and time again, for example in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* from 1932, where

technology has made it possible to create a complacent society, free of any real emotion due to technological advances in reproduction and conditioning. While the prospects of *Brave New World* seemed outrageous to the contemporary reader, the true horror for present-day readers lie in the prospect of being robbed of their freedom. Technology has advanced immensely since Huxley's cautionary tale, and while it is still frightening, the terrifying element is what human beings can do with it. In this regard, it is important to relate to the changed American society after September 11, 2001, as has been explained in the section *The Heritage of 9/11*. Because of the terrorist attacks, the horrors of war and fear for the future were suddenly a part of the American awareness and people had to relate to the dangers of the times in which they were living. It became easier to imagine a terrible future and a general skepticism also followed in the wake of September 11. Arguably this has also influenced how readers respond to and understand post-apocalyptic fiction. Imagining a future destroyed by war or technological advances no longer seemed impossible, rather it had already threatened to happen. As the aspects of science and technology help to accelerate the apocalypse, they are important elements in speaking of trauma and insecurity. Here, the element of religious thinking also comes into play, exemplified through *Oryx and Crake*, where science becomes a sort of religion. In relation to trauma, religion has a dual function. It can be a sign of a manifested trauma as religion makes use of rules and repetitions to systemize it or it can be used as a tool to process trauma by adhering to a higher power and add some stability. However, as rules and repetitions are signs of both trauma and the attempts to gain a sense of ontological security, as explained previously, this poses a dilemma in terms of where the line between progress and regression in individual and societal pursuits goes.

Moving on from Trauma

To return to the dissertation's theoretical framework on trauma, we propose that there is a link between trauma studies and ethical criticism, seeing that trauma is what happens when our ethical convictions are grossly and suddenly violated. How we as listeners to and witnesses of trauma relate to trauma is associated with how we perceive the traumatic events, especially those who are manmade. In relation to this, it is natural to discuss contemporary culture's fixation with trauma after the events of 9/11, which we argue invites an ethical discussion as well. The terrorist attacks that happened September 11, 2001 spawned a restructuring and reconfiguration of the American self-image. Whether people felt disbelief or anger, or maybe a mixture of both, Americans at large felt they had been victimized by outside forces that were beyond their control. The reaction to the attacks was fairly swift, first the war in Afghanistan in 2001, then Iraq in 2003 and was justified by

the American government as a way of both protecting America and the world from religious fundamentalists. In the aftermath of 9/11, ethical questions were important as ever, as people needed a way to justify the events, while processing them too. While not everyone agreed on the hasty declaration of war after the attacks, the majority of the American population needed to renew their sense of security, which some might argue could only return if the perpetrators were brought to justice. Here it is possible to argue that America was traumatized by the events and that this has influenced their society and in part also their culture since. The question is then, how do people move on from a traumatized reality into a semblance of "normal" living? While this question is difficult to answer it can be discussed whether or not hope has a role to play. When people are faced with a situation they perceive as hopeless, they tend to give up and cease their attempts to better their situation. However, with hope present there is something to strive for and this is a motivational factor that influences people's lives. Thus it can be argued that hope functions as a sort of salvation for the traumatized being. Hope can help transfer the feelings of despondency into a willingness to cope with life. Contrary to this argument, it is possible to say that hope only figures as a false comfort and that even in times of hopelessness people endure. In this view, hope does not act as savior and thus has no role in turning traumatized reality into normality. Relating this to the four post-apocalyptic novels, which arguably all present traumatized people, hope figures in a variety of ways, ranging from the budding hope of a new beginning in *The Pesthouse* to the almost non-existent yet frail hope of salvation in *The Road*. Each of the main characters represents progress and a strong adherence to ethicality, which in turn signals a hope. However, in these post-apocalyptic fictions hope to a large extent functions as a narrative tool that engages with the reader's moral reasoning.

Post postmodern Concerns

The question of whether the characters in the novel are beyond salvation has been commented on before. But the question of whether or not the narratives are right in their estimation has yet to be examined. While this question might seem redundant, since we argue that the reader's interpretation combined with the author's intentions are what create the actual answers, an interesting deduction occurs in Atwood's novel. By using Crake's, and by extension Atwood's, logic: "First the leaders and the led, then the tyrants and the slaves, then the massacres. That's how it's always gone." (Atwood, 2004:184) This quote serves to remind the reader that the possible solutions that the novel or author propose are inevitably futile, because a pre-set schema of how the end is going to happen already exists. This logic further underlines the novel's suggestion that individually,

humanity is in reach of redemption, but collectively humanity is doomed, because it is when we align individuals with social structures that it all goes wrong. This seems to hold true for the post-apocalyptic worlds of Atwood and McCarthy at least, while Kunstler's and Crace's worlds offer a glimmer of hope for humanity. As explained in the chapter *Exploring Ethical Criticism*, according to Gregory individuals have a natural moral disposition. However, it is in a social context that we as humans develop these moral convictions and as such, face a dilemma. This dilemma is founded on the question of how an individual ethicality can function in a social environment, without passing judgments that end up excluding people from society. As social beings, it is inherently important for people to be a part of a social group, and therefore our moral and ethical standings are often regulated in order to fit into the society we are a part of. In relation to post-apocalyptic fiction, both the reader and the characters within the narrative are challenged on their ethicality, especially when addressing issues of how to rebuild. Post-apocalyptic fiction does not give us all the answers on how to rebuild after a traumatic cataclysmic event. Rather, it processes contemporary fears and anxieties, which are exemplified in fear of moral decline, environmental pollution, biological violation and re-sacralized religious strife, all of which have been experienced throughout history. By nature, post-apocalyptic fiction offers a break in history, but history retraces its steps nonetheless. Through repeating old socio-cultural structures in these narratives, we see a reanimation of history.

Thus, in the face of reanimating history and engaging moral dilemmas, there is a culture of risk assessment, as risks are connected to the uncertainty of the future, which through fiction are sought to be disentangled. As post-apocalyptic narratives deal with the uncertainty of the future and the moral implication the future brings, it can be said to be risk fiction, seeing that the authors explore the risks that are historically and culturally relevant and extrapolate them into a future setting.

Following the development of risks according to Beck it is clear that the postmodern sociological relationship to risks and the insecurities that are bound up on environmental threats and scientific progress have undergone yet another change. This signals the paradigm shift from the postmodern to the post-postmodern. In literature, this change becomes apparent especially in post-apocalyptic fiction where risk management and the consistent feeling of the characters' insecurity is a constant issue. Following the trail of social fears and ethical concerns therefore allows an insight into how societies are ever changing but at the same time deal with the same issues. In effect, this also becomes apparent when looking at how re-sacralization is evident in the novels. In *Oryx and Crake* religion is reborn post-apocalypse in the form of the trinity of Snowman, Oryx and Crake. In *World*

Made by Hand religion is likewise reborn, but more so in the sense that we see a reanimation of the old ways where religion was an intrinsic part of society. In *The Road*, religion re-enters society in the religious allegory of a fight between good and evil, whereas *The Pesthouse* offers both a reference to Baptists and a general spiritual religiosity that permeates society. Furthermore, the post-apocalyptic re-sacralization shows the interdependent relationship between religion, social fears and anxieties and ethical criticism, and how literature harnesses these different fields to make sense of a tumultuous world. Continuing the thought of a paradigm shift, there is a strong case for looking at how this deals with the underlying contemporary issues. As the issues fundamentally remain the same, they never become irrelevant; the focus just shifts from time to time. Insecurity about the future and fear of the apocalypse has existed throughout history, but within differing parameters. Before industrialization, religious apocalypse was perceived as a real threat, but with the reality of technological advancements rose a fear of a technological apocalypse – seen especially in the science fiction published in the decades following the end of the Second World War. The technological side of apocalyptic fears still lingers in post-apocalyptic fiction in the form of nuclear war and scientific misuse but has more so shifted to fears of an apocalypse caused by man's failed attempt to control nature. What is worth noticing in this context is the need to control nature. Here, religion has a role to play, since religious believers largely believe that nature is controlled by God. Thus, by interfering with God's plan, humanity is in opposition to a higher power and that can trigger an apocalypse. As such, seeing that the apocalypse originates from ethical decline in a religious context, fear of the apocalypse will always be permeated by religion and ethicality.

Beyond Cautionary Tales

The last decade has seen a rise in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic cultural products that in one way or another relate to the end of the world. This rise has not only occurred within literature, but can be seen in various forms examples being music, computer games and films. On this note, *Oryx and Crake, The Pesthouse, World Made by Hand* and *The Road* are among a long list of post-apocalyptic fictions that bear testament to contemporary culture's fascination with end of the world narratives. The fact that we as readers, through post-apocalyptic fiction experience a change in the way societies act and try to restructure themselves, necessitates a rethinking of the function of post-apocalyptic fiction.

Narratives that deal with a declining society and the corrupt morals of a civilization on its last note have often been categorized as cautionary tales, insofar that they try to project a warning of

continuing down the road contemporary society is on. An example of cautionary tales is often found in dystopian fiction as it does not practice any hope and as such it tells us that mankind is doomed if we do not radically change our course. In post-apocalyptic literature, the catastrophe has already happened and there is therefore no hope of salvation and hope of restoring the dystopian society to its former utopian glory, if ever there was such a society. Civilization has crumbled and the cataclysmic events of the apocalypse have made a restoration virtually impossible. In the world of literature, society has taken a step further than the dystopian malfunctioning societies of the twentieth century. In contemporary society, we have caught up with the fictional dystopias and literature therefore explores future social endeavors drawing on the assumption that the world is beyond saving. Post-apocalyptic fiction suggests that there is no way to change the outcome of societal aspirations gone wrong, but instead discusses how societies move on after yet another literary and hypothetical future has caught up with us. Post-apocalyptic fiction is therefore a step beyond cautionary tale, as it in many ways makes a social diagnosis and tries to manufacture a cure. This is done by trying to take stock of the damages and constructing a game plan: it is a question of what to do after everything has failed. Following this line of thought, the narrative is no longer cautionary, because societies have already failed to take heed of apocalyptic warnings, and now it is only a matter of discussing how to move on without losing sight of what is important. This is evident through the analyses of the four novels, as they question previous societies' morality and show the struggle to rebuild and purify society, thereby signifying the importance of keeping a sense of morality and finding a way back to humanity and ethicality.

Whereas dystopian novels and apocalyptic fiction deal with ongoing societal issues or the issues that arise when faced with the finality that inevitably comes with the end of the world, post-apocalyptic literature deals with what is left. This is also why ethical criticism is a useful tool, since the novels question how we deal with the leftovers of a past civilization and how to combine it with the budding beginnings of a new one. Through each of the four novels, humanity is questioned and signals, not a biblical purification of sin and destruction, but rather a relocation of previous issues, that are reinforced post-apocalypse. Thereby, post-apocalyptic fiction does not figure as cautionary tales, since humanity has reached a point of no return and has to relate to the consequences of the end. Thus, whereas dystopian fiction is seen as having a distinct focus on the end of the world as we know it and works as a cautionary tale, post-apocalyptic fiction can be said to represent the beginning after the end. By distinguishing between dystopian fiction and post-apocalyptic fiction in

terms of how they relate to the future, the two seems different. However when looking at how author and reader are related through the novel, it is possible to find similarities.

Point of no Return

Thus, we return to the question of the relationship between novel, author and reader and who extracts or infuses a message in the text and how it is to be perceived. As has already been stated they figure in a symbiotic relationship that indicates that there is some kind of message that the author infuses into the novel, which the reader processes and extracts in one way or another. This message is connected to ethical societal issues. For a dystopian novel to be classified as a cautionary tale, the author needs to engage in some sort of contemporary danger which is present in society. In other words, the novel and the author need to tap into a fear present in the reader in order for the cautionary tale to actually be considered cautionary. Cautionary tales therefore need not only have a close connection to real life society and dangers, but also the real life reader. If the reader cannot relate to the fears and dangers that the author is trying to portray, the warning will be missed and the narrative will lose its status as being cautionary. For post-apocalyptic fiction to be classified as moving beyond caution and warning, there too needs to be a connection to contemporary fears in society. The author and the novel still need to relate to some fear of the future, however, the difference is that it is not to warn the reader of any potential dangers. Post-apocalyptic fiction enters into a discussion about the character of human morality and questions whether humanity is beyond salvation no matter what is done to prevent it. This is often portrayed by civilization regressing into old patterns even after facing near extinction. The post-apocalyptic narrative thus becomes an opportunity for the author to express his or her own fear of a bleak future, while simultaneously stressing that we are at a point of no return, as a variation of the scenario described in the post-apocalyptic fiction will happen. As such, Post-apocalyptic fiction moves beyond the notion of cautionary tale by giving the reader a chance to identify with certain characters' acceptance and further survival after an apocalypse. As the world reaches the point of no return, certain deliberations have to be made in terms of how to deal with the oncoming end. These deliberations influences the understanding of how it is living post apocalypse. It is within this scope that post-apocalyptic fiction shows its usefulness in negotiating the border between fiction and reality, combined with the attention to reader-responses that lies at the heart of ethical criticism.

Consequently, post-apocalyptic fiction in general triggers a variety of discussions that in many cases relate to how fiction and reality are connected. Because of the nature of post-apocalyptic narratives, the reader is presented with a wide range of ethical and moral dilemmas that they have to

process when reading. As such, the reader decides what they deem right and wrong or good and bad, inspired by the way in which the narrative is written. The reality that the author writes from is arguably a part of the story they produce and will then also invade the reader's perception of a given text. Furthermore, the readers' own ethical codes from reality are transferred onto the narratives and thus post-apocalyptic fiction function within a circle of mutual influence. Also it can be discussed whether the paradigm shift from postmodern to post-postmodern is apparent in post-apocalyptic literature in the form of societal insecurities, which we believe they are. This entails that cautionary tales for the most part thrived alongside postmodernity, whereas the post-postmodern condition warrants a new classification, since post-apocalyptic fiction has moved beyond being cautionary. In the respective novels, it is not a question of: "Will it come to an end?", because post-apocalyptic fiction all predicts the same, namely that the end will come. Rather it is a question of how we make the best of the situation that the fictive reality portrays.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, it has been the intention to look at the interdependent relationship of reality and fiction in post-apocalyptic narratives. The element of reality has been seen as contemporary societal concerns connected to an American setting but which resonates in a global context through ethical reasoning. Through the four novels analyzed in this dissertation, respectively *Oryx and Crake, The Pesthouse, World Made by Hand* and *The Road,* it becomes evident that there is a fear of decline in the American mentality. The United States' position in the world has become uncertain in the wake of the traumatic events of 9/11, which in turn is reflected in post-apocalyptic literature. Post-apocalyptic fiction is characterized by a change in social reality and marks the change from postmodernism to post-post-modernism. In the section *An Introduction to Postmodernism and Beyond,* Kirby's notion of this change has been described as digimodernism. We see digimodernism, conceptualized by Kirby, as a concept describing the post-postmodern condition, seeing that it figures well within an ethical frame. In Kirby's appropriation of digimodernism, the reader has gained a strong influence in a text's status as a product of both reality and fiction.

Through an analysis of the four novels with special focus on ethical criticism, it becomes evident that there is a strong interdependent relationship of author, novel and reader in post-apocalyptic fiction. In comparing the four novels, we found that they take different approaches to how societal issues culminate and how they extrapolate contemporary fears and anxieties into a future setting. The four novels all deal with societal degradation and the death of civilization by creating an American setting where societies are struggling to be reborn after the apocalypse. The American setting creates the basis for the entire narrative, as the four narratives center on American culture and American societies. Furthermore, the strong presence of morality and ethicality in the four novels and the way they comment on the unstable and ever-changing nature of humanity, bear testament to the identifiable nature of the novels' themes, at least identifiable in the Western world. What characterizes post-apocalyptic fiction is the way that they propose that a societal decline leads to a decline in human morality. In all four novels, there is a return of religious convictions, a re-sacralization, which suggests that in times where human morality is questioned, religious beliefs become reanimated. The biblical references that were found in the novels function as a further indicator that in a post-postmodern context religion has returned, as previously discussed through the words of Taylor. Religion will consequently always exist in times where the present and the future are laced with fear and risks. According to Beck's notion of the risk society, contemporary

societal risks are the direct result of environmental and industrial aspirations gone wrong, which surface in post-apocalyptic narratives. In the face of the ultimate traumatic event, which the cataclysm of the apocalypse undoubtedly is, post-apocalyptic societies will inevitably be influenced by a decreased sense of security. Furthermore, an increase in the fears associated with the insecurities about the future happens, both within the narrative and in the readers themselves. The dangers that become apparent in the face of the apocalypse, such as scientific misuse and social decline, are transferred to the reader's own reality. By inserting their own morals and ethical values, the readers have an influential role in the narratives, and thereby become intrinsically linked with the authors and characters alike.

When discussing the four novels, we found not only similarities but differences as well. The novels differences serve to highlight the various ways in which societal fears and insecurities can be approached. The ways in which they differ is related to the degree of social structure. Whether trying to restructure in small groups, as in *World Made by Hand* and *The Pesthouse*, creating a new non-human society, as seen in *Oryx and Crake* or fending for oneself and the ones closest to you like portrayed in *The Road*, the conclusion remains the same: Societies suffer a setback in the aftermath of the apocalypse. The destruction of social structures and the inhospitable environment make it difficult to form a home and lead to the question of staying to fight or to flee the country and seek one's fortune in the East. In both *The Pesthouse* and *The Road* the main characters originally flee the country but never make it across the sea signaling that flight is impossible, whereas in *World Made By Hand* and *Oryx and Crake* they stay in respectively the local societies or near something resembling a societal structure and figuratively and literally fight for survival and social rebuilding. Thus, the question of whether or not it is possible to rebuild society and if there are damages that we are unable to repair is left somewhat ambiguously answered, since the four novels propose differing answers. The presence of hope in the narratives adds to the ambiguity of social restructuring, as they each have different views on what we are able to repair or rebuild. However, hope, no matter how small, is also what disentangles the illusiveness of the question. Through the narratives we find that it is possible to rebuild and construct something better as seen to some degree in *World Made By Hand*, to find others who 'carry the fire' like the boy does, or to start completely over as Franklin and Margaret and as one of the interpretations of the ending in *Oryx and Crake* suggests. Hence, the reader is not left completely discouraged by the post-apocalyptic endeavors, but left to judge the ethical and moral implications that follow in the wake of restructuring societies.

To return to the second question proposed in the previous main chapter *From Fiction to Reality,* of whether or not we are beyond salvation, the four narratives again offer differing opinions. In *The Road* there is a foundation for stating that individual salvation is tangible, but not for society as a whole, whereas in *World Made By Hand*, society in many ways functions better than before, despite confrontations with the local outlaws.

By analyzing the novels in an ethical critical frame, the relationship between reader, author and novel becomes effective. Ultimately, the novels tap into the reader's moral judgments and values, making the novel come to life. The author's voice becomes apparent giving life to the implicit ethicality infused by the author and the reader thus identifies with the characters to an extent that brings them to life. In effect, the symbiotic relationship between author, novel and reader, when keeping ethical criticism in mind, is intertwined in a way that one cannot tell where the story comes to life and where its fictional borders begin. As such, fiction and reality become infused.

By way of analyzing the four post-apocalyptic novels and looking into how they interact with societal issues such as ethicality, religion, fear and anxieties, there can be seen a development from the earlier dystopian postmodern cautionary tales to a post-postmodern emergence of narratives dealing with ventures that are beyond caution. In addition, the post-postmodern condition carries on the postmodern notion of individualized religion and the fears and anxieties that fluctuate in society, but takes them beyond the postmodern imagination and beyond the classical dystopian traits, which were found in our 9th semester project.

Furthermore, it can be concluded that post-apocalyptic narratives presuppose that we cannot change the outcome of societies' degradation. Therefore, they can be classified as being beyond caution, since they are a step further than the societies that cautionary tales seek to remedy. Thus, the change in social reality leads to resurgence in ethical criticism and the ways in which it can be used to extract meaning from a text.

Looking at the four novels through the perspective of ethical criticism, the manifold contemporary societal issues become apparent. The ethical issues do not only have a fictive common denominator, but hold true in a real-life context as well. By dealing with issues such as science and the effects of global warming, the themes of post-apocalyptic literature respond to current topics within politics and society as well as literature. In conclusion, it can be stated that there is a fusion between fiction and reality when looking at post-apocalyptic narratives, since we as readers infuse our own moral convictions into the narrative. The framework of ethical criticism has thus allowed us to see how

post-apocalyptic literature is an expression of cultural trends and fixations and contemporary fears of end-of-the-world narratives.

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