Apocalypse, Ideology, America: Science Fiction and the Myth of the Post-Apocalyptic Everyday

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Perhaps, people invented atomic bombs because actually they hated cities, hated modern civilization, longed for inner necessity to smash the whole worthless, foolish mess? Start over?

—Philip Wylie, The Disappearance

That what is reflected in the imaginary representation of the world found in an ideology is the conditions of existence of men, i.e. their real world.

—Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy

[1] As a child, lying in bed at night, I would hear airplanes pass overhead and imagine that they were carrying The Bomb, which was achieving less popularity in my generation (X) than in our generational antecedents; I dreamt of nuclear war, a total war that could only exist in the imagination. Movies that portrayed the decimation of humanity at the hands of super-weaponry or strange meteorites in the night haunted me, and Superman IV: The Quest for Peace (1987) (wherein Superman casts all of humanity's nuclear stockpile into the sun) did little to alleviate my nightmares. And so it seemed utterly natural that as a young adult I became fascinated with literature of life after the apocalypse, which I returned to again as an adult, as the rhetoric of everyday life has turned to a discussion of terrorism and disaster the likes of which Henri Lefebvre, in Everyday Life in the Modern World (1971), could not have conceived. Concerned with the ways in which quotidian life could be disrupted through the work of writing, of bringing other realities into our own, Lefebvre outlined a sort of activism (“terrorism” for him) that placated Marxist academics and spurred the Situationists to do more than pontificate. And while academics take Lefebvre to be concerned with a very political sort of rhetorical terrorism, he is just as applicable to fictional accounts of terror, whether they appear in print (the novel) or cinematically; Lefebvre did well to explicate the possibilities of terror, and its varieties. Latterly, however, thinkers have returned to the ontology of terror without properly examining fictional terrors, and what they might mean for the future.

[2] And so with eyes keened to Slavoj Žižek’s thought of “how unfreedom is hidden, concealed in precisely what is presented to us as new freedoms” (qtd. in Reul and Deichmann), I returned to these fictions of disaster and its human ramifications in light of Jean Baudrillard’s “Fourth World War” [11]. Thinking too of Baudrillard’s claim in “L’Esprit du Terrorisme” that the attacks on the World Trade Centers and Pentagon were dreamt of the world around, “that nobody could help but dream the destruction of so powerful a hegemon” (13), I returned to some of the most famous (and infamous) of science fiction novels concerned with mass destruction and everyday life after the event, as well as the standing criticism on this particularly Western literature of conjectural, and inevitable, death. My choice of texts is primarily determined by their dialogic potential and their differential popularities — some, like Walter Miller’s A Canticle for Liebowitz (1959), are recognized classics within the genre; others, like Leigh Brackett’s The Long Tomorrow (1955), are continually unpopular, but similar themes exist in both, and it is vital to unpack these dominant tropes to understand the persistence of such. There are surely more popular science fiction novels and films about the post-apocalyptic, and this motivates my choice to examine less popular novels in an attempt to widen the arena of scholarly discourse. While my interests are divided between what these fictions of terror recount and what they say about themselves, my primary concerns are with
what these fictions say about the culture that has brought them into being, about their time of conception, and how they extend that present moment into a perpetual future. If, like Baudrillard's "world around" dreamers, these are terrors that are felt communally and unconsciously, then surely they tell us as much about the zeitgeist as they do about the subgenre. Standing criticism on the subgenre is myopic and rather deflating: Three primary critical readings have been forwarded, and due to their respectability have failed to be properly interrogated, thereby allowing these manufactured disasters to disappear in plain sight.

[3] The post-apocalyptic narrative has been seen as one of three possible readings: 1.) The re-advancement of technology, thereby allowing the reader to perceive the inevitable triumph of technology in a more primitive society than his or her own, 2.) A warning against war, which is simply political in that it attempts to defuse militaristic leanings within the culture that has influenced the author to produce the novel, or 3.) The neo-Luddite reduction of modern society (or possibly near-future society) to a simpler version, sometimes also allowing the author to entertain "inevitable" historical cycles if the narrative spans the chronological development of a culture of post-apocalyptic survivors, as is the case with Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. While a post-apocalyptic narrative can adopt any of these thematic modes, and sometimes two or three in itself, which refutes these simplistic, totalizing readings, the purpose of these post-apocalyptic narratives is necessarily more complex: These critical readings have deprived the discourse of the post-apocalypse its power. Only by denaturalizing both the interpretations of post-apocalyptic narratives, and the novels themselves, can an understanding of the novels' cultural functions emerge. The discourse regarding post-apocalyptic narratives is necessarily muddied: "Catastrophe," "holocaust," and "apocalypse" are all used interchangeably by scholars discussing similar subject matter, just as I have earlier used "terror," each term signifying the same process (radical, comprehensive social change), which I have limited here to emblematic narratives of the subgenre — Leigh Brackett's *The Long Tomorrow*, Philip K. Dick's *Dr. Bloodmoney*, or *How We Got Along After the Bomb* (1965), Robert Heinlein's *Farnham's Freehold* (1964), Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Wild Shore* (1984), and Michael Swanwick's *In the Drift* (1985). All these novels, save Miller’s *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, exist simultaneously within the subgenre of American agrarian fantasies, subject to Gary K. Wolfe’s reading in *The Known and the Unknown: The Iconography of Science Fiction* (1979) of post-apocalyptic narratives as technophilic (positing them as both pastoral and fetishizing the rise of technology). Previous criticism will be addressed presently, but my contention is that these fictions are attempts at the isolation of particularly, or essentially, American ideological formations, and the hegemonic actions on the part of those ideologies, manifested as institutionalized apparatuses of the state, in an effort to reestablish America, of the time of writing, and the politics of the author, into a homogenized American future.

[2] Through dialectical readings — by pairing these fictions in parallel opposition — insight into contemporaneous visions of America and the possibilities of the future come alive. Through these few "emblematic" novels, not only within science fiction, but within the culture that bred these fictions. This literature of terror is really the literature of the Cold War, and as such has a long and complex history. Thus, while the paired readings that I provide are temporally influenced, and the line of my argumentation progresses from the early years of the Cold War to near its end, I take the fictions considered herein as essential -- they, amid a great number of other fictions, are some of the most telling literature of the subgenre, and of the period.

[4] While this study does partake of a semi-historical analysis, my purpose is not to review the whole of the post-apocalyptic subgenre of science fiction but rather to generalize larger trends, through these few "emblematic" novels, not only within science fiction, but within the culture that bred these fictions. This literature of terror is really the literature of the Cold War, and as such has a long and complex history. Thus, while the paired readings that I provide are temporally influenced, and the line of my argumentation progresses from the early years of the Cold War to near its end, I take the fictions considered herein as essential -- they, amid a great number of other fictions, are some of the most telling literature of the subgenre, and of the period.

[5] Further, my concern in this study, in examining the fictions depicting life after an apocalypse, is neither to understand the circumstances that led to the apocalyptic state within the text at hand, nor to address the ontological meaning of the apocalypse, religious or more usually nuclear. Rather, I wish to address the ways in which authors have posited the ability of society to retain and strengthen ideological constructions (i.e. culture) after devastation of the population, and what significance can be attributed to this — and the retained ideologies. Society, within each of these post-apocalyptic narratives, through the concerns of its inhabitants, has retained some ideological construction of hierarchy in order to stabilize what might otherwise be construed as a lawless state.
In my research, this ideological retention has been limited to two forms: Religious and economic. Because I'm dealing with American literature, the former is Judeo-Christian in nature, the latter capitalism, and presumably, while the forms may remain the same from culture to culture, their content will differ accordingly. The eradication of American society that occurs in these novels allows the author to posit an emblematic American ideology representative of American culture as a whole, and often oppose it with an equally representative ideological construction (i.e. those who support communal agrarianism and those who promote technological advancement and a return to the city, as is the case with *The Long Tomorrow*), thereby allowing a dialogue of ideologies, both of them seen to be necessarily American, but only one of which is able to sustain itself in the new world order. Alternatively, some of these narratives posit an emblematic ideology only to show its inability to survive in a post-apocalyptic, post-American world, lacking a proper national superstructure with which to organize the post-apocalyptic society, as is the case with capitalism in *Dr. Bloodmoney*. Until the 1980s, this ideological conflict was traditionally conceived as religious in nature (as evidenced in Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* and Brackett's *The Long Tomorrow*). And while Philip K. Dick identified capitalism as the prototypical American ideology in the late 1960s, while contemporaneously dealing with the earlier perceived importance of religion, as in *Dr. Bloodmoney*, not until the 1980s did authors isolate capitalism and the processes of commerce as the essential American ideology. Thus, if Thomas M. Disch's argument that these fictions are meant to make our "nightmares somehow tolerable" (Disch 90), then are our nightmares of religion and capitalism, of totalizing/totalitarian states? Or is that the nature of our waking lives?

These fictions are indicative of larger trends in "cultural logic," which may not be consciously perceived, but rather exerted through discrete means, i.e. artistic representations. Further, while these fictions all deal with matters of religion and economy, the majority of them deal with such things implicitly — they are secondary concerns of the novels, secondary to character and plot development — and the romantic bildungsroman structure that most science fiction novels fall into. Miller and Brackett are the clear exceptions to this rule, as they both situate matters of religion at the fore, Miller developing his historical cycle in such a way that the bildungsroman is more appropriately about the coming of age of post-apocalyptic culture than it is about any protagonist. Brackett acts as a counterpoint to this, situating her critique of American religion in the development of her protagonist, in typical coming-of-age fashion. Because the main character, Len Coulter, is symbolic of his culture (roots in neo-Luddite religion, but striving towards technological integration), his development metonymically describes the development of all of post-apocalyptic America. The majority of novels tend to favor this latter method, substituting the life history of one character for the cultural history of her or his society. By describing the development of the protagonist, the author also describes the future history of the imagined world. Critics, however, tend to see the imagined post-apocalyptic world as a static entity, as if once the new order has been put into place it will remain thus until, like in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, it is swept away yet again. Readers should, however, see these alternate histories of the Cold War's result as glimpses of new progressions: This often means reading the novels with eyes towards the development of characters over time and how they reflect changing attitudes in the post-apocalyptic future as well as metaphorically speaking about contemporaneous American culture. Following this, my readings attempt to situate these post-apocalyptic narratives in American culture as both symbolic and progressive, for, while we may assume that these are narratives of being "bombed into the Stone Age," they are, rather, stories of the post-Atomic Age, and histories of a future yet to come.

**Dialectics of Religiosity**

Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959) concerns the cycles of history, positing that nuclear destruction is not only a possible reality, but unavoidable. Not only do technological forces conspire to make it come into being, but upon the reconstruction of society in the post-apocalyptic world that survives, nuclear proliferation and destruction will again come to pass through cultural/biological determination. The narrative, broken into three sequentially chronological parts, posits a post-apocalyptic Catholicism that acts as the final remnant of contemporary culture — when America is destroyed, only the Catholics and the barbarians remain. Over the course of the novel, rising from its pre-industrial state through computerization, society again rises to the point of near-contemporaneous American society, and again faces self-destruction. It is only the Church, with its foresight, that prepares for the continuation of American culture — emblematized in religious ideology after the necessary destruction. Humanity will be transported, in (only) small, select groups of Catholics, to alien worlds where they will again perpetuate themselves and their culture — this time free of the barbarians that plague them, and potentially free of the nuclear
dread that inspired their migration. There is the threat of an alien population awaiting humanity's arrival, but this is a physical threat and not an ideological one — and physical threats can be overcome (if history is any indicator). But life on Earth — what life remains after the apocalypse and evacuations — is destined to replay the historical cycle indefinitely.

A Canticle for Leibowitz, while clearly concerned with the triumph of technology with its attention to the rise of science subsidized through religion, finally resulting in the Catholic Church having access to space-faring vessels, and the necessary triumph of culture that allows such a transformation from the pre-industrial to Atomic, posits two factions as having survived the apocalypse that establishes the central conflict of the novel. There are the standard post-apocalyptic barbarians (mutants, bikers, etc., which translates into the “lawless masses,” deprived of the government that maintained their lawfulness) and the lawful religious orders of the Catholic Church, spared by the barbarians in their neo-Luddite eradication of technology, information, and science. While Miller thus posits two combative ideologies, that of the anti-science barbarians and the science-embracing Catholics, it is both their stances on science and their relationships to religion that divide these factions. The barbarians, because they stand against the pursuit of science, embraced by the Church, thus stand against the religious ideology of those within the Church; the novel explores the relationship between the godless and the god-fearing, a tension at the very heart of contemporaneous American culture. Thus the confrontations within the narrative are both about the relevance of technology within a culture (and the importance of this technology to the culture), and the dueling conceptions of the nature of the universe in which the members of these two ideological factions reside: It is thus possible to read A Canticle for Leibowitz as emblematic of the oppositional stance of ideologies concerning the importance of religious foundations to American culture.

While Miller is reductive in his approach, lumping all non-Catholics into the mass of barbarians (Protestantism is apparently only a shade of barbarism in post-apocalyptic America), this dialogism is useful in describing American culture as a whole. Because the barbarians are seen as being godless and supporting pro-war technologies, and the Catholics as being god-fearing and developing “peaceful” technologies, Miller works to critique religion and its place in American culture. The Church has rarely taken an active anti-science stance in American culture, the nearest it ever comes being its antagonism to abortion and birth control technologies, and as such can tacitly been seen as having acted in support of the development and employment of a wide variety of pro-war technologies, from the modern computer to napalm bombs. Thus while Miller sees the possibility for the Church to foster more peaceful technologies, this is set against the reality of a Church that is largely unaware of its technologic moralities. It follows that if the reader supports Miller’s understanding of cultural retention (that the Church will inherit the Earth), then a wiser Church needs to be founded in contemporary America, one that is actively both pro-science and pro-technology. But this relies on the eradication of dogmatic beliefs, something that Leigh Brackett confronts more readily.

The Long Tomorrow (1955) portrays post-apocalyptic America as dominated by the cooperative efforts of contemporary neo-Luddite religious organizations: The Quakers and the Mennonites. In their historical retention/adoptions of pre-industrial farming technologies, they find themselves uniquely prepared for a holocaust-era America in which more advanced technology is no longer available (and has, through their political schemes, become outlaw). Len Coulter, and his cousin Esau, both Mennonite, find themselves obsessed with the mythical Bartorstown, a city where humanity continues its technological pursuits unabated. Increasingly curious, and through the verification of Bartorstown's existence by an acquaintance, the young men leave their conservative hometown and begin their quest for Bartorstown. Eventually, through the help of Bartorstown citizens, the young men are cautiously welcomed into the technological society. Similar to Miller's A Canticle for Leibowitz, The Long Tomorrow is a bildungsroman for both the characters of Esau and Len as well as America, although the hope for the latter coming of (technologic) age is much less than that for the boys. Ruled as it is by neo-Luddites, America's embracing of technology and science, as emblematized by Bartorstown, will be slow in coming, but, in spite of their upbringing, Len and Esau both find themselves increasingly able to live, and work, with the Atomic Era technology with which Bartorstown makes its business.

Bartorstown's development is rather dubious as Brackett describes it. Hidden as they are from the larger American social landscape (the town is geographically far-removed from the major population centers), rather than developing simpler "lifestyle" technologies, the Bartorstown engineers busy themselves with atomic energy and a supercomputer. Instead of progressing
technologically, they attempt to make scientific leaps. As such, Len and Esau treat the atomic energy they attempt to develop dogmatically, and only slowly do they overcome their religiously inspired technological dread. As such, religion is seen as the hegemonic entity that it has become in American culture. Rather than facilitating cultural development — and compassionate development at that — religion becomes a point of division between individuals [5]. The Bartorstown men disguise themselves as Mennonites rather than face the dogmatic wrath of the faithful, and presumably this situation will not readily change. As such, the geographical position of Bartorstown will foster two separate and unequal superstructures, one steeped in the dogmatic beliefs of the neo-Luddite, the other secular and scientifically advanced. Evolving from this will inevitably be a divide along ideological lines: The people of Bartorstown will see religion as necessarily limiting technological and scientific advancement and grow increasingly atheistic and secular, while the Mennonites and Quakers will entrench themselves in static technological relations concretized by their religious ideologies.

[10] Somewhat ambivalent in its conclusion, The Long Tomorrow posits a reality in accord to the title of the work: It will be a very long time indeed before humanity, and America, returns to its contemporaneous state — the dependence contemporary society has for “non-essential technologies” (those not directly related to sustenance), establishing this seemingly interminable period. The Long Tomorrow, while concerned with technology and its relationship to American culture, explores the conflict between different religious ideologies, exemplified by the Mennonites and their antagonistic relationship with the inhabitants of the mythical Bartorstown. The Mennonites embrace a particular American religious ideology which limits the importance of technology, and by extension the city, to culture, thereby limiting society to small agrarian configurations that limit both the growth and advancement of society, and by extension, the evolution of culture. As one character makes clear,

The cities were sucking all the life of the country into themselves and destroying it. Men were no longer individuals, but units in a vast machine all cut to one pattern, with the same tastes and ideas, the same mass-produced education that did not educate but only pasted a veneer of catchwords over ignorance. (Brackett 84)

The Mennonite ideology is thus seen as the emblematic American ideology responding to the technophilia of an earlier age that allowed the expansion of cities and the eradication of “individuals.” This new ideological configuration limits technology out of neo-Luddite fear of the possibilities that technology may foster (whether this may result in utopia or not is beside the point) [6]. The men and women of Bartorstown are construed as being the harbingers of a new technological age, resisting at once the environmental conditions of the post-apocalyptic agrarian America with their secret technologies, as well as the American religious ideology of the Mennonites.

[13] This growing binarism, much like Miller’s, invites the reader to choose an ideological stance, yet Brackett and Miller are themselves divided on the importance of religious ideology and its relationship to the modern technological lifestyle. For Miller, religion must embrace technology, but a peaceful sort, while for Brackett technology is antithetical to the very foundations of religious faith. While there can be no resolution concerning the importance of religion in relation to a national ideology due to the very nature of the typical American’s relationship with technology (i.e. that there must necessarily be an acceptance of technology) [7], the dialectic established by Brackett and Miller requires the audience to examine their use of technology in relation to their religious ideologies, either embracing potentially harmful technology as natural, and a by-product of human civilization, or accepting technology as unnatural and detracting from “true” human culture as posited by their religious ideology. Thus, while religion can be perceived as a retaining strategy for American culture, the culture that will arise is necessarily limited by the religions that culture has developed previous to the socio-cultural trauma of the apocalypse.

[14] Rather Modernist in their logics, these new American cultures depend largely on Manichean divisions of believer/non-believer, technophile/technophobe, and good/evil. As pre-Kennedy Cold War fictions, these epitomes of American culture make some sense: Monological and strengthened by their binary opposition to an external foe, culture not only makes sense of itself but is able to make sense of the world in which it exists. While a division between capitalist and communist logics would also work in a similar fashion, because economy is a secondary attribute of culture, only when American culture began to overcome its monologic tendencies could fictions begin to examine capitalism and its role in postmodern American cultural development.
Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After the Bomb (1965), Philip K. Dick's post-apocalyptic novel concerns enclaves of survivors throughout California, living in agrarian communities free from the concerns of contemporary city life. California, through the exigencies of nuclear holocaust, reclaims its edenic qualities (save for some of the more urban areas), but along with Eden comes isolationism. Because of the episodic nature of the novel, being primarily a series of vignettes depicting everyday post-apocalyptic life in a small town, attempts to summarize the plot of the novel, if it can be said that there is one, is necessarily difficult: Dick's communal, agrarian societies are the most important aspect of the novel, acting as isolated utopias willing to protect themselves from external corruption through seclusion and democratic action. Hoppy Harrington, the primary protagonist of the novel, a wheelchair-bound genius, eventually attempts to unify the world's survivors under his fascistic rule. This unification being the primary danger of post-apocalyptic life, and presumably that which has most harmed contemporaneous life, Harrington must be overcome to preserve utopia, and eventually is. There is some hope in the final parts of the novel that society will once again become unified through less fascist means: A sort of communal capitalism — of enclaves trading between themselves for their mutual benefit — suggests the emergence of a new mode of capitalism.

Before this mode of capitalism can come about (and it is post-post-industrial capitalism, so its description is rather dubious), humanity must first overcome its tendencies toward monological thinking, emblematized in Harrington's attempt to control post-apocalyptic California (and the world). For humanity to bow before the influence of Harrington is to belie a Manichean drive, which can be seen as the force that brought about America's (fictional) demise in the first place. Critiquing Cold War culture as it does, Dick's apocalypse is one brought about through nuclear proliferation, facilitated through Manichean rhetoric on the part of American politicians. This cultural binarism will only lead to humanity again developing means of mass destruction. But for communal capitalism to thrive, humanity must first overcome this tendency for its own benefit. Thus, when Harrington is finally defeated, symbolically, American culture is able to move into a more dialogic (or even polylogic) means of identifying itself — and it is finally able to overcome the dehumanizing power structure of capitalism.

Through Stuart Conchie's sections of the novel (a traveling salesman in post-apocalyptic California), much is made in the novel of the ability to market new technology as well as seemingly more mundane elements of contemporaneous American life reinvented for post-apocalyptic living (mousetraps, cigarettes). While there are forces that would reinstate a formally capitalist economic system, the prevailing mode of trade is one of communal exchange, one community exchanging surplus goods for another's. As such, rather than exchanging symbolic goods (cash, debt), the communities exchange material goods, which may be more of a neo-feudalism than a new order of capitalism, as it partakes of an agrarian, communal logic rather than an individuated empowerment of an entrepreneur over his or her employees through means of classic Marxist alienation. In Dick's post-apocalyptic California, humanity succeeds through its communal efforts rather than the success of an individual. For Harrington to succeed in his bid for control would be to reinstate this older logic of capitalism that benefits the individual over the concerns of the community. Perceiving this as the failure of contemporaneous American culture, the novel becomes a morality tale describing not only quasi-capitalist culture after the apocalypse, but also the forces that led to the eventual apocalypse. Thus, the opening chapter of the novel, depicting Conchie's debasement at the hand of an employer, can be read as the result of American capitalism's processes of worker alienation. Conchie's revenge is that in the post-apocalyptic social order he is able to become his own employer, rising from the lowest rung of the American workforce to the highest. The irony is that in the new social order, the rule of the entrepreneur is greatly reduced — but what Conchie loses in power he is granted in freedom, and what society loses in its social power structure embodied in the modern city-state it is granted in the liberties that Dick perceives communal living as granting.

The Wild Shore (1984) details a society much like that of Dick's earlier work: Post-apocalyptic California has grouped itself into small agrarian enclaves who trade between themselves to support their communities (in this way, Robinson's California has adopted the communal capitalism that Dick earlier presented in Dr. Bloodmoney). The threat to the utopian communities, much as in Dr. Bloodmoney, is the unification of the enclaves, but now in the form of mass transit: San Diegans have begun the expansion of a new railroad system northward, which threatens the tranquility of the Orange County inhabitants who are the protagonists of Robinson's novel. The Orange County inhabitants who have begun the expansion of a new railroad system northward, which threatens the tranquility of the Orange County inhabitants who are the protagonists of Robinson's novel. The Orange County inhabitants who have begun the expansion of a new railroad system northward, which threatens the tranquility of the Orange County inhabitants who are the protagonists of Robinson's novel.
Emblematic of advanced capitalism and its attendant dehumanizing discourses, this globalization of capital forces threatens to impinge on the secluded Edens of Robinson's California. The laying of train tracks is the forerunner of the information age, if history is any indicator of technological progress, and indicative of the proximity that capitalism relies upon to facilitate exchange of goods [10]. Although the advancement of transportation and information technologies will presumably be a slow one, this alleged future implies an inevitable socio-cultural progression. Robinson, even more explicitly than Dick before him, writes in the American pastoral tradition emblematized by Henry David Thoreau, who, like Robinson, saw the rise of proximity as a dehumanizing effect of the superstructure. Robinson's community struggles with the issue of becoming connected to the rising global network, eventually foregoing inclusion in favor of preserving its seclusion and promoting its contrary, and more humane, mode of communal capitalism.

Through the advancement of a capitalist ideology, embodied in The Wild Shore in this expansion of the railroad from San Diego to Orange County, and in Dr. Bloodmoney as the rise to power of Harrington, both authors argue at once for the importance of the capitalist paradigm in American culture and its attendant eradication of individuality (in much the same way that Brackett imagines the city as affecting) through the adoption of industrialization and a mode of commerce that devalues the importance of the individual and prefers currency and the entrepreneur. In this movement from religion to capitalism, the shift in American ideologies can be plotted, moving from modernist to postmodernist outlooks; the internalization of the search for truth in fiction becoming decidedly cynical (which is not to say that both Dick and Robinson rule out the possibility of eutopia, simply the plausibility) as America is revealed as necessarily capitalistic, eschewing its legacy of New World utopia for a post-apocalyptic fantasy of commerce unabated.

Dialectics of Class & Race

Robert Heinlein's much criticized novel, Farnham's Freehold (1964), depicts the life of a middle-class suburban family transported into the post-apocalyptic future through scientifically-magical means. The novel concerns the nuclear Farnham family, father (Hugh), mother, son, daughter, daughter's friend Barbara, and the family's black servant Joseph, who are transported, at the instant of nuclear impact, to approximately a thousand years hence. Blacks, primarily originating from the southern hemisphere, have taken control of the post-apocalyptic world, which, among other broad social changes, has allowed them to institute a new racial hierarchy wherein Caucasians are now the ruled, relegated to the servant and slave classes. The Farnhams, displaced into a nature preserve, but thinking their isolation actually evidence of an empty world, begin a small sustenance-level farm and settle into domesticity. Amidst family travails, Hugh Farnham establishes a romantic relationship with his daughter's friend Barbara, and, eventually, the agrarian bliss of the family comes to an end when Ponse, the controller of the region they find themselves in, finds the family while on an excursion with his royal entourage into the woodlands where the Farnhams have made their home. The second half of the novel concerns Ponse's post-apocalyptic society and the indoctrination of the Farnhams into the new social hierarchy (as slaves, servants, and curiosities). Eventually, Hugh devises an escape plan and he and Barbara return to the pre-apocalyptic past to live together and raise their twin children.

That Farnham's Freehold is so radically unscientific implies that Heinlein's purpose in the novel is not the traditional hard SF foray that he's well known for. The "scientific" effect that temporally displaced the Farnhams, Joe, and Barbara, is hardly scientific at all, the event being hypothesized as a direct hit of a nuclear warhead on the Farnham's home. As such, Farnham's Freehold makes more sense as a social allegory than it does as hard SF adventure, but to read the novel as a racial allegory is to misread the text altogether. What Heinlein critiques is the nature of power, of class-based power in American culture, with one of the simplest morals of all: Absolute power corrupts absolutely. Regardless of the color of one's skin, given the means and opportunity, especially within individual-oriented capitalism, someone will be taken advantage of to maintain this power structure (and disparity) [11]. Contemporaneously, it is White culture that is helping to foster the growing Black underclass, and it is simply a matter of trading skin color to depict power's corruptive capabilities. As such, the much decried cannibalism of the future rulers of Earth should be seen as a Swiftian critique of the upper class, not the barbarism of Blacks [12].
Michael Swanwick’s collection of short stories that comprise the mosaic novel *In the Drift* (1985) details a post-apocalyptic East Coast, primarily Philadelphia, after a nuclear meltdown. Philadelphia is reduced to enclaves of survivors, some of them mutated by the radioactive isotopes unleashed by the meltdown, who supply nearby, more established governments with necessary workers. Thus, Swanwick’s post-apocalyptic future is explicitly concerned with class struggle, the upper classes (who live in seclusion in Boston, New York, etc.) pitted against their workforce, further compounded by the latter’s physical transformation into something inhuman. It too, like *Farnham’s Freehold*, hides behind a veneer of “racial” antagonism, but even more explicitly concerns the economics of post-apocalyptic America and the creation (and disadvantaging) of a new underclass. It is through these mutations that an eventual savior is produced, who leads the downtrodden mutants in a class revolt against the capitalist system that represses them.

As a novel, *In the Drift* is a classic fix-up, and suffers from a lack in cohesive thematic development. But, as a collection of stories, of vignettes much like Dick’s *Dr. Bloodmoney*, Swanwick does a rounded examination of the post-apocalyptic reality that the nuclear meltdown has wrought. The first story in the collection, “Mummer Kiss,” is the most telling, and most fully realized — the succeeding stories depend upon its presence for their own veracity, and for the socio-cultural milieu that it establishes. Describing the urban social structure, Swanwick’s post-apocalyptic America depends on the persistence of the Mummers, a typical “men’s club” that depends just as much on its self-imposed authority as it does its empowerment-through-exclusion that society grants it with.

Quickly securing economic control through “protection” payments made by businesses and individuals in lieu of taxes, the Mummers’ power is one that is largely financial, but compounded by fear tactics. The post-apocalyptic economy is precarious, especially within the Mummers’ Philadelphia, and so in order to solidify the power hierarchy, the Mummers implement a class-based system of social advancement. Only the rich can succeed through the Mummer ranks, buying their way, with the poor inevitably sinking to positions within society where they make only enough money to provide themselves with amenities and the “protection” of the Mummers.

Swanwick focuses on the proletarian uprising against the Mummers, who control the upper lawmaking echelons of post-apocalyptic Philadelphia, thereby making the hierarchical nature of the society in the novel evident. Because the revolution is also seen as a “racial” uprising, the mutants against their non-mutated oppressors, the nature of the revolt as economic can be elided in some readings. But it is this economic reality that underlies Philadelphia’s existence, and the Mummers’ power: The racial tactics on their part, of bigotry, is simply a matter of Othering for the benefit of their social control. Far removed from *In the Drift*’s militaristic class struggle, Hugh and Grace Farnham’s marriage is a classic low-maries-high myth (Hugh being of the successful middle class, Grace being upper-middle), later eradicated when Grace, Hugh’s first wife, is promoted again to the upper class, relegating Hugh at once to the lower class that birthed him and allowing him thereby to marry Barbara, a divorcee and similarly lower class citizen. But this is not to say that race is not an important marker in Heinlein’s conception of American culture: Because it has limiting potential, and is entirely ideologically based (with rationalization in biological difference), racism is simply a matter of “false consciousness.” Widely read as racist and inflammatory, Heinlein’s America is classist, and no more classist that the reality of 1960s American life — black Americans were placed *de facto* in the American lower class in the 1960s, deprived, largely, of the ability to move laterally into the upper class simply due to skin color; Memtok, Pons’s Caucasian Chief Domestic, is a glorified house boy in much the same way that Joe was Hugh Farnham’s. Hugh’s final uprising against Pons and his classist regime is an uprising against an American ideology that posits hierarchy as an essential construction of American life in much the same way that Swanwick’s uprising against the Mummers represents a revolt against the upper class and their hegemonic ideals. Both authors posit an ideology based upon hegemonic ideals that regard class hierarchies as essential to American life, thus positing an American ideology in much the same way as previous authors who identified capitalism or religion as necessarily important lines of demarcation.
Gary Wolfe's reading of these narratives posits the central thematic paradigm as the inevitable triumph of technology in human civilization. Wolfe explains that "the catastrophe theme offers science fiction writers a chance to explore [agrarian fantasies] without necessarily sacrificing technocratic values, and to demonstrate that the growth of science is a basic function of human survival" (146). Moreover,

Most of these novels, explicitly or implicitly, tend to validate technology by creating new environments of the unknown that force man to battle against nature, not out of ambitions of appropriation and mastery, but for simple survival. (Wolfe 147)

Thus, according to Wolfe, there occurs a transposition of the symbols of scientific advancement: The atom is replaced with its predecessor, the plow. Rather than the construction of nuclear weaponry, the inspiration of so much Cold War dread, the plow, symbol of agrarian peace, becomes the emblematic representation of humanity's technological needs and ends [14]. Following from this, the landscape becomes the adversary, not other ideological formations. Humanity must learn to cope with the modified (natural) environment, knowing that now there is no ideological competition — only the sustenance of post-apocalyptic society in a potentially adversarial environment. Wolfe continues:

Such works suggest that we may have lost sight of the real meaning (being that which promotes civilization/humanity) of technology, and that we may only recapture this meaning by visualizing an environment as unremittingly hostile as the
As such, civilization, and its progress, is defined in opposition to nature: There is a natural state and it is necessary for humanity, through the process of civilization, to replace that nature with a constructed environment more conducive to human survival (and comfort). While this may be employed as a trope, especially within the context of Brackett's *The Long Tomorrow* and Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, this celebration of technology is endemic to larger cultural formations that allow such a triumph to exist, that being the widespread fetishization in American culture of not only the inventor, but the inventions that facilitate communication, entertainment, and convenience, evidenced in the idolization (and sometimes vilification) of such cultural icons as Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and Bill Gates. But, these matters of technology are only important insomuch as they relate to the perpetuation of everyday life, and the eventual return to contemporaneous life.

Disch, in his 1998 study of the genre, *The Dreams Our Stuff is Made of*, posits that the function of this subgenre is to displace anxieties of nuclear disaster and the destruction of humanity through either simple thought experiments (relieving anxiety by presenting survivors who remain staunchly American in the face of great change, as in *Farnham’s Freehold*), or in the form of humor, i.e. making the apocalypse appear absurd, as is the case with Stanley Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove* (or, *How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*) (1962). But Disch’s reading of both the apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic novel as ameliorating cultural anxieties about nuclear catastrophe and the possibilities of life after any Third World War is again rather simplistic: Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove* may have helped to ease cultural tensions over the possibilities of war by making it appear absurd, but numerous films following in the wake of Kubrick’s only helped, once again, to restore those same cultural anxieties; *Seven Days in May* (1964) in its anxieties over dropping the bomb, and later *Planet of the Apes* (1968) with its post-apocalyptic narrative exhibiting racial and hierarchical anxieties, help to reinstall the very same cultural anxieties that Disch sees ameliorated through such fictions as *Dr. Strangelove*. Whether or not anxieties over nuclear catastrophe can be extinguished, Disch’s thesis grants these fictions only a historical importance, depriving them of most, if not all, of their lingering socio-cultural power-reducing them, instead, to a political tract keyed to the culture of the times in which it was produced (or any ensuing historical period that resembles earlier periods with similarities in cultural anxieties). Most importantly, Disch notes that these fictions help to have “quieted nuclear dread by turning it into the tropes of a new gothicism” (Disch 90), and while post-apocalyptic narratives fail to quell the cultural anxieties regarding nuclear catastrophe, the notion of the gothic, and its descent into darkness, helps to elucidates Edward James’ argument regarding the post-apocalyptic narrative.

James, in *Science Fiction in the 20th Century* (1994), identifies the post-apocalyptic narrative as facilitating two similar thematic paradigms: 1) a reinstated Wild West, an old/new frontier, and 2) the devolution of society, returning it to “simpler times” [15]. The new Wild West, as is largely the case in the wave of “survivalist” novels that arose in the late 1970s, most notoriously Andrew McDonald’s *The Turner Diaries* (1978) [16], are emblematic of the subgenre in their presentations of rugged individuals, inevitably men, who survive despite the holocaust, and through persistence, intelligence, and relentless action, are able to reconstruct a human civilization (generally in their image), while resisting new adversaries in the form of post-apocalyptic mutants (or simply members of other races, as is the case with *The Turner Diaries*). This Wild West, along with its parent theme of the reduction of society to a primitive or tribal mode, characterizes James’ argument:

In the so called “survivalist” novels of the 1980s, the holocaust has been seen as a useful cleansing exercise; according to them, only with the destruction of the corrupt Western World (in which far too much power has been given to feminists, homosexuals, liberals, and blacks) can the good, honest values of the American Wild West be reborn. (90, emphasis mine)

This notion of the “cleansing exercise” is vital to my understanding of the post-apocalyptic narrative as it is the means through which these novels produce their isolation of ideological conflicts, and while the cleansing effects are quite obvious, it is what remains that is decidedly the most important aspect of these fictions [17]. Further, James states that “in the 1950s, the post-holocaust was sometimes...an evaluation of how societies decline into tribalism or barbarism” (James 90).

While many post-apocalyptic narratives employ the trope of society reverted to earlier modes, to argue that this reversion alone is the purpose of these novels again rather simplifies them; they are reduced to neo-Luddite propaganda, hoping to counteract or to decry the modern dependence of
disruptions helped to situate the focus successful, but it was largely individual-oriented representations, literature is particularly useful "cold" media, whereas film is too spectacle-oriented and thereby understanding of the world both legitimate the presence of the individual and help to construct otherwise order to construct a body that she otherwise for further apocalyptic fictions nuclear tensions, and the increasing familiarity of globalized the modes of oppression inherent in a system of Modernist, in nature (Charles Dickens' oeuvre), and science fiction impossibility to contain. Formerly, in the novels of the 1950s and 1960s, it which will it stumble and dissolve, Which ideology will it only become an "America," a mere simulation of what it once was (which may be a simulation itself)? The answer is necessarily impossible to contain. Formerly, in the novels of the 1950s and 1960s, it had been religious, and Modernist, in nature (The Long Tomorrow, Dr. Bloodmoney, A Canticle for Leibowitz), but in the late 1960s it quickly changed to one more concerned with capitalism, which it has sadly remained, and the modes of oppression inherent in a system of relentless commodification that relies on divisions of class, race, and gender (identity politics rather than Manichean dialectics). But with the easing of nuclear tensions, and the increasing familiarity of globalized hegemonic capitalism, there is no need for further apocalyptic fictions — the voices have spoken, the exorcism has occurred [18].

Returning to Althusser, the imaginary relationship that an individual has to the socio-cultural body that she or he is a part of is of critical importance to the way in which fictions are understood to work within culture. Ideology is at once prosthetic and medium: Placed outside of the self in order to construct a meaningful relationship between the individual and a superstructure that may otherwise be seen as uncaring or oblivious to the individual's presence, the prosthetic works to both legitimate the presence of the individual and help to construct a narrative line of subjective understanding of the world [19]. My understanding of literature stems from Freidrich Kittler's understanding of media as fulfilling some manufactured "lack" (in the Lacanian sense) on the part of humanity [20]. Working from an understanding of Marshall McLuhan's notions of "hot" and "cold" media, whereas film is too spectacle-oriented and thereby deprived of quotidian representations, literature is particularly useful in representing the everyday lives that people desire [21]. With the rise of industrialization, literature that depicted disruptions of the quotidian became successful, but it was largely individual-oriented (Charles Dickens' oeuvre), and science fiction helped to situate the focus of literature on the macro level of society, imagining widespread disruptions in everyday life, most dramatically realized in the post-apocalyptic novel.

Ideology works to expedite the coherence of events; in Stieglerian terms, this relies on the desire
of the individual to narratize both the immediate concerns of the everyday and the broader socio-cultural events that occur in the periphery of life. But ideology is not utopian — by necessity: “Man’s adaptation to his desire is arrested mid way between the real and the possible, between experience and make-believe; his adaptation is also blocked by basic repressions” (Lefebvre 84, emphasis in original). A eutopian ideology is self-destructive; it fails to construct a viable understanding of the machinations of the milieu, and must ultimately fail. “False consciousness,” this dystopian prosthetic, while it may work in some limited capacity, fails to properly narrativize everyday life. It is a faulty prosthetic, and a tool is only useful and convenient as long as it requires no maintenance:

   The tool appears at one and the same time qua the result of anticipation, exteriorization, and qua the condition of all anticipation, anticipation appearing itself qua the interiorization of the originary fact of exteriorization. Exteriorization qua the act that is the horizon of anticipation...[is] the very moment of reflexivity, of the affection of self as a return to the self. (Stiegler 1998, 153)

The creation of the ideology of the “everyday” helps at once to mediate the persistently dismal realization of the quotidian as well as creating a dialectical relationship between the everyday and the “perfect day” [22]. The acknowledgement of the quotidian aspects of life elucidate the areas for utopian change, thus creating a mitigating need for the everyday to be a stunted realization of what can be desired, and is.

   Make-believe as such is a part of everyday life, everybody expects his daily (or weekly) ration; yet make-believe has a specific role in relation to everyday experience (compulsions and adaptation): it must disguise the predominance of compulsion and our limited capacity to adapt, the bitterness of conflicts and the weight of “real” problems, and sometimes it can further adaptation or circumscribe experience. (Lefebvre 90)

Although it is particularly dangerous to ascribe transcendent powers of adaptation to fictional representations of the world in which we live, allowing the reader to make-believe his or her way out of the quotidian, through the mediation of ideology the individual is able to come to terms with the fictions we all must create to make sense of our “everyday.”

[24] Myths of quotidian disruption are promulgated by the machine of capitalism, promoting the carefully deceptive fiction of revolution, or radical change, through the fictions of the fringe (the Deleuzo-Guattarian “minor literatures” [23]) — as if the act of consumption, of buying and reading a novel or comic book, could, in itself, further a political end. Even in those historical moments where something akin to a political movement has occurred (Edward Bellamy’s Looking Backward and the rise of Bellamy Clubs), these “political” attempts are ultimately circumscribed by the very act of consumption that underlies the formation of such groups. It is impossible to escape the totalitarian rule of capital, and any political attempt is undermined by its presence — even on the fringes of such an attempt — in a capitalizing system. For Lefebvre, this process finds its realization in the fact that “Consuming creates nothing, not even a relation between consumers, it only consumes; the act of consuming, although significant enough in this so-called society of consumption, is a solitary act, transmitted by a mirror effect, a play with mirrors on/by the other consumer” (Lefebvre 115).

Inasmuch as the fiction may be necessary, and it surely is through Althusser and Stiegler’s construction of the prosthetic of ideology, it is a blank act, working in the end to simply stabilize the systemic rule of capital (and hegemonic capitalism). The very dreams that are narrativized become suspect as they fall prey to the rule of merchandise.

[25] These fictions are ultimately limited in what they can imagine simply because of the contemporaneous culture that has given birth to them, and capitalized upon their existence — these are projections of a future that is historically specific, and thereby circumscribed in its abilities of prediction. If we are to find ways out of the cultural logic that global capitalism has supplied us, then it must be through our fictions, through the terrorism of eutopia, through the stories of better worlds we tell one another. But fiction has not become experimental enough, it no longer reaches for the stars inasmuch as it might be set there. All the possibilities that science fiction once foretold have failed, and rather than bemoan their premature deaths, we must revisit the spirit of these fictions, recapture their eutopian potential, and do something. Reading is no longer enough; eutopia must be a conduct [24].

Works Cited


Wolfe, Gary K. *The Known and the Unknown: The Iconography of Science Fiction*. Kent, OH: Kent State University, 1979.


Notes


[2] Presumably through similar analyses of fictions of the apocalypse from other nations, similar dialectical oppositions, and conclusions can be drawn about the nature of nationalist ideologies.

[3] By "contemporaneous" I mean the time in which the novel was written, as opposed to "contemporary," which I employ to denote the time of reading.

[4] Admittedly, within the first section of the novel, the rediscovery of science is rather accidental. Acting as archeologists, one order of Catholic monks discovers a cache of material once owned by the eponymous (and rather mysterious), St. Liebowitz. But this discovery acts as a catalyst for their future actions. The second section of the novel describes the Order of Liebowitz's reinvention of electricity, and the final section parallels their space-faring rocketry with the nuclear rocketry of secular society. As such, while the Catholics pursue technological advancement alongside their secular cohabitants, the Church's development is necessarily more peaceful in intent. Further, the Church, after the nuclear war that brought society to its present state, provided sanctuary for scientists whom the "barbarian" population took to be emblematic of the devastation that they and their families had survived.

[5] See Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture*, for elaboration on this point, pgs. 69-70. Religion has positioned itself as a focal point of identification, and in the clash of Cultures, religion is one of the conspiring forces that facilitates such division.

[6] I employ Brian Attebery's demarcation of terminology: "eutopia" being "good place," "utopia" being rather ambiguous, or good for some, bad for others (i.e. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*), and "dystopia" referring to societies/cultures that are adverse to the majority of people (i.e. George Orwell's 1984).

[7] One need look no further than the vilification of Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber, for evidence of this. His crimes became secondary to his lifestyle: More often than the victims of his terrorist attempts were discussed, pictures of his shanty home and his frazzled (non-cosmetic) appearance were displayed. What was wrong with Kaczynski was not that he harmed people, but that he rejected technology.

[8] Dick wrote other post-apocalyptic novels, and much of his work implicitly concerns human
culture after some sort of devastation, but Dr. Bloodmoney is explicitly about life after the apocalypse, and as such, and because of its obvious successors, is rather important to the development of the subgenre.

More recently, Vernon Vinge has revisited a similar social configuration in The Peace War and its sequel the difference being that for Vinge capitalism has become the primary force in post-apocalyptic America, and the protagonists are seen as revolutionaries for their stance in opposition to it.

For a further elaboration of speed and proximity and its role in the development of capitalism, see Paul Virilio's Open Sky and Speed and Politics, as well as Manuel Castells' The Rise of the Network Society.

See William Julius Wilson's The Declining Significance of Race. Wilson sees that while there is a increasing blindness to the race (at least in this early work) in terms of who is being taken advantage of, that Blacks will continue to be disadvantaged because of their history of disadvantage and their very susceptibility to such. A system that began with slavery will continue to foster a race-based underclass, almost regardless of race.

But of all Heinlein's novels, Farnham's Freehold depends upon a careful critique on the part of the reader, and as a social allegory amid other more scientifically and morally plain works, it was bound to be misread. This is not to act apologetically for Heinlein — as if a critic could — but rather to attempt to recover a powerful (if not plausible) novel.

Gary Westfahl's recent limp assault on Marxist science fiction scholars is hardly worth mention. His understanding of Marxist thought extends no further than market forces — and even in this respect is rather limited. While the germ of his criticism of insufficient criticism is appropriate, he is surely not the right, or most qualified person, to make such a claim. For those interested in Westfahl's argument see “Scientific Fact and Prophetic Vision: Marxism, Science Fiction, and the ‘Fantastic Other’.” The Fantastic Other: An Interface of Perspectives. Brett Cooke et al. Ed. Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998. 187-208.

Cf. Frieda Knobloch's The Culture of Wilderness: Agriculture as Colonization in the American West (1996) for a more detailed reading of the plow and its role in American culture.

By “simpler times" I mean to invoke the widespread cultural notion that the past was inevitably more understandable, albeit rustic in nature. This is hyperreality at its finest, and clearly not the case: The Wild West was anything but simple for the underclass — or for that matter, the middle (what there was of it), and upper classes. For an alternate, less celebratory, interpretation of the American frontier, see Patricia Limerick's The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West (1987).

It is known now that "Andrew MacDonald" was the pen name of William Pierce, a former Physics professor that has retired, as written in the "About the Author" section in later printings of The Turner Diaries, to a "remote, forested mountain" in West Virginia. The novel became rather famous after Timothy McVeigh's admission in a Time interview that he had not only purchased the book, but later acted as a huckster at gun shows selling Pierce's inflammatory novel. Considering McVeigh's own flirtation with the apocalyptic, it is easy to see how fiction of the future can inspire the individual to affect the future — for good or ill.


The exception hereto is the widely popular "Left Behind" series, authored by Tim Lahaye and Jerry Jenkins, which remains in the old mode of religious identity politics, but which, rather than laud the strength of the Mennonites or Amish, decries the ineptitudes of those that failed to follow a properly Christian path, and as such are left to fend for themselves on a war-torn Earth.

"A pro-thesis is what is placed in front of, that is, what is outside, outside of what it lies outside of. However, if what is outside constitutes the very being of what it lies outside of, then this being is outside itself" (Stiegler 1998, 195, emphasis in original).


But films that partake of the quotidian are usually rather successful, and one need look no
further than the wild success of *American Beauty* (1999), with its depiction of the felt everyday life of upper middle class America and the rather dramatic, and Romantic, disruptions that could take place to deprive the quotidian of its dehumanizing powers.

[22] Cf. Davin Heckman's *"It's a Small World After All": Smart Homes, Narrative, and the Technology of the Perfect Day* (2004). As Heckman explains, the Perfect Day is

a technologically enhanced style of daily living. Considering interactivity as a refinement of disciplinary form, even as it liberates subjects from the constraints of more static media, the Perfect Day is an attempt to institutionalize everyday life as the ultimate consumer practice. In attempting to remove undesired impediments to the realization of the self in the consumer world, the Perfect Day offers a technological solution by which traditional ethical considerations can be avoided and pleasure can be pursued. (32)

[23] Cf. Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975). Among the principle elements of "minor literature," Deleuze and Guattari list the need for it to be explicitly political. These fictions, and their ilk, should be seen as the political tracts they are, although whether they are "minor" is another matter altogether.

[24] For details on this conception of "conduct," see Judith Butler's *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997). While I admit that this is an abrupt end to my argument, my hope is that the act of reading Butler, or of recalling Butler, will begin a conduct on the part of my audience. Our eutopian stories, out of necessity, must be incomplete.

Post-apocalyptic films, derived from the term apocalypse which means a world-wide devastation and disaster, are a sub-genre focused on the post-disaster world in the science fiction genre. The increasing likelihood of a variety of disasters, such as nuclear warfare, danger of artificial intelligence related disasters, alien invasion, environmental disasters, viruses, pollution and global warming, has led to an excitement in the making of large-budget, large-income targeting films labelled as blockbuster. Thus, these films are aimed to reveal the deflection of the myth or the return of the myth in such a way as to give an appreciation to them. Keywords: Cinema, Science Fiction, Post-apocalyptic, Apocalypticism, Disaster. Discover the world's research. 15+ million members.