

## **Abstract**

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