

## ABSTRACT

### “ALL THIS OVER A FAMILY SQUABBLE...HEALTHY BABIES”: REPRODUCTIVE FUTURITY AND THE POST-APOCALYPSE

Lee Edelman's Theory of Reproductive Futurity places the image of the Child as a foundational trope of society. The Child trope cannot be questioned, for to do so would put one at odds with society itself. This essay uses post-apocalyptic narratives, which foreground the reproduction of children for the sake of humanity, to examine and problematize Edelman's formulation of Reproductive Futurity. It uses the dual images of the road and birth to examine the trope of the child and its implications for discussions of race and gender that Edelman glosses over. It also argues post-apocalyptic narratives are inherently hopeful in their rejection of the end of humanity.

Jonathan Andrew Byron Palmer  
August 2017



“ALL THIS OVER A FAMILY SQUABBLE...HEALTHY  
BABIES”: REPRODUCTIVE FUTURITY AND  
THE POST-APOCALYPSE

by

Jonathan Andrew Byron Palmer

A thesis

submitted in partial

fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in English

in the College of Arts & Humanities

California State University, Fresno

August 2017



APPROVED

For the Department of English:

We, the undersigned, certify that the thesis of the following student meets the required standards of scholarship, format, and style of the university and the student's graduate degree program for the awarding of the master's degree.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jonathan Andrew Byron Palmer  
Thesis Author

\_\_\_\_\_  
John Beynon (Chair) English

\_\_\_\_\_  
Alison Mandaville English

\_\_\_\_\_  
Melanie Hernandez English

For the University Graduate Committee:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean, Division of Graduate Studies

AUTHORIZATION FOR REPRODUCTION  
OF MASTER'S THESIS

\_\_\_\_\_ x \_\_\_\_\_ I grant permission for the reproduction of this thesis in part or in its entirety without further authorization from me, on the condition that the person or agency requesting reproduction absorbs the cost and provides proper acknowledgment of authorship.

\_\_\_\_\_ Permission to reproduce this thesis in part or in its entirety must be obtained from me.

Signature of thesis author: \_\_\_\_\_

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Melanie Hernandez, Alison Mandaville and John Beynon for their guidance in this endeavor. I would also like to thank my parents Byron and Pam Palmer as well as my siblings Heather and Jamie who supported me even in the tough times. Lastly, I want to thank my wife Shelly who believed in me, even when I did not. Thank you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2: THE FIRST LAST MAN.....	12
CHAPTER 3: ROAD TO BIRTH .....	24
The Fury Road and The Redemption of Hope.....	28
Raising a Child on <i>The Road</i> : Alienation of Father and Son.....	35
Child of the Road: The Ark of Art and Checkpoints .....	40
CHAPTER 4: BIRTH ON THE ROAD .....	45
Splendid's Sacrifice: The Return of the Green Place .....	47
Child of Kee: Refuge and the Refugee .....	53
Motherhood and The Alien Child .....	57
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION .....	63
WORKS CITED .....	67

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Chykowski, Peter. A two-sentence summary of every episode of <i>The Walking Dead</i> .....	46

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On March 23, 2016, The North Carolina state legislature passed HB2, a measure blocking local municipalities from passing anti-discrimination laws designed to protect gay and transgender rights. The law, largely aimed at a measure passed by the city of Charlotte the previous month, was dubbed a bathroom bill and consequently was particularly strident on the use of bathrooms by transgendered individuals: effectively barring them from using gendered restrooms other than the gender assigned at birth. One of the chief arguments for North Carolina's statute has been the need to protect young girls from predatory men who would do them harm and stand behind the protections supposedly granted by Charlotte's transgender anti-discrimination policy. The bill led prominent businesses threatening to pull out of North Carolina including the NCAA. On March 30, 2017, portions of the bill were repealed in a compromise that did away with the requirement that transgender individuals use the bathroom of the gender they were assigned at birth. The prohibition on local municipalities passing anti-discrimination laws was kept in place however it was made temporary. Despite the backlash against North Carolina similar bills have popped up in other conservative-led states such as Texas and Arkansas.

Much of the ink spilled in defense of the North Carolina legislature who passed this bill to supersede Charlotte revolves around that pathetic, cherubic, and innocent symbol of the girl who needs protection from the boogeyman in women's clothing. The argument against anti-discrimination willfully and flagrantly places the value of the image of a child versus the transgendered at any age. Lee Edelman ties this political image of the child to a structure of society around the futurity of children: namely that the imagined production of children creates and guarantees

the future of humanity. He names this structural image reproductive futurity and questions its place as one of the founding tropes of politics in society. Not in the conservative-liberal binary that so much political conflict eventually boils down to but instead as an unquestioned building block of societal expectation. In other words, the most sacred of sacred cows, one that cannot be questioned in the slightest for to do so places one outside the social order. Edelman explains,

For politics, however radical the means by which some of its practitioners seek to effect a more desirable social order, is conservative insofar as it necessarily works to *affirm* a social order, defining various strategies aimed at actualizing social reality and transmitting it into the future it aims to bequeath to its inner child. What in that case, would it signify *not* to be “fighting for the children?” How, then, to take the *other* “side” when to take a side at all necessarily constrains one to take the side of, by virtue of taking a side within, a political framework that compulsively returns to the child as the privileged ensign of the future it intends? (Edelman 288)

There is no a way to escape the privilege that the image of the child affords itself in any debate. Any argument raised in opposition to the child is setting itself against one of the highest bars of sociality and by necessity requires a rhetorical force almost unimaginable. The child is not enshrined in the laws of the founding fathers but instead seems to be ascribed to supposedly fundamental beliefs about the primacy of future children, and the future reproduction affords one. Whether it is the image of the football player buying his mother a car or the pride of a parent in their college educated child’s success, the future child is stuffed with a potentiality almost without limit.

The reproduction of children becomes the end point of all social action in a world where the image of the child holds such potency. Sociality can be seen to be heteronormative under these constraints. What value is there in a person that cannot or, more troublingly to the social order, will not produce children due to sexual orientation? What value is sex for pleasure when reproduction is tied directly to the creation of children? Edelman ties heterosexuality and the child trope together by focusing on the meaning inherent to an identity.

The child whose pure possibility suffices to spirit away the naked truth of heterosexual sex, seeming to impregnate heterosexuality itself with the future of signification by bestowing upon it the cultural burden of signifying the future, figures an identification with an always about to-be-realized identity—and identity intent on disavowing the threat to the symbolic order of meaning that inheres in a structure of desire that drives us to seek fulfillment in a meaning unable, *as* meaning, to fulfill us: unable, that is, to close the gap in identity that “meaning” means. (Edelman 290-291)

Heterosexuality as identity becomes tied to meaning and purpose in life. The production of children, in turn, provide meaning to life and foreclose relationships that would hinder or block said reproduction rendering them antisocial and worthless. Judith Halberstam echoes this sentiment by pointing to the effect of reproduction on life and how the production of children structures heteronormative life into a timeline of respectability. She writes,

The time of reproduction is ruled by a biological clock for women and by strict bourgeois rules of respectability and scheduling for married couples. Obviously, not all people who have children keep or even are able to keep reproductive time, but many and possibly

most people believe that the scheduling of repro-time is natural and desirable. (Halberstam 5)

The symbolism of the child structures sociality, community, and even the timeline of one's life into a heteronormative machine intent on a future based in reproduction. Reproductive futurity encompasses the entire timeline of one's life. One does not recognize that the protection of the idea of childhood is built on a nostalgic past. Nostalgia figures heavily in the production of reproductive futurity. Edelman writes, "That child, immured in an innocence seen as continuously under siege, embodies a fantasy unable to withstand the queerness of queer sexualities precisely insofar as it promises the perpetuation of the same, the return, by way of the future, to an imaginary past" (Edelman 293-294). While Edelman is arguing that queerness directly threatens the nostalgic, imaginary past, I would argue that this conflation of the nostalgic past and hopeful future applies in other ways as well. Society and heteronormativity become synonymous in a world where the child structures the social order. Is there an escape from the all-encompassing child? What happens when the future child is threatened, and the underpinning rules of society break down? What happens when the child meets the apocalypse?

This would be a good time to ask what post-apocalyptic settings do to narratives before jumping into why reproductive futurity works so well with them. For my purposes, post-apocalyptic settings have multiple parts: One, a massive cataclysm hereafter referred to as the apocalypse has altered the state of the world and could lead to the extinction of humanity; Two, human society has been altered in some fundamental way in the wake of said cataclysm; and Three, in response to their setting humanity soldiers on. While this is perhaps an overbroad definition, I cover multiple types of apocalyptic events from massive nuclear wars to the slow but methodical death of humankind due to the loss of fertility. I also want to make

the distinction between post-apocalyptic settings and dystopic narratives. While both include treacherous and difficult living conditions for life, dystopic narratives do not include hopeful endings. I do recognize that there is overlap between the two genres. Humans have an amazing ability to self-aggrandize our species and post-apocalyptic narratives, I would argue, reflect human inability to accept the end. Stephen R. L. Clark writes,

On the one hand, we wish to be part of something that will last forever. On the other, nothing is real to us that does not have an end. The contradiction is solved, it seems, by accepting the cyclical view of being that we impose on history. Every real entity must have an end – but it, or something very like it comes again. (Clark 30-31)

Clark touches on why post-apocalyptic narratives hold such interest. They address two seemingly opposed positions: the desire for immortality and the realization that all things must come to an end. This is precisely the tension between the post and the apocalyptic in the term “post-apocalyptic. It is at once a horrifying acceptance of the end and a hope that humanity might survive or escape that horrible end. Post-apocalyptic narratives give humanity an escape from the end, and that escape is usually based in reproduction.

Post-Apocalyptic narratives foreground reproductive futurity in a concrete and literal way. The future of humanity becomes bound up in the need for future children. Production of offspring is more often than not proposed, or at least implied, as the future and thus it becomes a type of salvation from the apocalypse. Every birth becomes the product of miraculous conception in a world where the very choice to have a child could mean the continuation of humanity. Even in apocalyptic narratives where children are absent or not foregrounded in the narrative, their value is tied to humanity’s future. However, not unsurprisingly the

apocalypse is perhaps most dangerous to children. As society crumbles, an important dichotomy becomes clear: Children may be the future, but at the same time they are in the most danger. Apocalyptic narratives are a natural place to interrogate reproductive futurity because the reproduction of children is routinely held as the most important act for the future of the human race. They foreground an aggressive adherence to reproductive futurity. Is a rejection of reproductive futurity an effective or even sustainable argument in light of an apocalyptic narrative? What does reproductive futurity look like and mean in the shadow of the apocalypse? Is there a future for humanity apart from the reproduction of children and what does that mean or look like for queer studies and community? How does gender tie into the world of the apocalypse and where does Edelman's rejection of reproductive futurity erase female voices and bodies? Some may argue that apocalyptic narratives create artificial constraints on humanity which would foreground the need for children. However, it is that very artifice firmly controlled by the author that elides the nature of reproductive futurity. Apocalyptic narratives serve as a reminder of what we stand to lose in a catastrophic loss of life and what may be required to rebuild a society.

One unfortunate side effect of the primacy of reproductive futurity in post-apocalyptic narratives is the erasure of queer voices. That is not to say that the genre is devoid of them, or that there aren't other areas of promise for queer folk in apocalyptic narratives. Examples of queer voices can be found in current shows like CW's *The 100*<sup>1</sup>. Gender expectations can also be flipped in worlds where

---

<sup>1</sup> Protagonist Clarke Griffin (Eliza Taylor) has been portrayed as bisexual throughout the course of the show. However, the showrunners were roundly criticized when her romance to another character Lexa (Alycia Debnam-Carey) was cut short by Lexa's murder within the same episode the couple declared their love for each other. The showrunners have since apologized for their handling of Lexa's death.

threats do not discriminate between either gender. Zombies will eat the brains of whomever they can get their hands on. Another way that apocalyptic narratives create spaces for queer voices is in the way that alternative family structures are routinely built in response to the threats of the apocalypse. Shows like *The 100*, *The Walking Dead*, and films like *Mad Max: Fury Road* feature shifting alliances between groups of people who band together against the threats of the apocalypse. While many of these examples still signal aggressive adherence to gendered coupling and male leadership; the day in, day out, dealings of the characters can subvert expectations about dominant patriarchal expectations of gender relationships. Fan fiction and fan communities also create pressure on the creative teams behind these works to subvert the heterosexual domination in them. This is not to say that post-apocalyptic narratives have figured out how to include queer viewpoints as a matter of fact: just that there is an outside push for diversity. However, the idealized heterosexual coupling that produces children is still associated with furthering the future of humanity under the artificial constraints of the apocalypse. Reproductive futurity may, in fact, be one of the most bedrock tropes of apocalyptic literature.

I would like to examine examples of the post-apocalypse to get a sense of how reproductive futurity functions in these works. To that end, I will be looking at four different works of post-apocalyptic fiction. Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* is foundational as a prototype of the post-apocalyptic narrative. While some may argue that it has more in common with an apocalyptic narrative, as it ends with the titular last man wandering the countryside without a future, I would argue that it gestures at a future beyond humanity. The post-apocalypse is laid out before protagonist Lionel Verney and indeed the reader through the author's reading of Sybilline leaves. In a cyclical manner, the metaphorical author of *The Last Man*

interprets the writings of the future Verney in an attempt at understanding her sense of loss. *The Last Man* gestures at what is truly important when one is the last man. Verney's small friend group creates an alternative family structure that for a brief moment signals queer formulations of family. What does it mean to be able to look back at the mighty works of man and see the totality of humanity's accomplishments? What is important to memorialize as the numbers of humanity dwindle? What role do children play at the end of the world of humans?

After having analyzed *The Last Man*, I will be reading three other narratives in light of two different themes: The Road to Birth and Birth on the Road. The apocalypse forces movements of people to escape its effects. Whether it's an attempt to escape the flu-like epidemic of *The Last Man*, traveling south for winter in *The Road*, a mad dash getaway from a tyrant in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, or a flight to freedom to save the first pregnant mother in 20 years in *Children of Men*, the image of the road plays an important part in the overall movement of these narratives as well as providing conflict for the characters to handle. The road functions not as a frontier of possibility but as a place of great constraint and difficulty. The act of giving birth in the apocalypse frequently happens on the road in dangerous conditions which could have disastrous consequences, not only for mother and father, but also for those around them. Because of the constraints of the road, giving birth is a powerful statement of hope in a future in the apocalypse. Aggressive adherence to reproductive futurity, especially in light of patriarchal expectations of the roles of men and women, can be especially dangerous in the hands of a tyrant. Women come to be seen as walking wombs whose only purpose is the creation of children in the world of the apocalypse. In addition, birth is not always a choice and the idealized relationship between mother and child can be

easily subverted in a world where the apocalypse has eroded all societal expectations.

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* follows a fatally sick Father and young Son fleeing to the American south to escape the ravages of a fast-approaching winter. Dodging cannibals and trying to hide his fatal cough, Father tries desperately to impart the needed survival skills and moral compass that will lead the young boy to safety. Hunger and its effects on the few surviving member of humanity five years after an unnamed catastrophe is examined in detail. The choices about what one is willing to do to sate hunger are cast as a morality test juxtaposed against an unforgiving landscape with dangerous people. The Mother's suicide—her response to the weight—of the apocalypse serves as a foil for Father's dogged determination to keep his Son alive. My focus on the Father here is to show the way McCarthy handles gender and childrearing in the apocalypse. Gender roles are continuously subverted as the idealized mother and child relationship is sundered.

*Mad Max: Fury Road* is the fourth installment of the storied *Mad Max* franchise. In an attempt at redemption Imperator Furiosa (Charlize Theron) attempts to jailbreak the Five Wives of the despotic Immortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne) to escape the sand swept hell-scape of a post-nuclear war for the green place of her youth. The titular Max (Tom Hardy) is drafted unwillingly into this escape by coincidence along with Nux (Nicholas Hoult), one of Joe's warboys on his last legs. *Mad Max: Fury Road* makes a surprising feminist critique of male domination. It hints that the destruction of the world is at the hands of tyrannical men like Immortan Joe. Women are reduced to reproductive props in the hands of unchecked masculine aggression, male desire to reproduce to maintain one's legacy, and control of resources. The five wives themselves, carrying Immortan

Joe's baby's, have decided to cast off the title of Joe's property and claim a future for themselves and their babies in the nostalgic green place of Furiosa's birth. To that end they accept, at great personal risk to themselves, Furiosa's aid in escape.

Alfonso Cuarón's cinematic adaptation of P.D. James's novel *Children of Men* turns a harsh light on anti-immigration fervor in the wake of a planet-wide crisis. The world is in turmoil eighteen years after the entire population of the world has become infertile. According to its own propaganda, only the island nation of Great Britain stands above the wreckage of a world without hope. Theo Faron (Clive Owen), a once progressive activist turned government drone, is pulled back into the world of causes when his ex-wife Julian (Julianne Moore) and the Fishes, a quasi-terrorist group she leads, tap him for help getting transport papers to move human cargo across military checkpoints to the sea. Refugees from the rest of the world have been outlawed and are herded into deplorable refugee camps like animals. The human cargo Theo is moving turns out to be Kee (Clare-Hope Ashitay), the first pregnant woman in 18 years. Her status as a black refugee makes her dangerous both to the establishment that desperately acts like refugees are the cause of all problems in Great Britain and the refugee supporting Fishes who want to use her baby to lead a revolution against the government. What is lost between these two extremes is Kee's desire for her baby. Theo ultimately is tapped to aid her in escaping to the Human Project, a secretive humanitarian project trying to restart reproduction. *Children of Men* focuses attention back onto the lived-in experience of people in terrible situations. It shows the ivory towers of the elite who have lost all hope for the world and just want to die surrounded by their toys and the lowest forgotten minority stuck in the bombed out hellscape of a refugee camp. It asks questions about why people are willing to allow these

atrocities happen to their fellow man. In the end, the hope found in Kee's baby echoes the sentiment that children are the future in a world without hope.

Ultimately, I argue that apocalyptic narratives generally adhere to reproductive futurity as formulated by Lee Edelman. His argument that children are the implied future of humanity seems to survive the apocalypse unscathed. However, I would argue there are gaps the apocalypse lays bare where the trope of the child is questioned; where Edelman's argument fails to take into account other queer folk's experiences. In a thesis devoted to what happens to humanity after the end of the world, it seems appropriate to begin with a narrative about the last man.

## CHAPTER 2: THE FIRST LAST MAN

A reading of Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* can give an example of the way that apocalyptic narratives put pressure on society's underpinning structure as society crumbles. I have chosen to use *The Last Man* as a prototypical apocalyptic narrative due to its surprisingly timeless distillation of current apocalyptic imagery: society crumbling, humans on the road, and a mysterious plague. I find *The Last Man* to be a foundational text in sketching out the tropes of contemporary apocalyptic narratives. Shelley's work is eerily prescient in the fears that still animate today, even though *The Last Man* recalls fears common to the Middle Ages in Europe: plague and pestilence. Her work is not so much an assertion of futurity, as it is a recognition and reckoning of the end of life, as it reflects the death of her husband and her recognition of her place as his survivor. In Lee Edelman's theory of reproductive futurity, he sketches out the trope of the child and its othering effect on queerness in society however he fails to account for other aspects of queerness that do not reflect his own male, homosexual position. He fails, for example, to fully consider the implications of gender and race to his positive rejection of a politics of futurity. My discussions in this chapter can be used to address Edelman's formulation of reproductive futurity. As we will see in *The Last Man* and later post-apocalyptic narratives, they tend to restructure family groups in ways that question heterosexual orthodoxy. While they do not always throw away heterosexual coupling, they do tend to create situations that raise questions about its primacy.

In the strictest sense, *The Last Man* is not a post-apocalyptic novel. While I am using it here as a post-apocalyptic narrative, it would be proper to recognize that it belongs to its own genre: The Last Man genre. David Seed writes,

The notion of an ending...does have the appeal of rescuing us from the ultimate nightmare of endless, undifferentiated duration. One tradition which grew from this issue, predating the present age by at least a century, was the series of 'last man' fictions, where the end of the human species is imagined. (Seed 3)

The "last man" genre embraces the end of humanity. Lionel Verney's narrative has to be brought through time by the Sibylline prophet and interpreted by the author. His writings exist because they have traveled through time, not as a warning but as a record of the end of humanity. I.F. Clarke believes that Shelley used the future to recall nostalgic happier times by writing her loved ones into the novel even as she writes their end (Clarke 19-20). The "last man" genre, even as it depicts the end of humanity, is one that celebrates humanity's achievements. Paul A. Cantor argues, "The idea of the last man is in fact the ultimate image of cultural belatedness: to stand at the final moment of human history and thus be able to survey the whole of human cultural achievement" (Cantor 204). This ability to see all of human achievement must have been powerful image for the romantics that wrote these "last man" narratives. Perhaps it is hubris to write that all art ends with one's chosen genre of art. Shelley, however, uses *The Last Man* as a place to grieve and memorialize her husband and her friend group.

Lionel Verney's prophetic journey into oblivion is surprisingly light on apocalyptic imagery despite its genre as a last man narrative. Instead, well over half the text is focused on the social community built around Lionel's beloved Adrian who lifts him out of a childhood of destitution and rage. The last third tells of the steep decline of the world's population until at last Lionel Verney is the last man. The end of his life is mirroring its beginning. Lionel and Perdita, born to the dissipated best friend of the former king of England, roam the countryside living

as orphaned waifs. Lionel especially curses the name of the former king and his children who did not see fit to aid Lionel's father. He believes the former king's rejection has directly led to his childhood as a penniless hoodlum. When word arrives that the Earl of Windsor will be in Northumberland, Lionel rages against the unknown youth,

All was attributed to him, for I confounded so entirely the idea of father and son, that I forgot that the latter might be wholly unconscious of his parent's neglect of us; and as I struck my aching head with my hand, I cried: 'He shall hear of this! I will be revenged! I will not suffer like a spaniel! He shall know, beggar and friendless as I am, that I will not tamely submit to injury!' (Shelley 23)

Lionel comes into the world penniless, and the death of his parents force him to a life of thievery and crime. He curses his lot and blames it on a boy he has never met nor presumably ever would meet. The older Lionel as the writer recognizes his youthful mistakes and foreshadows the change his personality will go through after meeting Adrian. Caught in the act of poaching on the Windsor estate, Lionel is shamed upon meeting the son of his father's best friend. Lionel describes himself,

My garments were torn, and they as well as my hands, were stained with the blood of a man I had wounded; one hand grasped the dead birds—my hard-earned prey, the other held the knife; my hair was matted; my face besmeared with the same guilty signs that bore witness against me on the dripping instrument I clenched; my whole appearance was haggard and squalid. Tall and muscular as I was in

form, I must have looked like, what indeed I was, the merest ruffian that ever trod the earth. (Shelley 25)

The first meeting of Adrian and Lionel foregrounds the image of the savage Lionel in his youth. Adrian lifts Lionel out of squalor and savagery, giving him an education and elevating his mind. This moment of elevation from savage to intellectual, impressive in its swiftness, is surprising due to the devotion inspired between Adrian and Lionel. Their relationship becomes the fulcrum on which the text tips.

Many scholars read *The Last Man* as a *roman à clef*. Reading the text this way is not surprising as it is the first novel published after the death of Percy Bysshe Shelley. The text's underlying themes of loss, abandonment, and yet passionate communal friendship follow Shelley wrestling with the death of Percy. Lionel and Perdita each represent different sides of Mary Shelley while Adrian represents Percy. Maggie Kilgour reads *The Last Man* as being Shelley's attempt to gain control over his legacy and representation. She argues,

More subtly, however, the novel also weaves together a remarkable range of literary sources to form the powerful romantic myth of the Shelleys's total oneness. In fact, at the end of the text the couple merges into a single person: The Last Man himself. The representation of the isolated figure of the narrator becomes a means both of expressing Percy and Mary's separation by death, and also of overcoming it by imagining a corporate figure who is finally and completely two Shelleys in one. (Kilgour 564)

To Kilgour, the titular last man represents the oneness of the Shelleys in the figure of Lionel. Even as Percy has died, Mary can shape his legacy as she sees fit. To

put a crass spin on this dynamic, she can control the narrative of Percy and herself. Kilgour further writes,

While Mary Shelley hoped in her journals to become more like her husband, as his survivor and later his editor, she had the power to shape him in her own image. Though she encouraged others to think of herself as her husband's Frankensteinian creation, we are increasingly realizing her role in bringing her husband back to life by putting together his mangled corpus. (Kilgour 582)

Even as some may be tempted to read a queer friendship onto Lionel and Adrian's relationship, the text can also be read to preclude it. That does not, however, preclude the queerness of their community of friends.

As I have stated before, the main locus of action in *The Last Man* revolves around Adrian and Lionel's band of friends and lovers. The happiest point in time in *The Last Man* occurs very early in the text when Perdita, Idris, Raymond, Adrian, and Lionel are all together in Perdita's cabin in the woods. Following the marriages of Raymond and Perdita as well as Adrian and Idris, the merry band of friends sets up an intellectual commune separate from their perspective families and wholly invested in each other. For this brief moment, the group acts less like a group of friends and more like an alternative family structure. One separated from their respective heritages and the world at large. Lionel says,

We sat like one family round my hearth. Our talk was on subjects, unconnected with the emotions that evidently occupied each; but we each divined the other's thought, and as our voices spoke of indifferent matters, our eyes, in mute language, told a thousand things no tongue could have uttered. (Shelley 79)

The perfect social world between these friends cannot be maintained for long, however. For the briefest of moments, Lionel's friend group reflects a queerer world. Raymond's tasks as the Lord protector draws him away. Idris and Perdita give birth to children. The world intrudes on this alternative family unit, and they are torn apart. In the case of Raymond and Perdita, their marriage is figuratively undone by Perdita's seemingly warranted conviction that Raymond's heart is stolen by Evadne. She pushes her husband away claiming that his infraction against her is against their love itself. The loss of love leaves her unable to be near him again. Lauren Berlant writes of loss and love,

Loss is what, in the object-relation, it's impossible to lose; it's what you're left with when an object changes its place or changes its state. Even change for the better, even gain involves such loss, where loss is not merely an emptiness but something more dimensional, something that fills the vacated space that's left by what used to be there. Loss, in such a context, may be a name survives. In the place of what one had before, loss remains to measure the space or distance relation requires. (Berlant and Edelman 41)

Perdita marks Raymond's love as lost even though he never actually acted on his feelings for Evadne. It is the impropriety of their relation that hurts Perdita the most. Due to her refusal of his love, Raymond returns to Greece. After he dies fighting in Greece, Perdita is beside herself in grief, and Lionel tries to console her.

Do you remember in her infancy, with what transport you beheld Clara, recognizing in her the united being of yourself and Raymond; joying to view in this living temple a manifestation of your eternal loves.[...] You say that you have lost Raymond[...] From him she

sprung, flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone—and not, as heretofore, are you content to trace in her downy cheek and delicate limbs, an affinity to Raymond, but in her enthusiastic affections, in the sweet qualities of her mind, you may still find him living, the good, the great, the beloved. (Shelley 205)

Lionel asks Perdita to look on her daughter Clara and see her ex-husband. This is meant as an attempt to persuade Perdita to give up her desire to rejoin her husband. Unfortunately, Lionel's trite attempts to save Perdita do not come to much as she drowns herself on finding that she is being kidnapped from her husband's grave in Greece. While Lionel does not explicitly invoke Clara's future as being worth Perdita's travails, he heavily implies that Raymond can be found in the child. Perdita rejects Lionel's exhortations to be with her love in death. A curious feature of this text is the way that children seem unimportant to the idea of futurity. Clara's need for a mother to raise her or as a reflection of Raymond is simply not enough for the grieving Perdita. The child does not represent a future legacy for Raymond and Perdita's love.

That is not to say that characters in *The Last Man* not interested in their children's legacy. The character who probably most closely adheres to a modern conception of reproductive futurity, ironically, is the Countess of Windsor, the mother of Adrian and Idris. She represents a particularly conservative and ineffectual force in the novel. Her stated desire is to return her family to the throne after her husband abdicated it. His action, at the behest of his subjects, transformed England into a republic. This angered his strong-willed wife who enjoyed the trappings of royalty. Much of the conflict in the first two volumes of *The Last Man* revolve around this decision and the consequences of England's transition to a republic. The Countess of Windsor, Unable to dissuade her husband from

abdicated the throne, places all of her hopes for the future into her son Adrian. She is described as, “Haughty and fearless; she cherished a love of power and a bitter contempt for him who had despoiled himself of a kingdom. For her children’s sake alone she consented to remain, shorn of regality, a member of the English republic” (Shelley 20). For the sake of her children, the Countess stays in a place that is not only foreign to her but also hostile to her desires for a royal life. The countess despises her husband for his perceived weakness in abdicating the throne but also sees a path back to royalty if she can train her children to desire power themselves. “When she became a widow, she turned all her thought to the educating [sic] her son Adrian, second Earl of Windsor, so as to accomplish her ambitious ends; and with his mother’s milk he imbibed, and was intended to grow up in the steady purpose of re-acquiring his lost crown” (Shelley 20). Adrian escapes the onslaught of his mother’s teaching through his virtuous disposition and intelligence. Even though a natural exchange such as drinking his mother’s milk is implicated as part and parcel of his upbringing, Adrian is somehow naturally above the desire for the crown and rejects his mother’s implication that he should be reaching for it. Adrian seems to more closely align with his father’s disposition and is inclined to love like his father does. Once he comes into contact with Lionel, they become fast friends even in spite and maybe because of his mother’s hatred for the elder Verney. The countess relies on the hope that her son will desire the crown as she does. She is nostalgic for the privileges that royalty bestows on her and tries to instill in her progeny a love for that nostalgic vision. Her ambition is wielded to a reproductive future based on her children who, in response, do everything in their power to subvert her desires.

The close ties between Adrian and Lionel are strengthened when Lionel realizes that Idris also loves him back. With Adrian actively showing no desire to

take the crown, Idris becomes her mother's one way to secure a royal future. She attempts to kidnap the recalcitrant teenager but fails in the process allowing Lionel and Adrian to spirit Idris away.

Adrian wrote a brief note to his mother, informing her that Idris was under his care and guardianship. Several days elapsed, and at last an answer came, dated from Cologne. 'It was useless,' the haughty and disappointed lady wrote, 'for the Earl of Windsor and his sister to address again the injured parent, whose only expectation of tranquility must be derived from oblivion of their existence. Her desires had been blasted, her schemes overthrown. She did not complain; in her brother's court she would find, not compensation for their disobedience (filial unkindness admitted of none), but such state of things and mode of life, as might best reconcile her fate her to her fate. Under such circumstances, she positively declined any communication with them.' (Shelley 89)

The indignity of losing her last link to the royal life she desires forces the countess out of the narrative until the plague. Only in the apocalypse does she recognize the futility of her hope for a royal life. Only once her children have separated themselves from her, removed any future, and as the world crumbles does she see fit to accept her children back into her life; to reclaim their love. Only after the death of Idris and the end of the world that the Countess finally softens and gives up her dreams of royalty. Lionel writes,

The aged Countess of Windsor had fallen for her dream of power, rank and grandeur; she had been suddenly seized with the conviction, that love was the only good of life, virtue the only ennobling distinction and enriching wealth. Such a lesson had been

taught her by the dead lips of her neglected daughter; And she devoted herself, with all the fiery violence of her character, to the obtaining the affection of the remnants of her family. (Shelley 385)

The end of the world forces a type of social reckoning. The Countess recognizes the futility of royalty in a world that is swiftly leveling the social order. Instead, familial love becomes the most important desire of the countess. Rather than search for a future embedded in her children, the countess instead searches for familial affection from her offspring. She comes to reject the notion of children as futurity and instead embraces connection between her and her children.

The plague that leaves Lionel the last man is a slowly creeping menace without form and without reason. Lionel originally views it as a natural cycle of life that sometimes flares up. It is a convenient prop to compare grief against. Lionel confidently prophesies the future of man. Humankind's worth is far too great for God to smite.

Yet we were not all to die. No truly, though thinned, the race of man would continue, and the great plague would in after years, become matter of history and wonder. Doubtless this visitation was for extent unexampled—more need that we should work hard to dispute its progress; ere this men have gone out in sport, and slain their thousands and tens of thousands; but now man had become a creature of price; the life of one of them was of more worth than the so called treasures of kings. Look at his thought-endued countenance, his graceful limbs, his majestic brow, his wondrous mechanism—the type and model of this best work of God is not to be cast aside as a broken vessel—he shall be preserved, and his

children and his children's children carry down the name and form of man to latest time. (Shelley 261)

Lionel is confident in mankind's ability to live after a catastrophe like a plague. The promise of reproduction is written in the fate of children: as long as children exist, they continue mankind's promise. There will be someone to write down the terrible cost of the plague. Someone to chronicle the exploits of man. Ironic that man kills one another because in the midst of the plague every single person has value and worth. The plague, however, has a different purpose. Judith Halberstam quotes the poet Mark Doty in a poignant example of how a catastrophe like the plague or AIDS shapes time, "All my life I've lived with a future which constantly diminishes but never vanishes" (qtd. In Halberstam 2). Catastrophic events call attention to the time one has on earth.

In the end, there is nothing Adrian and Lionel can do but accept the plague. Their numbers dwindle to just Adrian, Lionel, Evelyn, and Clara. Just 200 pages earlier Lionel had been spouting his confidence that mankind will live on, but now there are just the four of them. The last couple, Adrian and Lionel, can do nothing to save themselves; instead, they find joy in their two adopted children. Adrian tells Lionel,

Though strange, it will be sweet to mark the growth of your little boy, and the development of Clara's young heart. In the midst of a desert world, we are everything to them; and, if we live, it must be our task to make this new mode of life happy to them. At present this is easy, for their childish ideas do not wander into futurity, and the stinging craving for sympathy, and all of love of which our natures is susceptible, is not yet awake within them: we cannot guess what will happen then, when nature asserts her indefeasible and sacred

powers; but long before that time, we may all be cold, as he who lies  
in yonder tomb of ice. (Shelley 427)

At the end, after all others have died away, the two friends raise their children recognizing that they have no control over the future. They are at the mercy of nature and its sacred powers. The best they can do is show the children the finest time of their lives wandering through a decimated Europe: sleeping in the finest castles, wandering through the greatest cities, and enjoying the most accomplished works of mankind. These children are not the future; they will not become a new Adam and Eve to repopulate the world. They are children with childish hearts and desires in a world that is cruel and capricious.

With the death of Clara, Adrian, and Evelyn, Lionel finally becomes the titular last man. In this state, Lionel chooses to record his story for anyone who may find it. His children and loved one's dead, Lionel is left with nothing to do but wander the wilderness and record his life. The apocalyptic plague that destroys humanity does not leave children alive to carry out a future. Instead, the future of humanity becomes tied to Lionel's ability to record and memorialize his community of friends. Rather than placing an emphasis on the futurity of children, *The Last Man* shows the tenuousness of reproductive futurity. Nobody will make it out alive, nor will anybody create a safe space to recreate the human race. There is no Adam and Eve left to repopulate the earth. Instead, the last couple consists of two men who recognize the futility of trying to save mankind and instead try to show their children the time of their short lives by visiting the remnants of a great but ultimately lost human civilization.

### CHAPTER 3: ROAD TO BIRTH

Escape from the destructive force of the apocalypse is perhaps unsurprisingly associated with a journey or escape down the road. Journeys entail hardships, sacrifice and a reordering of the world around a traveler. In post-apocalyptic narratives, the road becomes the medium of that journey and a place of growth. Even the prototypical apocalyptic narrative *The Last Man* heavily features journey as an escape from the destructive power of the flu. The trope of the road becomes embedded in humanity's flight response to the apocalypse and a necessity for survival. While roads sometimes operate as spaces of possibility especially in light of the American frontier, they are often more like channels through which humanity is funneled into as options begin to fail and disappear in light of the apocalypse. These channels were at one time desirable for travel but have fallen into disrepair and danger. What once facilitated travel now is beset by those who would prey on the traveler. Other constraints are present on the road as well. The road is an unnatural clearing that cuts through the frontier. Clearings aid travel but they also focus travelers onto a narrow path. A narrative like *Children of Men* portrays society's slow descent into madness after mothers can no longer reproduce. The apocalypse, represented by the loss of reproduction, and the post-apocalypse, society's long descent into chaos due to that loss of reproduction, become blurred and indistinguishable. Apocalypse can be portrayed in a multitude of ways, but the most common defining feature of the apocalypse is how it affects humanity's ability to survive and carry on; hence my focus on reproduction and its conditions in post-apocalyptic narratives. The road is an obvious place to explore the conditions surrounding reproduction in the post-apocalypse, both because it is a place of possibility but also a place of great constraint. The frontier of

possibilities is replaced by narrowing channels of danger where a misstep could lead to the snuffing out of all human life. William H. Katerberg points to the way frontier myths configure the future as a place of possibility even in post-apocalyptic narratives that radically show humanity's fragility.

In stories like these set in the American West itself in the future, society has been swept away by some kind of natural disaster or human-made holocaust. In the primitive conditions that ensue, survivors have been forced to start over and perhaps build a new kind of society. But it is frontier conditions that erase the problems of the past and make a better future possible. At the same time, and contradictorily, such stories indicate that in postapocalyptic new worlds the past cannot be swept away easily. (Katerberg 5)

The roads of the post-apocalypse exist in a dual state of possibility and constraints. Securing the future will not easy, but these narratives hopefully imply that it can be secured. To that end post-apocalyptic narratives, no matter how bleak or depressing imply something hopeful about the future: namely, that there is one.

Returning to Lee Edelman, the trope of the child represents the future. Even in the apocalypse, futurity and the child are tied together. Echoing one of Edelman's rhetorical questions, What would it signify to not fight for the child in the post-apocalypse? Edelman, writing in the shadow of the aids epidemic, laments looking towards a promised future that is always coming but never comes (Edelman 296). Ambivalence towards the future in light of the catastrophic aids epidemic is completely understandable. However, Edelman displays a surprising lack of thought towards how gender and race play into this rejection of futurity in reproduction. Queerness does not necessarily mean a rejection of children and the rearing of said children. In fact, one of his longest footnotes in the text *No Future*:

*Queer Theory and the Death Drive* specifically rejects “the introduction of taxonomic distinctions at the outset [lest it] dissipate the force of [his] larger argument against reproductive futurism” (Edelman *No Future* 166). Edelman seemingly recognizes that there may be differences between different queer groups but his argument papers over what those differences may be in service of his own position. While avenues for queer folk to reproduce and/or raise a child were and still are relatively difficult and economically and socially, that does not necessarily mean the desire for children is gone. Nor does it mean that certain groups may be in positions where having children would be beneficial to the group for reasons other than societal respectability. What is important to recognize is the context Edelman is writing in and asking the questions: what did he get right, where could his argument be expanded on, and where do we see reproductive futurity working in literature?

Roads pose dangers to the pregnant and the newly born. Reproduction on the road must be approached with caution and finesse. The choice to have a baby would need to be approached with thoughtfulness and planning. Choosing to have a baby on the road in the shadow of the apocalypse even more so. Many post-apocalyptic narratives, including the comic series and television juggernaut *The Walking Dead*, feature pregnancy and child rearing as a source of tension. Is it surprising that this scenario is widespread? An audience recognizes the vulnerability of the mother and the child. Even those who would question the choice to have a child in dire apocalyptic scenarios recognize that, at some point, if humanity is to survive, babies need to be made and raised. The narrative tension surrounding pregnancy and childbirth on the road is further compounded by gender roles. Will the author choose to kill off the mother to stoke the father character’s motivation for revenge, survival? Does killing off the mother add

narrative tension by denying the child's food source? Will the father be killed too, in effect, abandon a seemingly defenseless mother and baby to the cruel world? Will the baby be killed off to fray the relationships of its parents already in a dangerous situation? Each of these possibilities, and many, more play out the ways that gender roles rigidly define responses to calamity. However, they can also be places where new family units form. If either of the parents dies could that force a group of people to come together to raise the child in some affirmation of the power of community? *The Walking Dead*, routinely removes Judith from her father Rick Grimes care and puts her in others' care. While the popular television series clearly maintains that Judith is Rick's child (an ironic assertion, since she is most definitely the offspring of Rick's wife and his dead best friend), The other survivors have just as much ownership over her raising as he does—even more so in some cases. Judith is a surprisingly powerful link between all members of Rick's group considering the only biological link she shares with any member of the groups is with her older step-brother, Carl.

Roads compound the dangers of childbirth and childrearing but by contrast highlight the dangers that characters are running from. In *Mad Max: Fury Road*, Splendid Angharad and the other wives' decision to run from Immortan Joe while heavy with child screams their defiance of him and their desire to escape him. To paraphrase Edelman, the choice to have a child in the apocalypse is not simply an adherence to some societal contract. In fact, the choice whether to have a child would probably not even be a choice at all depending on how many pharmacies survive the end of the world. Even if birth control somehow survives the apocalypse, power structures not too dissimilar from modern structures could still hold reign as can be seen in *Mad Max: Fury Road*.

### The Fury Road and The Redemption of Hope

The titular Mad Max is a side character in his own story. While the film begins with his voiceover narrating the state of the world and his own psyche, his journey is not the one recorded on the fury road. Instead, he is dragged kicking and screaming quite literally into Furiosa's journey of redemption. The Fury Road is not, perhaps surprisingly, a road at all. As Delia Falconer points out in her essay "We Don't Need To Know the Way Home: The Disappearance of the Road in the Mad Max Trilogy," the road as a place disappears over the course of the films. She writes, "In the first film, the road appears as a specific and violently contested site. By the last film it has disappeared in a landscape of mythic 'sights'" (Falconer 249). While she was writing before *Mad Max: Fury Road* was released, the disappearance of the road as a place is not only continued in the latest film: but I would argue, the disappearance of the road and its eventual return becomes a thematic link to the conflict inherent between domineering misogyny and a feminine hope for redemption and the future.

Max's failures, accrued over the previous three films, have hardened him into a relic of a former age who eschews connection and community at all costs. He tells the viewer while images of the ones he has failed including his family flash on screen, "I am the one who runs from both the living and the dead. Hunted by scavengers, haunted by those I could not protect. So I exist in this wasteland, A man reduced to a single instinct: survive" (Miller 2:43-3:17). Survival instinct is the one thing Max believes is animating him as the opening chase and his subsequent capture by Immortan Joe's men communicate. However, this laser focused reliance on survival instinct is undercut during his attempted escape in the very next scene, as he desperately searches the halls of Immortan Joe's sanctuary for an escape. While sprinting from warboys like a crazed fiend, Max's failures

continue to haunt him in the guise of memories of people who relied on him, including his daughter, wife, and friends. These preparatory scenes underscore the dual and conflicting aspects of Max's personality. The loathing he feels for himself due to his failures and the need to survive are both equally and deeply animating him. These separate aspects of Max have forced his descent into lonely wandering. As a drifter, he is deeply suspicious of people, as well he should be when Immortan Joe's warboys string him up as a living blood bag for their mutated bodies.

Max's survivalist ethos belies a failure of hope: he has lost all hope for a future and merely takes each day as it comes. His inability to protect and maintain community and his deep, warranted suspicion of the world around him is normal, even expected as a character trait in a post-apocalyptic world where men like Immortan Joe reign. As the world falls around him, he cuts off all social ties because they become weaknesses in this unforgiving, violent world. By contrast, Imperator Furiosa (Charlize Theron) has allowed hope to animate her for many years. Kidnapped as a child from her idyllic green place amongst the "Many Mothers," she has grown into a powerful warlord for the tyrannical Immortan Joe. Scarred and searching for redemption for her actions as Joe's warlord, hope has allowed her to acquire the means to escape and in the same act cause as much harm as she can to the man who kidnapped and enforced his will on her. Because of her gender, Furiosa is in a unique place to harm Joe as she has been allowed access to Joe's most prized possessions: his five wives.

Writer and Director George Miller's flare for the dramatic and operatic is embodied in the character of Immortan Joe: A hulking grotesque walking tumor of a man. The viewer is introduced to him as his peeling, diseased back is powdered in preparation for a translucent plastic chest piece molded to look like a fit, young,

and muscular body. The chest piece is adorned with medals to give the illusion that Joe is a fearsome and powerful war hero. His showy costume projects an illusion of power as he appears before huddled masses from hundreds of feet up his fortress built into three buttes. Joe's power resides in his fortress and in his army that reveres him as a God. He can pump water from the earth and dispense it at his pleasure to the masses. Joe's chosen water distribution method is a torrential waterfall out of three enormous tubes jutting out of a cliff hundreds of feet above the crowd. They come, not to hear him, but instead to gather the meager amount of water they can salvage from the torrent spewed wastefully upon them. Despite the desert surrounding Joe's citadel, there is very little suggestion that the water needs to be rationed to the community. Joe's cavalier waste of water shows his disregard for the people below. Instead, the rationing is a grand show of strength keeping the people under Joe's power. He tells them, "I am your redeemer. It is by my hand you will rise from the ashes of the world... Do not, my friends, become addicted to water. It will take hold of you, and you will resent its absence" (Miller 8:28-9:59). Joe also derives his power from alliances with the "bullet farm" and the "gas town," locations where these essential resources are produced. Control over water, bullets, gas, and the warboys is what gives Joe his unassailable power. His weakness, however, is his legacy. Genetic deformities mar Immortan Joe and his children. Rictus Erectus is a towering hulk of a man with the mind of a child, while Corpus Colossus is smart but suffers from what appears to be brittle bone disease which is never clearly conveyed. Immortan Joe's children do not appear to be able to continue his line, and so he has taken multiple wives to ensure a healthy child. The child then is a trope, a metonym for futurity, around which society, under Immortan Joe, structures itself. Cavan Gallagher argues that "Joe has seized ownership of reproduction, of the very essence of parenthood: one tyrannical

father in the citadel, in direct opposition to the ‘many mothers’ [...] of the Green Place” (54). Gallagher points out the inherent power struggle between the lone father figure who swings his power like a club and the multiple mothers who look to each other for strength: authoritarian power versus diffuse and multiple sources of strength. His future as a ruler and his posterity demand a healthy child to continue his reign, and his multitude of wives are how he can achieve that future. To jeopardize the child and, by extension, the wives that serve as incubators of that future child will incur the mighty wrath of Immortan Joe.

Furiosa is a trusted confidante of Immortan Joe and has risen through his ranks from slave to war rig driver, one of the prized positions in Joe’s army. As part of the elaborate water ceremony, Furiosa is tasked with bringing gas back from Gas Town. When she deviates from this path, the men under her command do not immediately turn on her. Confused, they believe that orders have been given by Joe himself and accept her command to turn east into dangerous territory. She is trusted, and she uses that trust to gain ground in her escape from Joe.

Juxtaposed against her betrayal, the next scene sees Rictus and Joe tending to milk maids pumping milk from their own breasts and bottling it for the expected arrival of the next heir. This signifies planning on the part of Joe for his heir apparent. Corpus’s and Rictus’s deformities preclude them from being able to secure Joe’s legacy. Furiosa’s actions are clearly an assault on his power and her attempt at redemption. Furiosa desperately needs to atone for her sins as Joe’s warrior. Stealing the wives away from Joe is a worthy attempt at redemption because Joe’s power is tied to his future legacy. Neither Rictus nor Corpus can carry on his legacy due to their deformities. If Furiosa does not totally understand the enormity of the task she has laid at her feet, at least the wives themselves do. When Immortan Joe realizes Furiosa’s betrayal, he rushes to the bank vault that

houses his wives and is greeted by graffiti scrawled on the wall by the wives themselves. “Our babies will not be warlords. Who killed the world? We are not things.” The maid, Miss Giddy, left behind with a shotgun, tells Joe, “They are not your property. You cannot own a human being. Sooner or later someone pushes back” (Miller 13:57-14:28). The wives’ drive to escape is motivated by a rejection of Joe’s claims on their bodies, their children’s bodies, and of his entire worldview. Joe desires an heir and his children will warlords molded in his image. Masculinity, war, and power will all tied together in Joe’s heir. Of all the graffiti in the wives’ room, the most incongruous question is, “Who killed the world?” (Miller 14:13). The camera whips around Immortan Joe as “Who killed the world?” is framed above him implicitly answering the wives question. While this question may seem incongruous with the wives’ assertions of female empowerment, rejection of slavery and servitude to a man they despise, and affirmations that they will control their children’s fate lays bare a simple reality of Mad Max’s world: the apocalypse, or killing of the world, is tied directly to masculine aggression, warmongering, and the hoarding of resources to maintain power.

Children are a form of currency in this world. Warboys are frontline soldiers that live, breathe, and die for Immortan Joe’s teachings of Valhalla. By controlling the next generation, Immortan Joe controls the tenor of the world. Their bodies racked by cancer, the war boys live short, brutish lives in pursuit of glory in death so they may return to Valhalla “Shiny and Chrome.” Even if they don’t fight and die in Max’s army, their lives would still be short due to their corrupted genetics thanks to the apocalypse. Joe uses their short lives and weak genetics to wage war. He then hoards the pure sources of reproduction, the five wives, for himself. Children growing into warlords is of a piece with his violent,

warmongering. The question of “who killed the world” directly challenges Joe’s worldview. His children, well after his patriarchal control, will continue the cycle of war that led to the destruction of the world. The wives, by contrast, desire a different path. Furiosa’s stories of the green place and the many mothers sets up an alternative worldview where children do not have to become warlords and continue the manipulation of the populace. Resources under the control of women are preferable to the autocratic totalitarian kingdom of Immortan Joe.

Furiosa teaches Max to hope again by showing the lengths she, and the wives, will go to escape Immortan Joe. Furiosa and the Five Wives are a powerful source of determination and willpower in their quest to reach The Green Place and the Many Mothers. Max comes to rely on and trusts these women in their mad dash on the fury road. Furiosa and Max, in particular, come to an understanding of each other and their place. While stuck in a quagmire in fog late at night, Immortan Joe’s lieutenant the Bullet Farmer comes for them while sweeping his spotlight and machine guns across the landscape probing for the wives. Max attempts to shot out the spotlight with the meager number of bullets they have for the sniper rifle to no avail. The last shot he turns over to Furiosa and lends his shoulder for her to steady her aim and the shot rings true. After Furiosa neutralizes the Bullet Farmer, Max goes to finish the job in the one action sequence left to the viewer to imagine. Bursts of light from gunfire pierce the fog and Max returns covered in blood carrying a load of guns pillaged from their enemies. His brutal efficacy is underlined when one of the wives asks if he is hurt because of the blood covering his face and hands. Furiosa responds “That’s not his blood” (Miller 1:14:25-1:14:33), as he washes himself off with the mother’s milk the tanker has been hauling. Furiosa and Max complement each other as warriors. They learn to understand each other and the horrors they have both faced. When Max questions

whether the Green Place even exists, Furiosa can tell him it does, because she is from there. He responds “why did you leave? And she answers, “I didn’t. I was taken as a child. Stolen.” He asks if she has done this before and she responds that she has many times, implying that this has been her dream forever. Now that she drives a war rig she can make that dream a reality. She saved the wives because they were looking for hope and Furiosa had the means to provide it to them. All she wants is redemption from the man who stole her away (Miller 1:15:32-1:16:22).

After a touching reunion with the Vuvalini/Many Mothers and the introduction of the wives to them, Furiosa, unable to contain her excitement anymore, exclaims that she can’t wait to show the wives the green place. This is greeted by sad explanations that the water turned poisonous, the crows came, and the Vuvalini had to flee, their number dwindling to barely a dozen. Furiosa is finally broken, and she walks into the dunes and collapses wailing. She has tried desperately to redeem herself by freeing the wives and bringing them to a safe place that unfortunately does not exist anymore. The resolve that Furiosa has had in abundance throughout their journey collapses as she wails into the dunes in anguish. Home is gone, her mother is dead at the hands of her oppressor, and her people are reduced to a small band nomads. Furiosa, the five wives, and the Vuvalini decide that they must continue across the sand sea in search of a new place to call home. The out of place Max declines to follow them. He tells Furiosa, “You know, hope is a mistake. If you can’t fix what’s broken, you’ll, uh... you’ll go insane” (Miller 1:25:15-1:25:31). This is the perfect encapsulation of Max’s philosophy. He at one time hoped for a future, but that hope drove him mad. He couldn’t fix what was broken, and now he runs with survival being his only animating motivation. However, the next scene calls Max’s assertion into

question. As he watches the caravan of women pull away, he is alone again. The voices from his past return and ask Max why he won't help them. Why is he abandoning them once again? The unspoken truth is that a trip into the sand sea is a funeral march. Max recognizes the futility of their plan, and with the urging of his personal demons he returns to the Vuvalini, the wives, and Furiosa. He points out the futility of escaping into the sand sea and argues that their energy could instead be channeled into taking Immortan Joe's citadel from him. Splendid Angharad's sacrifice on the road can be avenged by taking the place of their subjugation and turning it into a seat of strength. The green place can be rebuilt in the heart of matriarchal power if only these women can seize it. And so they return on the fury road back to the Citadel driving Immortan Joe's car, claiming it for themselves. Their children will sprout not as warboys but as residents of the green place.

Raising a Child on *The Road*: Alienation  
of Father and Son

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* sets aside questions of the origin of the apocalypse intentionally. Only vague references are made to what has destroyed the world. Instead, the journey of Father and Son is placed front and center. Their relationship, in spite of the apocalypse, is what animates their journey down the titular road. If one of the central questions of *Mad Max: Fury Road* is who gets to control the world one raises a child in, then *The Road* deals in the actual experience raising a child in a changed and dangerous landscape. The Father has nothing other than the survival of his Son animating him. The cough he tries to hide from the child will eventually kill him, but he has no other option other than to push on in spite of an indifferent and destroyed world. Despite the destruction of the world around them, the plight of Father and Son is not that far removed

from a normal relationship between Father and Son in a pre-apocalyptic world. The gathering of food, need for shelter, and clothes for warmth are all basic needs. The same stressors that animate a normal father are, of course, amplified on the road; however, the journey is still one of raising a child in uncertain times. The difference between the pre-apocalypse and the post-apocalypse, however, illuminates a difference between the Father and Son at a baser level. The Son is alienated from his Father's experience of the world in a fundamental way that cannot be overcome. Lydia Cooper writes "Born after the catastrophe that ended human civilization, the boy is at least partially feral; he is unfamiliar with such basic trappings of human society as shopping, sitting at a table, even walking up stairs" (Cooper 222). When Father tries to expose the Son to the house of his youth, the Son is vocally anxious and afraid of the structure itself. He is far more comfortable under the trees away from visible structures of human civilization. The boy is alienated from his Father in other ways as well.

The strong central relationship between the Father and his Son calls attention to the absence of the Mother. While she is not active in the present of *The Road*, her memory and philosophy of life haunts the Father and causes much of his doubt and anguish. Her suicide, while not outright condemned, is certainly seen as an impediment to the Father's mental state. Together they raised their Son and debated the philosophy of life after the apocalypse coming to similar but diverging outlooks on survival. She says,

I didn't bring myself to this. I was brought. And now I'm done. I thought about not even telling you. That would probably have been best. You have two bullets and then what? You can't protect us. You say you would die for us but what good is that? I'd take him with

me if it weren't for you. You know I would. It's the right thing to do.  
(McCarthy 56)

Mother argues that this is not how she wanted her life to be: that her lot was forced on her. She has lost autonomy. The protection the Father provides is bluster and meaningless. Two bullets are not protection against the dangers they face and in fact, could have been used to end their suffering. The Mother also argues vehemently what she believes the correct course of action should be: death for her and her child in as quick and painless a way as possible via the two final useless bullets. She elaborates on the dangers facing them, "Sooner or later they will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They'll rape him. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you wont face it. You'd rather wait for it to happen. But I cant. I cant" (McCarthy 56). The fear of her and her Son's pain and suffering in a world where no one can be trusted leads her to choose death as her way out. She no longer wants to live with fear in a world that she believes already lost. The reader is not given their full argument nor their list of pros and cons for suicide, but Mother does give us a peek into the philosophy that forces Father forward.

They say that women dream of danger to those in their care and men of danger to themselves. But I don't dream at all... My heart was ripped out of me the night he was born so don't ask for sorrow now. There is none. Maybe you'll be good at this... The one thing I can tell you is that you won't survive for yourself... 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. (McCarthy 57)

Mother cannot push forward because she cannot stomach her Son being in danger. Seeing him born into the world has harmed her. She dreams of danger to her Son, and it overwhelms her. She also perceives that her husband does not have the strength to survive on his own. He needs something to put his arms around and to protect. Mother can't summon the same protective drive because she lost it when he was born. Her dreams are filled with danger for her Son, and their haunting threat leads her to suicide.

Father routinely dreams of Mother coming to him, enticing him to follow her into death. He chalks the beauty of these dreams up to a lie. He says of these dreams, "He mistrusted all of that. He said the right dreams for a man in peril were dreams of peril and all else was the call of languor and of death. He slept little and he slept poorly" (McCarthy 18). He holds these comforting dreams in contempt because they breed complacency in the post-apocalyptic world. He longs for death, but it would be a betrayal of his fatherly duties ensuring the survival of his child. The arguments Father had with Mother were what galvanized him to this path. While he holds a dim view of his own survival, he soldiers on for his Son. Father's choice to live and the Mother's choice of suicide show two differing reactions to the apocalypse: An attempt at survival and the choice to end life on one's own terms.

The stress of raising a child is only amplified by the Father's knowledge that he does not have much time left. He knows that he has little time to prepare his Son for the world without him in it. Coupled with the realization that he is the only thing keeping the boy alive for himself is the knowledge that in spite of his best efforts he will probably die before the boy is ready to live without him. "He watched the boy sleeping. Can you do it? When the time comes? Can You" (McCarthy 29)? The ambiguity of these questions is clearly intentional. The Father

does not think in complicated prose. Instead, he thinks in necessities, therefore his seeming simple questions cover the myriad different horror scenarios that play in his head. Can he teach the boy how to survive? When the appointed time comes can the Father kill the boy? Can he leave the boy behind in this world? Can the boy survive in the world without his Father? Will the boy be able to leave his Father when he needs to? The Father is not only asking himself, “can you?” In his mind, he is also asking if the boy can survive without his Father. Perhaps the question underlying all these is whether the Father is going to be able to have enough time to teach his beloved Son to survive in this new foreboding world.

While walking the road, Father sees that his Son’s experience growing up in the post-apocalypse is far different than he could ever have imagined. The warped, foreboding home of his youth is terrifying to his Son. His memories of the past are not shared with a Son born after the shear of light that destroyed the world. (McCarthy 53) Instead, his Son only knows the world of the apocalypse.

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 he. (McCarthy 153-54)

Father learns the lesson that all parents learn. At a certain point, their directions will fall on deaf ears. Their teachings will no longer be followed without question. Their stories will no longer be accepted without pushback. Their values and beliefs will fade away to be replaced by their offspring’s values and beliefs. The road is a story of growing up and learning the truth that no matter what a parent does they cannot protect their child from the world. Father has tried to use stories

to instill in his Son a need to help and protect others, but instead, they don't practice helping others. The Son has noticed this incongruity. He has noticed his Father's lies. He tells his father, "Those stories are not true. / They don't have to be true. / They're stories. / Yes. But in the stories we're always helping people and we don't help people. (McCarthy 268) Practicing what one preaches when it comes to helping others is a hard thing to do in a world where cannibals eat their own children, and anyone you meet may kill you for the shoes off your feet. The stories Father tells to his Son are meant to instill his father's values and beliefs, but those values and beliefs are from another world and another time. Father does not practice them because contact with other people is dangerous to his Son. The need to protect outweighs the need to reach out to others in need.

#### Child of the Road: The Ark of Art and Checkpoints

One difference between each of these narratives is the speed with which the protagonists move along the road. *Mad Max: Fury Road* ends where it begins with a furious sprint home to recreate society in the way of the green place and the many mothers. It is an extended car chase punctuated by very few moments of rest. *The Road* depicts a slow, plodding journey south to escape the cold of winter, to find a place for the Son to grow, and survive without his Father. It ends with the Father's death and the Son being embraced into another family. *Children of Men* portrays Theo, Miriam, and Kee rushing staccato-like between checkpoints and obstacles on the locked-down heading to ruin Great Britain. It also portrays an escape from apocalypse for one mother and her baby, hinting at a return of hope.

While *The Road* did not feel the need to delve into the details of its apocalypse, *Children of Men's* apocalypse is a deeply personal and slow moving one. Rather than destroying a third of the world's population in one fell swoop,

*Children of Men* depicts the end of reproduction itself and the implications that brings to the world. The despair the world experiences leads to heinous human rights violations masquerading as protection of borders and maintenance of comfort for the rich and worthy. Set in an increasingly fascistic Great Britain, the government has begun an extensive purge of refugees in an effort to maintain the status quo for the true British citizen as they die off. Refugees from other nations are met with disdain, locked up, treated like livestock before being deported or worse, murdered for no other reason than they existed. In the midst of these atrocities stands Theo Faron (Clive Owen), a lapsed, jaded, and bitter former activist who now works for the government bureaucracy. The source of his bitterness comes from the despair of watching his newborn child die early on in the reproductive apocalypse. The boy's death disillusioned Theo while his wife Julian (Julianne Moore) became a more radical activist and left him.

The first scene fades in as a news voiceover sets the state of the world: Wars in America, Muslim rights being trampled upon, British borders remaining closed in the name of national security. But above all that, a single man's death is the most important story of the night. The death of Baby Diego Ricardo at the age of 18 has stunned the nation and indeed the world. The scene opens in a coffee shop where a crowd of stunned people watches in horror as the youngest person on the face of the earth has just died. The celebrity that came with his young age being part and parcel of what killed him. His length of life is calculated down to the second so that the world can be reminded when hope was lost forever. Cutting through the morass of hopeless people Theo Faron makes his way to buy coffee before almost dying in an apparent suicide bombing. He doesn't need the death of baby Diego or the near constant threat of bombs to remind him of the death of hope, although he is not above using Diego's death to get some free time off work

to visit his friends Jasper (Michael Caine) and Janice (Phillipa Urquhart). Notice he does not use the excuse that he almost died in a bombing attack to leave work. Bombs have apparently become like fog in Great Britain, a minor inconvenience. At Jasper's, the viewer learns that at one time Jasper, Theo, Theo's ex-wife Julian, and Janice were all activists trying to better the world. Janice was a Pulitzer Prize winning photojournalist tortured by her government for her work and is now a mute invalid due to the torture. Jasper was also an award-winning cartoonist who now lives in the boonies taking care of his wife. Like Max, Theo has no hope in this world. The death of his son meant the death of his family, and he is an angry man without a cause to root for.

Theo's starting point is an angry, depressed man without motivation or resources. However When Julian kidnaps and introduces him to the refugee support and borderline terrorist group, The Fishes, Theo is reintroduced to the world of causes. While there is still palpable chemistry between him and his ex-wife, He balks at aiding a terrorist group despite their assurances that after Liverpool they have not bombed again. She offers him 10,000 pounds to get them transit papers from Theo's cousin Nigel (Danny Huston) to move someone to the coast, and he agrees despite his misgivings about working with a terrorist organization. Theo goes to his cousin who works with the Ark of Art project; an attempt to gather the world's greatest works of European art and protect them for whatever comes after. I would consider this a refutation of Lionel Verney's musings that become the mystical Sibylline leaves are a worthwhile record of man. That the words of *The Last Man* himself committed to paper is a justifiable and worthy form of future-proofing for the posterity and future of mankind. Instead, Cuarón depicts the Ark of Art project as a hollow form of navel-gazing and aristocratic snobbery at best. Allison Mackey calls it an "extreme historical

disavowal” and an “almost colonialist archival collection completely divorc[ing] the cultural works from their historical and cultural contexts. (Mackey) Theo had to travel by Rolls Royce from the poor side of town through the richest and well-manicured parks in London. Separation of the classes is now highly enforced by checkpoints and armed guards. The Ark of Art is a fortress meant to protect the richest human’s prized possessions rather than a record of humanity; it is a self-masturbatory exercise in shoring up elitism, cataloging worth, and storing it for a future that will probably never come. Theo says to Nigel, “You kill me. A hundred years from now there won’t be one sad fuck to look at any of this. What keeps you going?” Nigel responds, “You know what it is, Theo? I just don’t think about it.”(Cuarón 19:58-20:14) Then he gestures to his monument to man’s accomplishments knowing full well its meaninglessness. The Ark of Art is a clear allusion to Ozymandias’s mighty works. The art gathered is incomplete, vaguely racist, and colonialist catalog of mankind's accomplishments that will be dust in a hundred years.

The road that Theo and his refugee companion Kee eventually end up traveling is an extremely restrictive one. Rather than being a place of opportunity, their travels are the best example of the road being a place of constraint. The structure of society has not completely fallen apart in the wake of the loss of reproduction. Instead, society has grown so increasingly rigid that movement between points is restricted. Even citizens like Theo have difficulty moving. Getting the transit papers for Kee, Miriam, and Julian are treated as a particularly dangerous thing for Nigel to get. Kee’s status as a refugee makes the road incredibly difficult to pass on. Her skin color and accent mark her as other even in a cosmopolitan society like near-future Great Britain. When Theo gets the papers, it turns out his involvement is not over as he has to accompany Kee for the papers

to be legitimate. Not only are the roads dotted with checkpoints to search for rogue refugees, but they are also dangerous due to mobs of angry, disaffected groups of people. While traveling to the sea together, an angry mob attacks the small and Julian is shot in the fracas. While the mob attack is a cover for a power struggle in the Fishes and an attempt to wrest control away from Julian which succeeds, it shows the dangers of the road quite well. At every turn Theo, Miriam, and Kee are beset by people who could easily take advantage of them or worse. After escaping the Fishes Theo, Miriam, and Kee are forced to rely on a law enforcement acquaintance of Jasper who smuggles illegal weed across checkpoints. He takes them into custody so they can enter the seaside refugee camp on their last stop before the reaching the sea. During the high-pressure processing of refugees Kee enters labor and Miriam is ripped away to be beaten for interfering with the police. Theo and Kee escape more intrusive searching and find a secluded room in the camp to birth the baby with no medical intervention. Just the two of them to welcome the young child into the world.

Childbirth on the road is defined by the constraints travelers labor under. In the next chapter we will delve more into the particulars of birth, but here I have tried to elucidate some various ways the road impacts childbirth and childrearing. While the road can be seen as a place of possibility, it may be the only option in the post-apocalypse. Rather than function as a frontier of possibility, the road is a place of danger and menace in a world turned upside down: having a baby on the road even more so.

## CHAPTER 4: BIRTH ON THE ROAD

Reproductive futurity presupposes the basic act of reproduction. There is no future child trope without reproduction taking place. To that end, I would argue that there is no more important point of interrogation of the trope of the child than the act of childbirth. As I have argued before, birth on the road in the post-apocalypse stresses the conditions of life and places artificial but recognizable constraints on travelers thus heightening the value of children as a type of salvation from the apocalypse. The act of birth attains a type of deific status. These children are born miraculous, and the protection of them becomes a higher order concern for a group of survivors. Within apocalyptic settings, all births are the result of immaculate conceptions, mysterious and hopeful occasions with the promise to begin a path towards ending the human misery and suffering caused by the apocalypse. Children literally become the future in the apocalypse. As I have intimated before drama and narrative tension is easily derived from the well-being of children. A well-known meme in the fan community of *The Walking Dead* revolves around the narrative tension provided by the young son of the Rick Grimes acting out. An example of the image macro “Get Back in the Fucking House Carl” (see fig. 1) references the young Carl acting like the little boy he is, escaping the stifling but safe farm house to play outside. However, in the world of *The Walking Dead*, zombies could attack at any moment and a little boy outside poses a huge danger to the rest of the survivors. The meme recognizes Carl’s self-centered and childish misunderstanding of the world, and exasperated fans command the boy with the force of a parent to please just return to the house for the safety of the group. Unsurprisingly, the boy leaves the safety of the house

multiple times, and during one of his escapes from the domestic, stifling confines of the house, a subsequent rescue attempt is made where a major character dies.

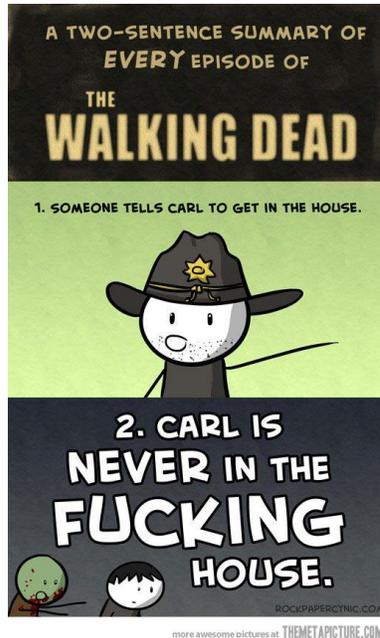


Figure 1. Chyikowski, Peter. "A Two-Sentence Summary of Every Episode of The Walking Dead." Rock Paper Cynic, 03 Dec. 2012. rockpapercynic.com/index.php?date=2012-03-12. Accessed 25 Apr. 2017.

Childrearing in the apocalypse is routinely portrayed as an outrageously dangerous and near impossible undertaking. In *The Walking Dead*, the infant Judith, born to protagonists Rick and Lori Grimes, poses a unique challenge to the group trying to keep her silent so as not to be detected by zombies. The very cries that a baby needs to communicate its needs to her caretakers place the survivors in danger from zombies and other humans as well. Bringing a child into the apocalypse is a defiance of the end of humanity, A child is simultaneously a hopeful nod that there might be a future as well as a selfish drain on resources that threatens survival. The relationship between a baby and their parents largely will define whether or not a child successfully navigates the post-apocalyptic world and actually achieve the grandiose bearing of the future of humanity. Apocalyptic

narratives take Edelman's symbol of the child and make it real. The mechanics of reproductive futurity lose all artifice and become literal. However, post-apocalyptic narratives calling attention to the ways that children and futurity become tied together can be questioned. When the artifice is pulled away, the limitations of Edelman's formulation of the child trope become apparent. This is especially clear in relation to his blind spots on gender and race.

### Splendid's Sacrifice: The Return of the Green Place

As I have illustrated in the previous chapter, the constraints of the road make childbirth and childrearing incredibly dangerous. The main conflict in *Mad Max: Fury Road* is between a domineering masculine patriarch attempting to cement his legacy with a child capable of reproduction and an aggressive feminine need for hope and redemption. This need strongly identifies masculine warmongering as the force that destroyed the world. As argued in the previous chapter, this conflict is played out on the road with women subverting their imprisonment by returning to claim Immortan Joe's citadel, their place of imprisonment, to create their own green place. Before the wives can make the seemingly impossible and foolhardy decision to return to the stronghold and turn the tools of their oppressor against him, a sacrifice of hope and faith will be made.

I would now like to examine the initial meeting of Max, Furiosa, and the five wives in more detail as a precursor to talking about birth. The first major chase of the film ends in a monumentally powerful sandstorm, which allows the wives and Furiosa to have their first collective breather and taste of freedom from Joe. They take this time cleaning up after the storm as well as removing the tools of their oppressor. Max, concurrently, also escapes his shackles being a living blood bag for the mutated warboy Nux and is looking for tools for survival. When

Max encounters the dust-covered war rig and the women it carried, he stumbles upon a scene of women literally and metaphorically washing off the dust of their oppression. His relief at his escape mirrors their own but to a far lesser degree. He has only recently been captured. They have presumably been captives of Joe for a very long time. As he drops the body of the unconscious Nux (Nicholas Hoult), he alerts the women to his presence and raises his shotgun threateningly. Noticing Max but not heeding the danger he poses, The Dag (Abbey Lee) continues to cut the accursed chastity belt off another wife named Cheedo the Fragile (Courtney Eaton). The wives literally clean the dirt of Immortan Joe and cast the tools of his oppressive patriarchy off themselves even when faced with the danger another unknown, armed man poses to them. After sizing each other up, the extremely pregnant Splendid Angharad (Rosie Huntington-Whiteley), Immortan Joe's favorite wife, defiantly growls at Max, "We're not going back." (Miller 33:34) Even though she has no real power, she makes clear that she will not return to be Immortan Joe's slave wife. She resists any male intrusion into her affairs. Her defiance, coupled with the knowledge Joe is preparing for birth implies that she is the reason they have chosen this time to escape. If they had waited until she gave birth, Joe would have her son, raising him to be a warlord with or without her. Her only value to Joe is as a womb and sex object, nothing more. The impending birth of Splendid's child raises the specter of what Joe will do once his legacy is secured. What becomes of the wives and their children in the world of Immortan Joe? What would a man who locks his wives in an enormous bank vault do once he no longer needs their bodies? He doesn't even need Splendid for her breast milk as he has a multitude of wet nurses at his beck and call. And so the wives chose to put themselves in the hands of Imperator Furiosa to guide them to the green place of her youth; to deliver them from evil. Max's survival instincts kick

in and he, Nux, the wives, and Furiosa all fight over the weapons available to them. In a display of impromptu male comradery, Max and Nux join forces for a split second to subdue the Emperor just as the sounds of Joe's war party come into hearing. Nux mistakes the alliance between him and Max for glory seeking, assuming that Joe will reward them for the return of the wives. His relationship with Joe is as a supplicant who has value for what he can provide his Immortan. As an example later in the film, Nux is promised that Joe will personally carry Nux through the gates of Valhalla for the act of returning Joe's wives to him. An act Nux immediately fails at. While Nux cuts Max's headgear off Splendid walks towards the war rig whispering to herself, "We're going to the green place and the many mothers." (Miller 38:27) Max stops her in her tracks by shooting at her, nicking her leg ever so slightly, wounding Joe's prize wife. Unfortunately for him, Furiosa has set kill switches for her war rig, and it sputters to a stop mere feet away. Max makes the decision to allow Furiosa aboard without the wives which she rejects. It's either the wives plus Furiosa or being recaptured by Joe. Since Max harmed Splendid, Furiosa appeals to Max's survival instincts by pointing out the stupidity of relying on the generosity of man like Joe. Ultimately Max capitulates to her demands and joins their escape party begrudgingly.

Splendid's defiant journey to escape Joe is tested in the second major chase sequence. Between the small band of feminist rebels and the green place is a mountain range only passable through a narrow canyon. Emperor Furiosa has arranged passage with the motorbike bandits that live in the hills, but she has lied about what kind of pursuit party would be trailing her. The exchange of gasoline for safe passage is thwarted by the impending arrival of Immortan Joe's war party. Furiosa's small band barely makes it through a large archway that becomes subsequently blocked under a rock slide started by the motorbike bandits. Joe's

war party is waylaid, but he can give chase in his monster truck. A balletic assault of motorbike bandits on the war rig ensues while Immortan Joe's monster truck closes fast. Joe, at this point, perceives his battle to be between him and Furiosa, not the wives. As Joe's truck pulls up alongside the war rig, he personally points his revolver at Furiosa to end her life and reclaim his property. In response to Joe's threat Splendid Angharad, with the help of the other wives, places her pregnant body between Joe and the Emperor Furiosa. The use of her pregnant body and the life it contains creates the ultimate shield. By showing she knows where Joe is most vulnerable, Splendid takes ownership of her body and her autonomy. Her son is the child trope incarnate. She will not bow to Joe's will; she will not return to him quietly; and she will protect Furiosa with her and her child's life if need be. Joe's response shows his privileged belief that he holds power over their bodies. "Splendid, Splendid. That's my child, my property!" (Miller 56:21-26) Hugh Keays-Byrne's vocal performance of anguished, guttural growls makes clear that Joe perceives the child in her belly to be his future. He has left the relative protection of his army behind, raced like a madman to retake what he believes to have been stolen from him, only to find out that his property is fighting back.

At this point, the tenor of the fight changes. Joe knew his wives escaped him. However they are now actively thwarting his rescue. Forced to back off and he attempts a new approach as the wives desperately place themselves in harm's way to protect Furiosa and Max. When Rictus is able to harpoon the steering wheel and pin Max's hand, Splendid is the one who cuts the harpoon free. The escalation of danger she puts herself in climaxes in her horribly violent death: crushed under her loathed husband's truck tires after slipping from the war rig. He futilely attempts to steer around her and crashes the truck allowing the war rig to

escape at the cost of her and her baby's life, as well as the cost of his future legacy.

Splendid's unconscious and badly broken body falls back into Joe's hands. Genuinely enraged he screams to the high heavens over the death of his legacy in her womb. His property destroyed at his own hand. Splendid's death does not elicit soul searching. He does not recognize his complicity in her death nor that he drove his wives off. He certainly does not see the violence inherent in his domination over them and his people. Later that night, Joe's war party rejoins him and they promptly get stuck in a sandy swamp. Joe's lieutenants The People Eater and the Bullet Farmer (Richard Carter) take stock of the preceding days attempt to recapture Furiosa and the five wives. Their complaints about the economic cost of retrieving the wives are juxtaposed against the dying breaths of Splendid. Earlier in the film, The Bullet Farmer growls, "All this over a family squabble... Healthy Babies..." and spits to show his disgust at the resources squandered to save Joe's legacy. During Splendid's death, The People Eater, dutifully and furiously gives a reckoning of the resources expended already to bring in the all but dead corpse of Splendid. "We are down 30,000 units of gasoline, 19 canisters of nitro, 12 assault bikes, 7 pursuit vehicles: the deficit mounts, and now sir, you have us stuck in a quagmire!" (Miller 1:05:56-1:06:11) From the People Eater's angry haranguing over the economic loss, The Organic Mechanic (Angus Sampson) calls Joe's attention to his dying wife. Joe's response is to remove the child to save it. The body of Splendid is further desecrated by the Organic Mechanic plundering her womb to save the baby without another thought to the well-being of the mother. The Organic Mechanic's attempts are all for naught as the baby is still too young to have lived outside the womb in this post-apocalyptic world.

While the desecration of Splendid's body to claw out the life within does not yield the birth of a living breathing child, it still shows the value placed on reproduction in Immortan Joe's world. If he is to maintain his legacy he needs a perfect child, free from the physical deformities of his other children. His legacy as an Immortan, or god on earth, rests on being able to sire a new life without blemish. Splendid matters only in so far as she is an incubator for life. Her reproductive organs are all that matters in the post-apocalypse. Perhaps most troubling in this post-apocalyptic world is that Lee Edelman's trope of the child is given literal flesh. The only thing that matters is not the reproduction of children but the reproduction of Joe's child. All other children are simply grist for Joe's war machine. War boys become mutated and corrupted by tumors and other afflictions in service to Immortan Joe. I would find it hard to argue that Immortan Joe's world perfectly matches with Edelman's formulation of Reproductive Futurity. Instead of the trope of the Child being tied to political action as in Edelman, the child of the elite, powerful, and godlike Joe becomes tied to futurity. It is a similar process, but differences do exist. The idea of children becomes concrete in a single child born of a god figure. All other children are either disregarded or seen as resources to be exploited for the shoring up of power and the making of war. Furiosa and the five wives push against the exploitation of their children for the making of war. However, I would argue this still tracks with the elevation of the trope of the child over actual children. While the particulars are different, the results are the same. Immortan Joe does not care at all for the huddled masses at the base of his citadel, but he does care deeply for the unborn child that could be his heir. While the wives are not given a chance to articulate a strong multistep plan for their children's future, we see that they do not wish to raise masculine warlords. They reject the patriarchy of Immortan Joe as the

murderer of the world and long for the green place and the many mothers. While the Vuvalini cannot provide the green place to the wives or to Furiosa, the citadel that Immortan Joe has vacated in his mad attempt to crush Furiosa and reclaim his wives stands vacant and ripe for reappropriation by these women. The plundering of Splendid's womb and death of her child shows the depths to which a toxic masculine man will stoop to continue his legacy. In attempting to cement his legacy, Joe unwittingly leaves a path open for Furiosa, the wives, and the Vuvalini, to lay claim to his seat of power and rebuild the world in their image. One free from the warlords who destroyed the world.

#### Child of Kee: Refuge and the Refugee

Birth in *Mad Max: Fury Road* is tied to suffering and the knowledge that the status quo means a mother's child will be stolen away and turned against their mother. *Children of Men* also deals with the very real fear that Kee's child will be stolen away and used for propaganda in a world where immigration is outlawed, and refugees are treated with hate and disdain. Kee's identity as a Fugee coupled with her skin color, make her especially vulnerable to exploitation in a Great Britain in crisis. As mentioned in the previous chapter the death of Baby Diego is far more shocking to the populace than the rampant corruption, bigotry, and terrorism all around them. Terrorism is even idly suspected by Jasper to be perpetrated by the government to draw attention away from the malfeasance of the day. For a baby to be born to a refugee would be greatly damaging to those who use refugees as scapegoats for the problems of the world. Even though Kee is relatively safe with the Fishes, she could also be perfect propaganda for them as well. To trot out a child born of a refugee would give power to their cause. Julian's decision to bring Theo in as Kee's protector is not simply to get the papers for

moving Kee to the sea. Instead Julian needs a man outside the organization who will take Kee under his wing and keep her safe from both the Fishes and the government.

After the death of Julian at the hands of her allies, Kee senses that something has gone wrong and brings Theo into the secret that she is pregnant. Theo, shaken by the death of Julian and his complicity in the murder of police officers, wants nothing to do with the Fishes and tries to leave her, thinking they will do what's best for her. Surrounded by cows in a dairy she shows her pregnant body to him while the music swells to highlight the drastic shift that has just occurred. The first pregnant mother in just under 20 years should be a cause for celebration. Hope has returned to a world that desperately needs it. The legacy of humanity is not just consigned to the dusty Ark of Art. Instead, humanity has the chance to right the wrongs of the present. Alas, that will not happen if Kee's baby is used as a propagandistic tool. The government could easily take her baby away from her and give it to a rich black family. The baby's status as a refugee can be erased by her upbringing. Like Splendid, Kee's womb is all that is needed for reproduction. Once the baby is born the child can be severed from her. The baby's skin color can be matched with another couple, and the child's nature as a fugee never need be disclosed or discussed by a government actively carting refugees around like cattle. Echoing unethical scientific experiments carried out on unsuspecting black folk, Kee could become the scientific pawn of a government desperately trying to call attention away from the problems of the world. On the other side, the Fishes would like to use Kee's refugee status as a call to arms to attack the corrupt government. Kee is stuck between a dangerous government who would deny her rights and could possibly kidnap her baby and a quasi-terror group. Julian entrusts Kee to Theo not just because he is outside the group but also

because of their shared history and the understanding of what the death of their son did to them both.

Standing among the cows, her naked body exposed, Kee is at her most vulnerable. She recognizes the baby growing inside of her is a miracle that will snap Theo out of his self-involved fear over the preceding hours. And snap to attention he does. Underscoring the miracle of this pregnancy, Theo exclaims “Jesus Christ” (Cuarón 35:23). The exclamation making a winking nod to another miraculous birth. As the other Fishes rush in ready to accuse Theo of harming her, Miriam (Pam Ferris) points out that Kee wanted Theo to know about her birth and it was Kee’s right tell her secret. Luke (Chiwetel Ejiofor) perfunctorily responds, “Of course, she does.” (Cuarón 35:29-35:32) He says it ominously under his breath foreshadowing the Fishes attempts later to take ownership of the baby. The symbolic weight of Kee’s belly inflects every conversation with the Fishes, further highlighting that they have just as problematic designs on the baby as the government would have.

After escaping the Fishes and watching Jasper’s murder at the hands of Luke; Theo, Kee, and Miriam find refuge in an abandoned elementary school to wait for Jasper’s drug smuggling contact. While there Miriam contemplates her memory of the horror of realizing that women are not giving birth anymore. Working as a midwife, she watched the numbers of miscarriages rise and occur earlier in pregnancy. She remembers specifically booking a woman’s appointment only to notice the next page is completely blank. Women are no longer in need of appointments to an obstetrician in a world without reproduction. The horror of watching the death of reproduction haunts her. Miriam tells Theo, “It’s very odd what happens in a world without children’s voices. I was there at the end.” Theo responds. “Now you will be there at the beginning” (Cuarón 1:00:22-1:00:32)

Illustrating Miriam's point is the surrounding elementary school, in disrepair and long abandoned in a world with no need for the trappings of childhood. Miriam has found her purpose in Kee. She will bring the first baby into a world that has lost hope. Reproduction has a purpose outside of just creating new humans. The act of bringing children into the world gives hope and comfort to people. It can be a communal act if it is allowed to be. Kee's status as a refugee cuts away the lie that she is worth less than true citizens of Britain. Her birth, in another time or place under a different government, could be seen as an inverse Baby Diego. Where his death represents the grief of a world without children, Kee's baby could be the beginning of a new age of humanity. One where race and citizenship are not held against a person. The world could begin anew. Unfortunately, she will never fulfill this purpose as they will be separated by the security apparatus of the state.

Kee goes into labor at perhaps the most inopportune time while on a refugee detention bus. Miriam's attempt to protect Kee is thwarted when Miriam is pulled from the bus. Kee's water breaking launches an awful night of being processed and forced into a refugee holding community. She gives birth in dark room with only Theo to support her. A cacophony of dogs barking in the background and a scared young woman doing something that hasn't been done in 18 years, Theo talks Kee through the birthing process. The baby comes quickly as if the world has needed it for so long. After the girl is born, Theo tells Kee, "You've done it, Kee. See, it wasn't that bad." She responds. "Not for you." (Cuarón 1:13:04-1:13:17) And they laugh as only an exhausted couple who have been through hell and found their destination can. They laugh because they have achieved the impossible and brought reproduction and hope back into the world.

Race and citizenship play a key part in the destruction of the world in *Children of Men*. Great Britain's self-conception of itself as a bastion of hope and

decency in the chaos around it is based on a lie. That lie being that any problems should be placed on the undesirable refugees that have flocked there. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the government's attempts to placate the elite and leave all others to rot is especially borne out by the contrast of the checkpoints between areas of the country that make movement so difficult for Theo and Kee. The inner parks of London on the way to the Ark of Art stand in stark contrast to the refugee camp where Kee gives birth. Ironically or perhaps not so ironically, once the baby is born and war breaks out between the Fishes and the military, the baby's cries lead to a *détente* where both sides stare in awe at this new life brought into the world. Its status as a refugee and its skin color fade away. All that matters to the soldiers, who are there to wipe the refugees out, is protecting this new life. Minutes pass as Theo, Kee, and the Baby are whisked through the soldier's lines until a single shot breaks the spell and the battle continues. The symbol of the child in a world without reproduction, no matter where that baby came from, could be potent enough to break down the seemingly petty differences between the Fishes and the government.

#### Motherhood and The Alien Child

In *The Road*, birth is held at arm's length like the memory of a mother who abandoned her family in despair at the thought of living in an apocalyptic world. McCarthy's vision of the apocalypse is not very kind to motherhood or the act of birth in general. Mother's despairing choice of suicide is juxtaposed against Father's steadfast, desperate need to protect his Son. The birth of the Son also coincides with the unnamed apocalypse, and the two are linked in Mother's mind. The linking of birth and death runs throughout McCarthy's narrative as it also crops up in a disturbing reversal of the role of Mother and child. Hunger

necessitates this role reversal in a scene of infanticide and cannibalism. The indifference of the apocalypse to human suffering is compared to the indifference of a husband to his wife's own pain. In the wake of the end of the world, Father and Mother watch the world burn by candlelight. (McCarthy 59) The Son comes a few nights later, and Father makes due delivering the baby with various kitchen implements. I would like to call special attention to the way Father responds to Mother in this scene.

A few nights later she gave birth in their bed by the light of a drycell lamp. Gloves meant for dishwashing. The improbable appearance of the small crown of the head. Streaked with blood and lank black hair. The rank meconium. Her cries meant nothing to him. Beyond the window just the gathering cold, the fires on the horizon.

(McCarthy 59)

Indifference to Mother's suffering is instigated at birth. That her cries mean nothing reverberate throughout the narrative. Father seems to have chosen to erase the Mother of his child. In another scene, he goes through his wallet and leaves its contents, including a picture of his wife on the road. Perhaps the pain of keeping the memory of Mother alive is too much for Father, but what does that say about her suicide? After her suicide, the Son asks Father if she is gone and he replies that she is (McCarthy 58) and that is the end of her impact in her Son's life. Once the boy is brought into the world, Mother is no longer needed, and her death creates pathos for Father but strangely not for her Son.

As I have intimated before, encounters with strangers on the road are fraught with danger, and so Father has attempted to keep his Son from all strange groups of people no matter how large. Along with pressing the fear of strangers into his Son he also tries to shield the boy from the grotesqueries of their

existence. The Father, born in a world without the daily calamities and barbarities of the post-apocalypse, tries desperately to shield his Son. He misunderstands this world's barbarity, danger, and death. Throughout the novel, Father tries to impress on his Son the danger of what one puts in one's head. The Son asks Father, "What you put in your head is there forever? / Yes. / It's okay Papa. / It's okay? They're already there. / I don't want you to look. / They'll still be there. / He stopped and leaned on the cart. He looked down the road and he looked at the boy. So strangely untroubled" (McCarthy 191). What the Father doesn't understand is that the boy has always lived in the context of the Apocalypse. The things the Father sees as grotesque and abominable are the lived-in experience of the Son. He is not so much numbed to them, as he knows nothing else. They live in two alien worlds and Father's experience is alienating to his Son. Father tries to take on the emotional weight of the world and keep it from his Son. He tries desperately to give his Son something, anything remotely like a normal childhood; yet Father's normal childhood would be alien to his Son. He thinks that by keeping the darkness of the world at bay, he can raise the boy to one day survive for himself. What he misunderstands is: the boy is watching. Throwing away Mother's picture is not for his Son. The boy sees what Father is doing and understands that Father thinks it is benefiting the boy. He also recognizes that it is killing his Father. Following an encounter with a thief, Father and Son have an argument over stealing more from the thief than was taken from them. Son tells Father that all he wants is to help the man even though he looks like he is going to die. "He is so scared papa. The man squatted and looked at him. I'm scared, He said. Do you understand? I'm scared" (McCarthy 259). As I have pointed out before, the Son sees the incongruity between what Father teaches him and what Father does. Even though he is young, he sees the strain this puts on his Father's psyche. Father tries

to hold the weight of the apocalypse on his shoulders. He tries to shield his Son from the darkness by taking it all on himself. But he cannot protect the boy forever. After Father tells his Son he is scared, Father snaps at his Son, "You're not the one who has to worry about everything. The boy said something but he couldn't understand him. What? He said. He looked up, his wet and grimy face. Yes I am, he said. I am the one" (McCarthy 259). Father has misunderstood his Son's desire to help. He thinks the Son does not weigh the dangers of these encounters: that his Son misunderstands this world. He doesn't see that his Son recognizes the world for what it is and is trying to resolve the fears not only of himself and his Father but also of the people they see along the road. Father has tried to instill in his Son a moral center. A belief that there are good and bad people in the world. However, Father's actions call into question whether they are good people themselves.

One such encounter that shows the impossibility of protection in the post-apocalypse occurs in relation to birth. Continuing McCarthy's indifference to motherhood, it involves birth. While walking, Father realizes they are being followed. In response, they hide and watch as three bedraggled men and a pregnant woman pass them. They try to keep their distance and allow the small group to move away. As night passes, the father-son duo come upon the group's campfire again. Assuming that they have fled, Father and Son see if they can scrounge anything from the campfire only to discover a darker truth about the apocalypse. McCarthy describes the scene,

He was standing there checking the perimeters when the boy turned and buried his face against him. He looked quickly to see what had happened. What is it? He said. What is it? The boy shook his head. Oh Papa, he said. He turned and looked again. What the boy had

seen was a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit. He bent and picked the boy up and started for the road with him, holding him close. I'm sorry, he whispered. I'm sorry.  
(McCarthy 198)

Protection against the threat and violence of the world is untenable and impossible in a world where the expected bond between a mother and child is broken at birth; where infanticide and cannibalism are seen as needed for survival. A reverse dichotomy is enacted where the mother eats the child rather than sustaining the child's life through her milk. The child becomes sustenance for their small group rather than a drain on their meager resources, however in the ethical framework of *Father and Son* this child's fate is met with recoil and horror. Eating the child makes a practical amount of sense, the child would be and has been a drain on the resources of the small group, and its body can act as sustenance. However, the grim calculus that allows a mother to make this decision, if indeed it was her decision, cannot and will not be reckoned with by *Father and Son*. In fact, it is the basis of their moral code. Matthew Mullins argues that hunger and the response to satisfying hunger are how morality is constructed in *The Road*. He elaborates,

...The primary means of defining who is good and who is bad comes, at least in part, from how humans react differently to hunger. Some are willing to do anything to survive, including eating other humans. Others, like the boy and the man, refuse to resort to cannibalism, even if it means sacrificing themselves to hunger. (79-80)

The core components of *Father's* moral schooling signal a belief that community between others can, at some point be returned to. That one should help one's neighbor and love one's child. This moral code, simplistic as it may be, is

difficult to follow when hunger burrows into one's stomach and perches there for the rest of one's mortal life.

The relationship between mother, child, and the demands of the post-apocalypse define the conditions of birth. The cannibalism of the pregnant mother shows the dissolution of the idealized relationship between a mother and her child. Instead, the child is cut out to sustain the mother for a very short time rather than the immense length of time it would take to sustain and raise that same child. Juxtaposed against the desecration of Splendid's body, one can see the difference between valuing reproductive futurity too highly and valuing it not at all. In both situations, the mother's body is treated as a vessel for something of value; an heir in one, a meager morsel of food in another.

Mothers' bodies become sites of divine conception in the apocalypse if, and only if, they choose to accept that there is a future. This is the main difference between an apocalyptic narrative and a post-apocalyptic one: choosing to embrace the future. Post-apocalyptic narratives foreground children as the future. They have to, because there is no future for humanity under the artificial constraints of an apocalypse without children. That is not to say, however, that these narratives cannot wrestle with the problems Edelman raises with the child trope. My discussion in this chapter can be used to address Edelman's blind spots on gender and hopefully make for a fuller understanding of reproductive futurity in relation to post-apocalyptic narratives.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Lee Edelman argues that the trope of the child “serve[s] as the figural repository for sentimentalized cultural identification, [and] has come to embody[...] the telos of the social order and been enshrined as the figure for whom that order must be held in perpetual trust” (290). Reproductive futurity privileges the trope of the child and entangles it with future hopes and aspirations. The image of the child as hope for humanity’s future is one of the bedrock tropes of post-apocalyptic narratives. The trope of the child is easy to exploit when setting the ramifications of a world-ending cataclysm. By endangering the child, an author is sending a message about the inherent values of their post-apocalyptic world and what the future even means in that world. What would Father do to protect his Son in *The Road*? What are the important lessons he feverishly teaches knowing he is days away from death? Why can’t Mother handle the apocalypse for the sake of her child? Will Father break his own code of ethics he is trying to instill in his to keep the child alive? In *Children of Men*, how should a baby and its mother be protected from the symbolic weight of the first birth in 18 years? What does the ark of art say about futurity? Why would a baby be enough to lead a revolution?

I make the argument that the road represents an escape from the apocalypse. The journeys characters take, in these texts, are necessitated by a need to flee from danger. Survival and the road become synonymous in the post-apocalypse world. The road is simultaneously an obstacle, a point of conflict and constraint, and also a ladder to redemption. To that end, the road of the post-apocalypse is a site of contestation where the tenuous future of humanity plays out. The “Fury Road” is where Furiosa releases and defends the wives in an attempt at atoning for her sins under Immortan Joe’s command. The road is where

Father and Son trudge in an attempt to reach warmer climates to escape the winter. It is also where Father tries to impart a sense of goodness into his Son before Father is gone for good. Treks across the continent are how Lionel Verney and his coterie flee the plague in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*. On the road is where they spend the rest of their lives trying to live as the last people on earth. Lastly, the road is where Theo gives his life trying to bring Kee and her baby to those who will keep them safe. Is it any surprise then that the road becomes a place of birth? In the mad dash to escape the apocalypse, birth becomes one of the obstacles on the road.

The act of birth on the road becomes the product of divine conception in the post-apocalypse. A mother's womb becomes a way of ensuring the future, even as the child becomes a liability to its parents and guardians. The act of birth can also be tarnished by the conditions of the road. The infanticide of the cannibal's child for sustenance and the plunder of Splendid's body for Joe's progeny both illustrate the ways birth itself is a site of contestation. In *The Road*, the Mother literally eats what was once part of her for survival, and the future of the newborn child is sacrificed for the short-term survival of the group. To Joe, Splendid's body is merely an incubator for his prized progeny and, by extension, his legacy. Her desires for herself or her child have no merit in Joe's eyes. In *Children of Men*, the cries of Kee's child is enough to create a moment of peace between the refugees and the army.

My reading of post-apocalyptic narratives is by no means all-inclusive. There are various other readings of the genre that do not find it nearly as hopeful as I do. At the outset of this endeavor, I tried to select texts that included reproduction on the road in the wake of world-altering events. There are, of course, readings of other literary and cultural texts could be just as illuminating for

understanding reproductive futurity and the role the child tropes plays in post-apocalyptic narratives. I am thinking of texts by women, people of color, and queer folk which might respond to and complicate Lee Edelman's theory of reproductive futurity. A text like Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* looks very differently at reproductive issues and is certainly not hopeful in its critique of patriarchal control of women's rights. Work should be done in taking the post-apocalyptic genre and studying it in light of futurity. What do these texts argue is the purpose of hope in a future beyond the apocalypse? Is value placed in the production of children? Does this focus on reproduction exclude queer folk? What role does gender play in the construction of reproductive futurity in the apocalypse? I would hope these questions can be used to construct further readings of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives. Edelman lays a framework for understanding reproductive futurity that, I believe, needs to be expanded on for other queer and not-so-queer identities and communities.

By their very nature, post-apocalyptic narratives reject the end of humanity. Channeling Stacker Pentecost's (Idris Elba) memorable exhortation to this fellow soldiers to not give in on the eve of a kaiju attack in *Pacific Rim* (Del Toro), post-apocalyptic narratives cancel the apocalypse and show the beginnings of life returning to society. The genre is built on the notion that, even in the apocalypse something or someone survives: that the end is not exactly an end but a beginning in disguise. Stephen Clark points out that,

Life, we say, goes on, and any partial alteration and destruction will soon be restored. We do have history on our side in this belief; however many millions died in European wars or post-war epidemics in this century there is no lack of people now, nor any clear account of what went differently because they died. (Clark 33)

It is in the rebuilding of society however that an audience can see glimmers of change. Post-apocalyptic novels offer the chance to recreate society from the ashes of old. To that end, I believe we should return once again to *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Furiosa and the five wives are given the chance to take the tools of their oppressor and rebuild society in the image of the feminine Vuvalini and the Green Place. Redemption is not found in the war between Immortan Joe and Furiosa, but in turning his citadel against him.

## WORKS CITED

- Berlant, Lauren and Lee Edelman . *Sex, or the Unbearable*. Duke University press, 2014.
- Cantor, Paul A. "The Apocalypse of Empire: Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*." *Iconoclastic Departures: Mary Shelley After Frankenstein*, edited by Frederick S. Frank, and Gregory O'Dea Syndy M. Conger, Associated University Presses, 1997. pp. 193-211.
- Children of Men*. Directed by Alfonso Cuarón, performances by Clive Owen, Julianne Moore, Michael Caine, and Clare-Hope Ashitey, Universal Pictures, 2006.
- Chyikowski, Peter. "A Two-Sentence Summary of Every Episode of *The Walking Dead*." *Rock Paper Cynic*, 03 Dec. 2012. [rockpapercynic.com/index.php?date=2012-03-12](http://rockpapercynic.com/index.php?date=2012-03-12). Accessed 25 Apr. 2017.
- Clark, Stephen R.L. "The End of the Ages." *Imagining Apocalypse*, edited by David Seed. St. Martins Press, 2000, pp. 27-44.
- Clarke, I F. "The Tales of the Last Days, 1805-3794." *Imagining Apocalypse*, edited by David Seed, St. Martin's Press, 2000, pp. 15-26.
- Edelman, Lee. "The Future is Kid Stuff: Queer Theory, Disidentification, and the Death Drive." *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*. Ed. Donald E. Hall, et al, Routledge, 2013, 287-298.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Duke University Press, 2004.
- Falconer, Delia. "'We Don't Need to Know the Way Home': The Disappearance of the Road in the *Mad Max* Trilogy." *The Road Movie Book*. edited by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, Routledge, 2002, pp. 249-270.
- Gallagher, Cavan. "Old Hands, New Breeds: *Mad Max: Fury Road* and Evolving Gender Roles." *Metro Magazine* no.186, 2015, 50-55, [search.ebscohost.com.hmlproxy.lib.csufresno.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=110626052&site=ehost-live](http://search.ebscohost.com.hmlproxy.lib.csufresno.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=110626052&site=ehost-live), Accessed 9 February 2017.
- Halberstam, Judith. *In a Queer Time and Place*. New York University Press, 2005.
- Katerberg, William H. *Future West: Utopia and Apocalypse in Frontier Science Fiction*, University Press of Kansas, 2008.

- Kilgour, Maggie. "'One Immortality': The Shaping of the Shelley's in *The Last Man*." *European Romantic Review*, vol. 16 no. 5, 2006, pp. 563-588, doi: 10.1080/10509580500420464. Accessed 4 April 2014.
- Mad Max: Fury Road*. Directed by George Miller, performances by Tom Hardy, Charlize Theron, and Hugh Keays-Byrne, Warner Bros. Pictures, 2015.
- McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. Vintage Books, 2006.
- Mullins, Matthew. "Hunger and the Apocalypse." *Symplokē*, vol. 19 no. 1-2, 2011, pp. 75-93, Accessed 2 February 2017.
- Seed, David. "Aspects of Apocalypse." *Imagining Apocalypse*. edited by David Seed, St. Martins Press, 2000, pp. 1-14.
- Shelley, Mary. *The Last Man*. Oxford University Press, 2008.