Wandering into the Wasteland:
White American Masculinities in the Apocalyptic Science Fiction Road Narrative

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Submitted for the degree of PhD

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Date of submission: 9th October 2013
Word count: 99 939 words

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This thesis examines the portrayal of American white male subjects within the apocalyptic science fiction road narrative, focusing on two visual media in which this genre hybrid features prominently: film and comics. The study builds upon an embryonic body of scholarship addressing several structural, iconographic and thematic connections between the road genre and apocalyptic science fiction. In responding to the call for further research into the road genre's spread across media, the study observes that apocalyptic road films and comics complicate the dominant critical narrative regarding the road movie's increasing emphasis upon racially and sexually diverse travellers. Interrogating this discrepancy with an awareness of its ramifications for female, black and queer secondary characters' representation, the thesis demonstrates how the apocalyptic science fiction road narrative has been persistently and primarily used as a forum for examining, indulging and critiquing various conceptualisations of American white masculinity and associated desires and anxieties. Each chapter conducts a textual analysis of a selection of case studies that foreground a particular 'type' of male traveller prevalent throughout apocalyptic road films and comics released between 1975 and 2013. These discussions utilise a mixed methodology combining reference to studies of apocalyptic fiction, the road genre and their integration, formalist work on comics that positions the medium in relation to film, and appropriate work on cultural representations of whiteness and masculinity. The first two chapters address several approaches to the correspondence between male power, communal involvement and the vehicle's changing role throughout action-oriented post-apocalyptic narratives. Chapter 3 investigates the correlation between post-apocalyptic settings and thwarted narratives of adolescent maturation. Chapter 4 examines the recent concern with paternal agency and violence in traumatic journeys undertaken by fathers and children. Lastly, Chapter 5 explores the masculine crises arising from the road's displacement by other, digitally enabled and/or fantastical forms of mobility.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

> The world crumbled. […] On the roads it was a white line nightmare. Only those mobile enough to scavenge, brutal enough to pillage would survive. […] And in this maelstrom of decay, ordinary men were battered and smashed. Men like Max, the warrior Max. In the roar of an engine he lost everything – and became a shell of a man, a burnt-out desolate man, a man haunted by the demons of his past, a man who wandered out into the wasteland. And it was here, in this blighted place, that he learned to live again.
>
> *From the opening narration of*
> Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior *(George Miller, 1981).*

In a 1994 article in *Sight & Sound*, Michael Atkinson posed the question, '[H]as the road movie found new wheels?'.[1] The millennial boom in academic research surrounding road films and, secondarily, road stories in other media answers in the affirmative. Edited collections such as Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark's *The Road Movie Book* (1997) and Jack Sargeant and Stephanie Watson's *Lost Highways* (1999) and major monographs including David Laderman's *Driving Visions* (2002) and Katie Mills' *The Road Story and the Rebel* (2006) demonstrate an increased drive to trace the road film's history and examine both its status as a distinctly American genre and its spread to other national cinemas. Matters of gender, sexuality and race are integral to many of these discussions. Whereas Timothy Corrigan defined the road film in 1991 as 'a genre traditionally focused, almost exclusively, on [white heterosexual] men and the absence of women',[2] the recent growth in academic interest stems from, and foregrounds, the genre's diversifying focus upon journeys undertaken by women, black travellers, gay and transgendered individuals and children from the 1990s onwards. This is a significant transformation, but one that is challenged by certain hybrid strands of the genre.

Several studies confront the risk of adopting too purist an attitude towards the road story's status as a genre by considering what Sargeant and Watson describe

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[1] Michael Atkinson, 'Crossing the Frontiers', *Sight & Sound*, 4.1 (1994), 14-17 (p. 14).
[2] Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture after Vietnam* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. 143.

as its inherent 'intertextuality and ability to combine with other genres'.[3] Building upon the common perception that the genre was consolidated in *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967) and *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969), scholars have also noted its roots in the western, social conscience films like *The Grapes of Wrath* (John Ford, 1940), and *film noirs* like *Detour* (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1945).[4] In addition to these precursors, several academics have discussed the road story's frequent combination with science fiction, and especially the subgenre of apocalyptic science fiction.

The most widely examined example of the latter is the Australian *Mad Max* trilogy (George Miller, 1979; Miller, 1981; Miller and George Ogilvie, 1985), especially the post-apocalyptic feature *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior*, which achieved worldwide commercial success.[5] Immediately spawning numerous international low-budget imitators, *Mad Max 2*'s images of tough and taciturn leather-clad survivalist heroes and marauders prowling hostile deserts in eccentrically customised vehicles retain a powerful cultural influence. Tellingly, James Combs has coined the awkward portmanteau term 'Mad Maxian' to describe any post-apocalyptic film in which wandering survivors battle over desolate wastelands.[6] However, few academics have recognised and addressed the true diversity and enduring vitality of visual media narratives combining apocalyptic science fiction and the road story, not only in film but also in comics (to an altogether more prominent degree than in television or video games). Even fewer have considered how these hybrid texts have complicated the prevailing critical narrative describing the road genre's diversification by focusing insistently upon white male travellers. Whilst many of these characters wander into wastelands on perilous journeys that involve a simultaneous flight from, and confrontation of, the demons of their past or a search for stability, belonging, purpose and security, they are demonstrably not all 'men like Max'.

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[3] Jack Sargeant and Stephanie Watson, 'Looking for Maps: Notes on the Road Movie as Genre', in *Lost Highways: An Illustrated History of Road Movies*, ed. by Jack Sargeant and Stephanie Watson (London: Creation Books, 1999), pp. 5-20 (p. 6).

[4] David Laderman, *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), pp. 23-34.

[5] Precise figures are unavailable for *Mad Max 2*'s international gross, but the film recouped its US$2 million budget several times over in North American takings alone, grossing over $24 million. See Anon., 'Box Office History for Mad Max Movies', *The Numbers*, [n.d.] <http://www.the-numbers.com/movies/series/MadMax.php> [accessed 4 February 2013].

[6] James Combs, 'Pox-Eclipse Now: The Dystopian Imagination in Contemporary Popular Movies', in *Crisis Cinema: The Apocalyptic Idea in Postmodern Narrative Film*, ed. by Christopher Sharrett (Washington, DC: Maisonneuve Press, 1993), pp. 17-35 (p. 31).

Collectively classifying these texts as apocalyptic science fiction road narratives, this thesis examines the terms and nature of their enduring focus upon American white male subjects, desires and anxieties. The inquiry spans five chapters, each dealing with a prominent 'type' of travelling subject and associated concerns relating to gender, sexuality and race. From the mid-1970s through to the present, numerous apocalyptic science fiction films and comics have portrayed the voyages of hardened road warriors whose sense of self is uneasily bound to specific vehicles and associated paraphernalia (addressed across Chapters 1 and 2), adolescent boys anxious about sexuality and the nature of manhood (Chapter 3), fathers torn between violent survivalist imperatives and accompanying children's emotional, psychological and moral needs and vulnerability (Chapter 4), and travellers navigating the contemporary, specifically masculine crises culturally associated with the road's displacement by other forms of transit (Chapter 5). By addressing comics as well as films, the project responds to Mills' call for further research into 'the contribution to the road story made by the Internet, comic books, graphic novels, video games, and children's culture'.[7] This study thus works towards a more comprehensive understanding of how different visual media's narrative and aesthetic forms impact interconnected issues of genre and gender. Through the detailed textual analysis of a range of examples that reveal both the diversity of this hybrid and several overarching commonalities, the study advances the thesis that apocalyptic science fiction road narratives present a distinctive space for exploring and critiquing various constructions of white masculinity.

This introductory chapter establishes the project's central concepts, rationale and intervention. Following an overview of the precedent for examining American white male travellers specifically, it presents a literature review of appropriate definitions and discussions of the road story, apocalyptic science fiction and their amalgamation. This survey is supplemented by a consideration of the apocalyptic science fiction road narrative's increasingly prominent standing within critical reception, building towards a working definition of this generic hybrid. The chapter then addresses the specific reasons and benefits of extending this investigation of genre and gender to comics. Lastly, it outlines the thesis's methodology and structure.

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[7] Katie Mills, *The Road Story and the Rebel: Moving Through Film, Fiction, and Television* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2006), p. 8.

Masculinity on the move in American culture

The road in apocalyptic science fiction is predominantly the domain of white male characters. In defining the study's focus, however, one must recognise the existence of examples focusing upon other subjects. For instance, Alan Martin and Jamie Hewlett's British comic strip *Tank Girl* (1988-1995) and the film adaptation of the same name (Rachel Talalay, 1995), *Cherry 2000* (Steve De Jarnatt, 1988), *Resident Evil: Extinction* (Paul W.S. Anderson, 2007) and Brian K. Vaughan and Pia Guerra's comic book series *Y: The Last Man* (2002-2008) depict the travels of female rebels and warriors. Though discussed primarily in terms of its portrayal of its adolescent-identified male protagonist, Chapter 3 acknowledges *Y: The Last Man*'s problematic treatment of female masculinities. With the exception of *Cherry 2000*, however, the other aforementioned texts do not fit comfortably into the working definition of the apocalyptic science fiction road narrative outlined below, and would confuse the thesis's focus.

An exceptionally prominent example of an apocalyptic road narrative centring on an African-American male traveller, *The Book of Eli* (Albert and Allen Hughes, 2010), also emerged during the period of research. However, to seek a distinct imagining of black experience on the apocalyptic highway in this film is to find little acknowledgement of the concerns observed in American road literature concerning black travellers. As Kris Lackey has argued, many such books 'are not about escape from routine', 'historical nostalgia' or 'the pursuit of the ideal self', as white journeys often are, but instead 'reveal the fraudulence of space viewed as an essence, transcending class and colour'.[8] As one of several recent American films to use a post-apocalyptic setting to present 'a fantasy of the nation that is […] postrace',[9] *The Book of Eli* arguably maintains a simplistic colour-blind view, whilst perpetuating the portrayal of African-American masculinity as asexual and removed from any larger black community that is considered to be 'unthreatening' to a mainstream white audience.[10] The current study builds towards possible future research into apocalyptic road narratives' treatment of socially marginalised

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[8] Kris Lackey, *RoadFrames: The American Highway Narrative* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 130.

[9] Claire Sisco King, 'Legendary Troubles: Trauma, Masculinity, and Race in *I Am Legend*', in *Millennial Masculinity: Men in Contemporary American Cinema*, ed. by Timothy Shary (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), pp. 243-64 (p. 245).

[10] Philippa Gates, 'Always a Partner in Crime: Black Masculinity in the Hollywood Detective Film', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 32 (2004), 20-29 (p. 28).

identities by addressing the ramifications of several case studies' positioning of the adult heterosexual white male traveller as an outsider for the representation of female, black, child and queer subjects.

A general outline of American white male subjects' historical place within narratives and rhetoric concerning mobility and apocalypse will help to contextualise this thesis's inquiry. The road narrative is widely considered a quintessentially American tradition,[11] and mobility within American culture has long carried certain apocalyptic connotations. These trends stem from the national discourse of progress grounded in imagery of displacement and territorial expansion that is explored in Richard Slotkin's extensive work on the 'Myth of the Frontier'. This myth consists of three stages: 'a scenario of separation, temporary regression to a more primitive or "natural" state, and *regeneration through violence*', particularly the brutality and relocations experienced by the Native American population.[12] At the root of this narrative of 'separation' lies the westward emigration from the European metropolis to the American wilderness.[13] This collective movement from the Old World to the New World echoes the transition from a defunct world to a New Heaven and Earth described in the Book of Revelation. These connotations endure within work like Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau's 1861 essay 'Walking'. Thoreau regards the apparently instinctive westward trajectory of his wanderings into the countryside as a miniature reflection of the voyage from Europe, synonymous with the past, to America, writing that the human race 'go[es] westward as into the future, with a spirit of enterprise and adventure'.[14] Apocalyptic undertones colour Thoreau's description of the Atlantic as 'a Lethean stream' that enabled the settlers who crossed it 'to forget the Old World and its institutions'.[15] This fantasy of forgetting a prior social state and beginning anew is resurrected in urban form in the prospect of 'occupying the deserted metropolis and starting all over again' observed within Susan Sontag's foundational 1965 essay on 'end-of-the-world' science fiction cinema, 'The Imagination of Disaster'.[16]

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[11] Ronald Primeau, *Romance of the Road: The Literature of the American Highway* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996), p. 5.
[12] Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), p. 12 (Slotkin's emphasis).
[13] Slotkin, p. 11.
[14] Henry David Thoreau, 'Walking', in *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau: Excursions*, ed. by Joseph J. Moldenhauer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 185-222 (p. 196).
[15] Thoreau, pp. 196-97.
[16] Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Anchor, 1966), p. 215.

Indeed, as Slotkin's *Gunfighter Nation* (1992) shows, this apocalyptic rhetoric is not limited to the period in which the frontier was a geographical reality. As part of his examination of the frontier's mythical function as an enduring metaphor that helps people to 'interpret a new and surprising experience or phenomenon by noting its resemblance to some remembered thing or happening',[17] Slotkin considers its expansion into popular fiction genres. These include the western and science fiction, the latter of which Slotkin discusses in terms of the imagining of new 'regenerative barbarian wildernesses' on other planets in Edgar Rice Burroughs' John Carter novels.[18] Slotkin also acknowledges room for further inquiry into 'the differentiation, development, or significance' of genres like science fiction in their appropriation of the frontier myth.[19] For example, this thesis discusses the fact that the American wilderness in apocalyptic science fiction road narratives is seldom another world or country but rather a palimpsest. However, it is no longer the 'alien' culture of indigenous peoples that is over-written, but a familiar socio-political state of affairs upset by viral, nuclear, environmental or cosmic disaster. In particular, several post-apocalyptic texts' engagements with the familiar frontier theme of (re)building civilisation involve stories of white men engaging explicitly or implicitly with a past historical, national and personal legacy of patriarchy.

In starting to distinguish the particular place of the white male traveller within apocalyptic science fiction road narratives, it is necessary to refer to gender roles within American narratives adapting the aforementioned pattern of social separation, regression and redemptive violence. Slotkin isolates two fundamental genres concerning characters who overcome the perceived savagery of both the wilderness and their own natures through the self-knowledge granted by their identification as '"men (or women) who know Indians"': the female captivity-myth and the story of 'the American hero-as-Indian-fighter' and saviour of the captive white woman.[20] By the time Jonathan Rutherford discusses the reactionary figure of the 'Retributive Man' in 1980s popular culture, the figure who finds regeneration through violence in the wilderness is resolutely characterised as male. Unsettled by the emergence of sensitive, domestically involved yet materialistic media constructions of the 'New Man' in response to second-wave feminism, the

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[17] Slotkin, p. 6.
[18] Slotkin, p. 202.
[19] Slotkin, p. 25.
[20] Slotkin, p. 15.

Retributive Man's 'struggle to reassert a traditional masculinity, a tough independent authority' is, according to Rutherford, manifest in 'the pursuit of survivalism, the obsessive concern with apocalypse and the search for self sufficiency [*sic*]' within war films and,[21] further, adventure stories that envisage male heroes in physical and emotional 'flight from women' and family.[22] In American culture, this infatuation with flight is inherited from the novels discussed by Leslie A. Fiedler, which centre on white men and boys and include an example often elected as a precursor to American road fiction and cinema, Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). As Fiedler observes,

> the typical male protagonist of [American] fiction has been a man on the run, harried into the forest and out to sea, down the river or into combat – anywhere to avoid 'civilisation,' which is to say, the confrontation of a man and woman which leads to the fall to sex, marriage, and responsibility.[23]

Just as the redemptive land where Max supposedly 'learn[s] to live again' in *Mad Max 2* is also a 'blighted place', Fiedler remarks that the apparent freedom of the forest and other marginal zones is offset by 'fear and loneliness'.[24] The journey into the wasteland is not simply framed within American culture as a means of reclaiming male power, but is also clearly both the result of social and sexual anxieties and an experience that perpetuates them.

This ambivalence is an important consideration when examining apocalyptic science fiction, a genre that risks being dismissed as a straightforward exercise in wishful thinking, granted by the escape 'from normal obligations' described by Sontag.[25] Undeniably, some examples do uncritically indulge simplistic male sexual and power fantasies. *Seeking a Friend for the End of the World* (Lorene Scafaria, 2012), in which a romantic road trip unfolds against the backdrop of the Earth's imminent destruction by a comet, is particularly cynical. The film draws an unconvincing contrast between the promiscuity of the one-dimensional grotesques encountered by disillusioned middle-aged bachelor Dodge (Steve Carell) and his

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[21] Jonathan Rutherford, 'Who's that Man?', in *Male Order: Unwrapping Masculinity*, ed. by Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), pp. 21-67 (pp. 28-29).
[22] Rutherford, p. 47.
[23] Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), p. 26.
[24] Fiedler, p. 26.
[25] Sontag, p. 215.

implausible end-of-days fling with Penny (Keira Knightley), a young woman who sets family aside to restore his faith in true love.

Matt Kindt's 2010 comic book series *Revolver* explicitly characterises the post-apocalyptic scenario as a solipsistic male fantasy. In *Revolver*, office worker Sam moves between an unfulfilling present-day job on a celebrity gossip column and a productive journalistic mission in a devastated possible future he visits in his dreams. Although he rejects the post-apocalyptic America's horrors when obliged to choose between these realms, Sam translates its violence into the present. He is last shown resigning, selling his belongings and embarking on a journey to kill the man plotting the disaster's realisation. *Revolver* thus endorses a fantasy in which the 'average white guy' is assured of his singular historical importance, notably distinguishing his transformative agency from the materialism of the comic's shrewish female characters. This presents a simplistic reactionary response to the decline of a masculinity built around 'productive effectivity' and the 'apocalyptic' fear of men's reduction to the conventionally feminised role of passive consumers, a subtext that Jonathan Bignell detects within Francis Fukuyama's critique of American liberal democracy, *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992).[26] *Revolver* and *Seeking a Friend for the End of the World*, then, address middle-class white male desires for agency, sexual gratification and a return to a more 'authentic' state.

Other texts have presented a more complex and critical treatment of these themes. Vastly superior to *Revolver* is Peter Bagge's comic *Apocalypse Nerd* (2005-2007), a dissection of the same 're-masculinising' apocalyptic fantasy's narcissistic, anti-social and misogynistic underpinnings. Many texts addressed in the following chapters allude to similar fantasies, yet they also interrogate or subvert notions of male regeneration, autonomy and authenticity in the wasteland to varying degrees through their appropriation of certain elements of the road narrative. The next section provides a survey of literature concerning the road 'genre', apocalyptic science fiction and their general points of intersection.

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[26] Jonathan Bignell, *Postmodern Media Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 69.

Issues of genre definition

The following review and the definitions developed from it are informed by Rick Altman's theoretical study *Film/Genre* (1999), which valuably recognises that not all combinations of genres become fully fledged genres in their own right. Altman's model of 'genrification' describes a continuous 'sliding of generic terms from adjective to noun',[27] wherein cycles that introduce 'a new type of material or approach' to a familiar genre may or may not evolve into 'noun' genres.[28] This transition requires that critics and audiences widely recognise a certain generic trend and its common visual and structural features.[29] This shift is regularly signalled by the integration of two previously combined terms;[30] for instance, the term 'sci-fi' is now widely understood as an abbreviation referring to the entire 'science fiction' genre. As demonstrated below, reviewers and academics have begun to apply variations on the term 'apocalyptic road story' to several films and comics. Whilst this term appears to condense the more long-winded label 'apocalyptic science fiction/horror road narrative', to infer that such texts are now understood as a discrete genre would be overly hasty. Instead, this thesis treats the apocalyptic science fiction road narrative as one of several similar co-existing hybrids, which collectively exemplify Altman's assertion that genrification is a non-linear process involving the application of the same adjectival material (the road story) 'to multiple noun genres' (apocalyptic science fiction, non-apocalyptic science fiction, apocalyptic horror, apocalyptic fantasy).[31]

Another aspect of Altman's work integral to the following survey and working definitions is his attention to both semantic and syntactic approaches to genre. Whilst the semantic approach focuses on the presence of particular iconography, elements of mise-en-scène and stock characters, the syntactic approach 'privileges the structures into which [these elements] are arranged'.[32] Altman's proposed combination of these approaches acknowledges how familiar semantic and syntactic elements can be re-appropriated to generate new combinations.[33] For instance, one may consider how the road narrative's syntactic

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[27] Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999), p. 52.
[28] Altman, p. 60.
[29] Altman, p. 53.
[30] Altman, p. 51.
[31] Altman, p. 66.
[32] Altman, p. 219.
[33] Altman, p. 222.

continuities with the western are transformed by the horse's substitution for the automobile. The following review considers both semantic and syntactic elements, whilst noting that the '*broad applicability*' that Altman considers a merit of the semantic approach has proven problematic.[34]

Mapping the road genre

Work on American road fiction has developed from studies of the automobile and the journey like Cynthia Golomb Dettelbach's *In the Driver's Seat* (1976) and Janis P. Stout's *The Journey Narrative in American Literature* (1983) to monographs specifically dealing with the 'highway narrative', including Ronald Primeau's *Romance of the Road* (1996) and Lackey's *RoadFrames* (1997). However, prior to the 1990s little attention was paid to the road narrative as a 'genre' within visual media, with the exception of Mark Williams' 1982 filmography. Although academics have gradually begun to recognise isolated examples in comics, as addressed later, and more commonly television,[35] the bulk of research on the road 'genre' concerns cinema. There is an academic tendency to treat the 'exploding demographics' of the road films of the 1990s,[36] to cite Atkinson, as a novel 'overhaul' of the genre.[37] However, to speak of transformations within a genre, and even to discuss the road story as a genre, is to assume the previous existence of an established set of stable conventions. Whilst many genre definitions and approaches to genre criticism itself continue to be debated, the lack of critical consensus surrounding the precise nature of the road film, let alone the road story throughout visual media, is particularly conspicuous.

As Jason Wood claims, 'road movies commonly entail the undertaking of a journey by one or more protagonists as they seek out adventure, redemption or escape from the constricting norms of society and its laws', embarking in the process on 'a search for self' that frequently ends in compromise, disappointment, anti-climax or death.[38] Beyond this basic premise, various accounts of the road film by scholars ranging from Corrigan to Ron Eyerman and Orvar Löfgren treat its

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[34] Altman, p. 220 (Altman's emphasis).

[35] See Mark Alvey, 'Wanderlust and Wire Wheels: The Existentialist Search of *Route 66*', in *The Road Movie Book*, ed. by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 143-64; *TV Goes to Hell: An Unofficial Road Map of Supernatural*, ed. by Stacey Abbott and David Lavery (Toronto: ECW Press, 2011).

[36] Atkinson, p. 14.

[37] Atkinson, p. 17.

[38] Jason Wood, *100 Road Movies* (BFI: London, 2007), p. xv.

generic identity as self-evident.[39] However, especially within American cinema, it is fallacious to assert that any film about, or memorably featuring, cars, driving or roads is manifestly a road narrative. The cultural standing of 'the Mother Road', Route 66, provides only one illustration of the road's wider national significance; indeed, as Jean Baudrillard suggests, to discover the essence of America 'you have to take to the road'.[40] To classify an American text as a road story on the basis of the prominent inclusion of automobiles is to confuse their broader national and modernist iconicity with a more specific syntactic arrangement of such elements.

Certainly, the preoccupation with the car and the road as the road genre's defining iconography has generated much confusion and self-contradiction among scholars, and illustrates problems with the semantic approach's inclusivity. These difficulties and several elements that distinguish road stories from texts that simply feature the road become apparent in instances where scholars who are invested in the notion of a 'true' road film stretch their definitions to include certain marginal examples. For instance, Laderman describes the science fiction comedy *Repo Man* (Alex Cox, 1984) as exemplary of the road genre's postmodern turn in the 1980s, only to state subsequently that it 'is not really a road movie', but part of 'the non- or semi-road movie tradition of *American Graffiti*, *Taxi Driver*, and *Speed*': films which are 'about driving and cars, but within the city limits', rather than across regional and national boundaries.[41]

Two important conclusions may be derived from this example. Firstly, accounts of the road narrative can easily become reliant on arbitrary questions of degree, as exemplified by Christopher D. Morris's rhetorical question, 'How much road travel makes a road film?'.[42] This leads to definitions of the road 'genre' as an assortment of disparate niches arranged along a vague continuum spanning 'true', 'semi-' and 'non-'road films. Secondly, however, Laderman's qualification of his choice also reveals a useful distinction that indicates something of the road story's special compatibility with apocalyptic fiction: namely, that texts which are 'really' road stories tend to unfold in a particular kind of space, not urban but geographically marginal, open and sparsely inhabited. In particular, Sargeant and Watson identify the desert, 'a void in which long-established meanings vanish', as a

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[39] Corrigan, p. 144; Ron Eyerman and Orvar Löfgren, 'Romancing the Road: Road Movies and Images of Mobility', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 12 (1995), 53-79.
[40] Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1988), p. 5.
[41] Laderman, p. 139.
[42] Christopher D. Morris, *The Figure of the Road: Deconstructive Studies in Humanities Disciplines* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 148.

key road film setting.[43] Manohla Dargis similarly locates the road film's allure in its visions of 'an empty expanse, a *tabula rasa*, the last true frontier'.[44] These syntactic interpretations of the spaces regularly travelled in the road film bear clear similarities with apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic science fiction's renderings of familiar environments flung into chaos, the desert again being a preferred setting for conveying such alienation.

In imagining environmental, technological and societal upheaval, however, apocalyptic examples also complicate existing semantic/syntactic definitions of the road genre. Laderman distinguishes contemporary road novels and films from journey narratives such as Homer's *Odyssey*, picaresque novels like Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), and Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* on the grounds that they 'generally devote more romantic attention to the highway and automobile' as figures of 'freedom, exploration and escape, as well as a menacing incarnation of our culture's destructive addiction to technology'.[45] Post-apocalyptic road stories, meanwhile, often invoke a keen sense of the loss of the road and industrial vehicles. Stopovers at petrol stations in *The Road* (John Hillcoat, 2009) and Jeff Lemire's comic *Sweet Tooth* (2009-2013) and panoramas littered with wrecked cars in *A Boy and His Dog* (L.Q. Jones, 1975) and the television miniseries *The Stand* (1994) illustrate both an attachment to old infrastructures and new modes of living and moving. Roads are literally submerged in *Waterworld* (Kevin Reynolds, 1995), a text which realises the fantasy described by Dargis more vividly than any land-based road film. Rather than disposing of the car and road, the thesis indicates that apocalyptic texts enter into dialogue with their syntactic associations in the road genre.

Whilst the preceding overview illustrates several of the dissimilarities and self-contradictions across existing studies, one should not overlook the points on which they agree. From these commonalities, it is possible to derive a discrete yet flexible working definition appropriate to the thesis's needs. All scholars recognise that road stories demonstrate a greater preoccupation with the passage of the journey than its final destination. This focus upon the journey itself often generates an episodic narrative structure, commonly built around a series of encounters with individuals and communities encountered on the roadside. These offer insights into the experiences of persons suffering as a result of surrounding social, political and

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[43] Sargeant and Watson, 'Looking for Maps', pp. 13-14.
[44] Manohla Dargis, 'Roads to Freedom', *Sight & Sound*, 1.3 (1991), 14-18 (p. 16).
[45] Laderman, pp. 8-9.

economic conditions, and create opportunities for the traveller to connect with these communities and explore or transform themselves in the process.

Most scholars examine the physical entity or concept of 'the road' as a liminal space that invites and accommodates marginal experience. Road stories typically concern subjects who are disadvantaged by, or dissatisfied with, dominant political systems and social mores. This has led Laderman to characterise the road film as an instrument of 'cultural critique',[46] although it should not be assumed that road texts condone ideological marginality without reservations. Indeed, Mills valuably notes that many examples feature rebels without a particularly legitimate cause.[47] Elsewhere, the escape from restrictive social obligations manifests itself in experimentation with one's identity, as illustrated by the shifting racial, class and sexual identifications and behaviours in examples ranging from Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* (1957), often regarded 'a "master narrative" for the road movie',[48] to the adolescent road film *Y Tu Mamá También* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2001). Accordingly, Mills considers the road story less a quest for self-discovery than a study of 'how one *constructs* a sense of self' amid on-going post-war upheavals in social conceptualisations of race, gender, sexuality and class.[49]

Laderman divides road films into two categories. The 'outlaw couple road film' proceeds in the mould of *Bonnie and Clyde* and concerns characters who hit the road either as active criminals or fugitives. Typified by *Easy Rider*, the 'quest road film' is motivated by the search for a place, person or object.[50] These forms are not mutually exclusive. *Twelve Monkeys*' (Terry Gilliam, 1995) protagonist is identified as a fugitive, but his search for information regarding a devastating virus's origins and his fantasy of fleeing to the Florida Keys ground his journeys from a post-apocalyptic future to the present and from Baltimore to Philadelphia in a quest narrative. Most of the texts covered in this thesis follow the 'quest' formula, whilst those which do feature an element of pursuit tend to afford it less priority than examples like *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991) and *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994). De-emphasis upon this aspect can prove highly revealing with regard to the representation of masculinity, as demonstrated in Chapter 3's discussion of *Y: The Last Man*. Before such points of generic

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[46] Laderman, p. 1.
[47] Mills, p. 25.
[48] Laderman, p. 10.
[49] Mills, p. 19 (Mills' emphasis).
[50] Laderman, p. 20.

intersection can be detailed more fully, however, it is necessary to outline some of apocalyptic science fiction's defining aspects and concerns.

Cultural and generic conceptualisations of apocalypse

Recent work including Kirsten Moana Thompson's *Apocalyptic Dread* (2007) and Christopher Sharrett's 1993 edited collection *Crisis Cinema* has recognised apocalyptic elements in many genres, including horror, melodrama and *film noir*. Nevertheless, ostensibly genre non-specific studies including Mick Broderick's *Nuclear Movies* (1991)*,* Joyce A. Evans' *Celluloid Mushroom Clouds* (1998), David Seed's *Imagining Apocalypse* (2000) and Jerome F. Shapiro's *Atomic Bomb Cinema* (2002) remain dominated by discussions of science fiction film and literature. As a genre that frequently imagines future worlds and which Sontag has famously defined as a form 'about disaster' and 'the peculiar beauties to be found in wreaking havoc' (at least in its cinematic incarnations),[51] science fiction accommodates the important role allocated to prophecy and catastrophe within scriptural and secular conceptualisations of apocalypse.

It is important, however, to recognise that prophecy and disaster form only two components of apocalypticism. As Lois Parkinson Zamora observes, apocalypse is commonly misunderstood as a synonym for catastrophe,[52] a misconception which Seed suggests may be the result of the spectacular imagery of destruction commonplace in popular film and fiction.[53] In actuality, the Greek term from which 'apocalypse' originates, *apokálypsis,* translates as 'to uncover'.[54] Within scriptural constructions of apocalypse, destruction is merely one aspect of a process that culminates in the disclosure of divine design and judgement. Several road narratives concern themselves explicitly with religious constructions of apocalypse, as demonstrated by the quest to find an absentee God and hold him to account for human suffering in Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon's comic *Preacher* (1995-2000). Most examples, however, operate within a human frame of reference rather than a divine one, often informed by the road narrative's typically intimate focus upon the experiences of a small group of travellers. Even *Preacher*

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[51] Sontag, p. 213.
[52] Lois Parkinson Zamora, *Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Vision in Contemporary U.S. and Latin American Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 10.
[53] David Seed, 'Introduction: Aspects of Apocalypse', in *Imagining Apocalypse: Studies in Cultural Crisis*, ed. by David Seed (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 1-14 (p. 11).
[54] Zamora, p. 10.

interweaves the final battle between a narcissistic God and a vengeful angel of death with a more down-to-earth fight outside a bar as eponymous preacher Jesse learns of his friend Cassidy's horrific maltreatment of various women. This study therefore draws more heavily upon Frank Kermode's integral work on apocalypticism, which extends its insights beyond theology.

Kermode argues that apocalypse and eschatological discourses and fictions are valued within spiritual and secular traditions and Western culture more generally as 'sense-making paradigms'.[55] Amid the uncertainties, historical injustices and the fear of death that form humankind's 'irreducibly intermediary preoccupations',[56] Kermode argues that we devise historical endpoints to gratify our 'considerable imaginative investments in coherent patterns'.[57] Utilising two Greek terms describing different conceptualisations of time, Kermode writes that this process involves the identification of '*kairoi*' – crises, 'point[s] in time filled with significance' – from the 'humanly uninteresting successiveness' of '*chronos*', or '"passing time"'.[58] By discerning a concentrated sequence of events pointing to an ending, apocalyptic believers derive the reassuring impression of some wider meaning and purpose behind human existence and their lives, projecting themselves 'past the End, so as to see the structure whole'.[59]

It is crucial to acknowledge the differences between apocalypse's wider cultural conceptualisation and functions, and apocalyptic science fiction as a fiction genre with its own distinct conventions and thematic preoccupations. Work on apocalyptic science fiction typically spans two not altogether separate fields: studies that address it specifically as a strand of science fiction and those that treat it as part of the disaster genre. Whilst an early definition of disaster cinema by Maurice Yacowar includes post-apocalyptic features,[60] Stephen Keane's *Disaster Movies* (2006) and Ken Feil's *Dying for a Laugh* (2005) limit their focus to apocalyptic science fiction action features centring on the spectacle of urban destruction, like *The Day After Tomorrow* (Roland Emmerich, 2004). Notably, this film is structured around a journey, yet it is less concerned with the self-transformation that preoccupies the road narrative than with the straightforward use of scenes in which

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[55] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 44.
[56] Kermode, p. 7.
[57] Kermode, p. 17.
[58] Kermode, pp. 46-47.
[59] Kermode, p. 8.
[60] Maurice Yacowar, 'The Bug in the Rug: Notes on the Disaster Genre', in *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. by Barry Keith Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), pp. 277-95 (pp. 281-82).

the traveller fights through deadly environmental hazards as a show of his commitment to his estranged family. Accordingly, the thesis distinguishes between apocalyptic road narratives and apocalyptic disaster films more generally. Taking the marginal case of *War of the Worlds* (Steven Spielberg, 2005) as a key example, the study recognises a definite shift in focus from the amoral pleasures of spectacle commonly considered in work on disaster cinema to the traumatic dangers of vision itself. This study, then, favours accounts of apocalyptic science fiction that do not position it as an offshoot of the disaster genre, but rather understand it primarily as a strand of science fiction.

It must be recognised that the theoretical accounts provided by Kermode and many others focus upon the anticipation of apocalypse rather than the survivalist themes commonplace in fictional narratives set during or after an apparent End. In considering how such theory may be combined with these examples, it is useful to refer to Mick Broderick's four-part model of apocalyptic science fiction, which distinguishes between narratives set before, during, or immediately or long after a catastrophe.[61] This thesis includes examples classifiable under all four headings, whilst reflecting the fact that most apocalyptic science fiction road films and comics concentrate upon the short- or long-term aftermath of disaster. Whilst the thesis refers to its case studies collectively as apocalyptic science fiction road narratives, then, it consistently recognises that this body of texts encompasses examples set within a variety of timeframes that bear significantly upon their portrayals of masculinity.

In pre-apocalyptic examples like *Twelve Monkeys*, where the protagonist is a figure from beyond the End who fits even seemingly minor incidents into an overarching pattern, the compulsion to decode signs and the desire for consonance between origins and endings tend to be more prominent elements.[62] Yet the aspect of distanced hindsight described by Kermode also figures within numerous post-apocalyptic road narratives and shapes their treatments of gender. Such texts are bound by the deconstructive dilemma that Frederic Jameson observes throughout science fiction more generally. Given 'our constitutional inability to imagine Utopia' as a result of our imprisonment in contemporary 'systemic, cultural and

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[61] Mick Broderick, 'Surviving Armageddon: Beyond the Imagination of Disaster', *Science-Fiction Studies*, 20 (1993), 362-82 (p. 365).
[62] Kermode, p. 17.

ideological' mores and discourses,[63] Jameson defines the genre in terms of its ability not to imagine a distinctive future but to 'defamiliarise and restructure our experience of our own *present*',[64] reimagining it as the past and permitting critical reflection upon it. Similarly, this study will indicate how several apocalyptic science fiction road narratives use the dual hinterland of the devastated landscape and the road to reflect explicitly or implicitly upon certain matters and anxieties relating to masculinity and white patriarchy.

Having detailed some of the general features and preoccupations of the road story and apocalyptic fiction, it is now crucial to consider the academic and critical precedent for discussing the integration of these two forms.

The apocalyptic road narrative in academic and critical discourse

Within studies centring on the road narrative, acknowledgements of the genre's intersection with science fiction and specific apocalyptic examples are frequent yet often cursory and prone to overgeneralisation. Across filmographies by Williams and Wood and historical studies by Laderman and Mills, a handful of apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic science fiction films have routinely been granted special consideration, the primary examples being *Mad Max 2*, *Death Race 2000* (Paul Bartel, 1975) and *Repo Man*. However inadvertently, this selection of examples fixes science fiction road films within a single time period running from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s. Only Karl Phillips' 1999 essay on apocalyptic road films in Sargeant and Watson's *Lost Highways* has sought to bring an awareness of the hybrid's recurrent re-emergence up to date. Two dominant conceptualisations of the intersection between the road genre and science fiction in cinema have emerged, both of which describe the human traveller's effacement or displacement in some regard.

The first of these arises from the merging of the driver's identity and the vehicle that Laderman and Corrigan consider a defining characteristic of the road film.[65] Laderman asserts that the science fiction premises and imagery of films like '*Death Race 2000*, *The Road Warrior*, and *Crash* most literally dramatise a

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[63] Frederic Jameson, 'Progress Versus Utopia; or, Can We Imagine the Future?', *Science-Fiction Studies*, 9 (1982), 147-58 (p. 153).
[64] Jameson, p. 151 (Jameson's emphasis).
[65] Corrigan, p. 145.

hyperindustrialised, pre-cybernetic fusion of car and driver'.[66] In his emphasis upon fusion, Laderman overlooks the many apocalyptic science fiction road narratives in which automotive technology is discarded and replaced. The thesis aims to provide a more inclusive account of this aspect and its ramifications for the representation of masculinity.

Surveying a more recent tendency, Phillips argues that apocalyptic road films like *Until the End of the World* (Wim Wenders, 1991) and *Twelve Monkeys* reflect the displacement of free-wheeling travel by the 'information highway's' massive reduction of distances between different locations and time zones.[67] He asserts that within these and other examples like *The Postman* (Kevin Costner, 1997), the traveller and means of travel have accordingly become less important than the transmission of important messages or images.[68] However, as Chapter 2's discussion of *The Postman* and Chapter 5's examination of *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys* will show, Phillips is too hasty in asserting that the traveller has been reduced to a mere vessel for information. Through its particular concern with the gender identities of apocalyptic travellers, the thesis shall reflect upon the important narrative role played by the psychic suffering and resistance which result from the introduction of different forms of travel that elide the journey itself.

The journey's enduring importance within apocalyptic science fiction has also been recognised throughout academic genre studies and popular criticism regarding its cinematic and literary incarnations. Movement in apocalyptic texts differs substantially from the usual exploratory nature of science fiction travel. Across the higher budget science fiction films of the 1950s, *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), and subsequent 'space opera' films, Vivian Sobchack observes a 'positive visual movement […] informed by the somewhat smug and optimistic belief in infinite human and technological progress and by a view of the unknown as a beautiful undiscovered country […] ultimately discoverable and conquerable'.[69] As Chapter 2 especially will show, elements of conquest remain present in some apocalyptic texts, but the tone and the status of territorial exploration and attitudes towards technology differ.

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[66] Laderman, p. 18.

[67] Karl Phillips, 'We're Virtually There: SF Film on the Road to Ruin', in *Lost Highways*, ed. by Sargeant and Watson, pp. 266-74 (p. 272).

[68] Phillips, p. 269.

[69] Vivian Sobchack, *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*, 2nd edn (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), p. 110.

Travel's prominent role in apocalyptic texts is most frequently recognised in work on post-apocalyptic science fiction. Phillips has discussed the 'sense of wandering' in post-apocalyptic films as a survivalist necessity generated by societal regression and a 'breakdown in communications and goods supply' rather than the frontier spirit apparent throughout science fiction more broadly.[70] Other scholars indicate that travel plays several specific narrative roles. In his account of films about 'survival long after nuclear war' created during the 1980s and early 1990s in the mould of *Mad Max 2*, Broderick emphasises interactions between stationary communities, invading nomadic gangs, and the heroic lone male drifter. These texts repeatedly suggest that, without the male drifter's efforts to 'lead them from the wilderness', the community's utopian aspirations will always be arrested by their 'inertia'.[71] Like Broderick, Gary K. Wolfe does not indicate that the narrative itself is necessarily built entirely around a journey. Rather, he notes that 'the journey through the wasteland' typically forms one of 'five large stages of action' within post-apocalyptic novels and, occasionally, 'narratives that begin before the holocaust'.[72] The journey typically functions 'to provide an overview and confirmation of the disaster', sometimes involving a cross-section revealing 'the various ways people may relate to their [transformed] environment', and poses 'the promise of new frontiers' and social recovery through the search for other survivors and/or safe refuge.[73]

Whilst Wolfe's observations relate specifically to literature, clear points of correspondence can also be found within cinema. Post-apocalyptic films like *The Omega Man* (Boris Sagal, 1971), *Le Dernier Combat* (Luc Besson, 1983), *Night of the Comet* (Thom Eberhardt, 1984) and *I Am Legend* (Francis Lawrence, 2007) employ early scenes of driving or flying as extended establishing shots for what often develop into remarkably claustrophobic or static texts. When driving and the vehicles involved are imbued with particular meanings in these films, they usually fit Sontag's account of apocalyptic science fiction's fascination with the dissolution of normal economic and social constraints.[74] This may be attractive and thrilling, as is the case with Robert Neville's (Will Smith) pursuit of deer through an abandoned

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[70] Phillips, p. 269.
[71] Broderick, 'Surviving Armageddon', p. 377.
[72] Gary K. Wolfe, 'The Remaking of Zero: Beginning at the End', in *The End of the World*, ed. by Eric S. Rabkin, Martin H. Greenberg and Joseph D. Olander (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), pp. 1-19 (p. 8).
[73] Wolfe, p. 10.
[74] Sontag, p. 215.

New York City in an expensive Mustang in *I Am Legend*, or nihilistic, like the suicidal races of *On the Beach* (Stanley Kramer, 1959). By recognising the minor and discontinuous role movement plays in other apocalyptic texts, one begins to consolidate through negation a firmer sense of the apocalyptic road narrative's parameters. Yet whilst they regard the journey primarily as a constituent element, the attention Wolfe and Broderick draw to the nomad's role in social recovery and relationship with 'the people' also indicates themes integral to several apocalyptic science fiction road narratives.

In considering the apocalyptic science fiction road narrative's status as a distinct entity and charting the degree to which it is recognised as such, it is limiting to rely upon academic work alone. Altman stresses that 'any understanding of genre terminology must begin with the critics and compilers who constitute [audiences'] major source of genre terms'.[75] Significantly, several reviewers have started to shift from labelling individual texts only as derivative of one paradigm, the *Mad Max* films, to the tentative yet increasingly explicit categorisation of several recent texts *as* apocalyptic road stories.

Evidently, the discourses of taste integral to reception have impacted this gradual transition. For instance, *Entertainment Weekly*'s Owen Gleiberman demonstrates an obvious evaluative agenda when he criticises *Waterworld* as 'a brazen knockoff' of *Mad Max 2*.[76] *Waterworld* may feature a similar industrial bricolage aesthetic, a taciturn nomadic anti-hero and scenes of vehicular combat, but as a narrative built wholly around a journey it is structurally very different from *Mad Max 2*. Lest one infer that reviewers are simply deterred from interrogating the combination of apocalyptic science fiction and vehicle-based action as a wider generic trend because they find films like *Waterworld* too derivative, a similar development has also occurred at the other end of the scale. For instance, Roger Ebert praises *The Road* as an adaptation of an acclaimed novel which 'might' have been 'vulgarised' and transformed into 'just another film of sci-fi apocalypse' if not handled sensitively and adeptly.[77] This refusal to read *The Road* as an apocalyptic science fiction film, let alone an apocalyptic road story, indicates a continued taste-

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[75] Altman, p. 124.

[76] Owen Gleiberman, 'Movie review: Waterworld', *Entertainment Weekly*, 1 August 1995 <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,298216,00.html> [accessed 4 December 2012] (para. 2 of 5).

[77] Roger Ebert, '*The Road*', *Chicago Sun-Times*, 24 November 2009 <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091124/REVIEWS/911249990> [accessed 10 August 2012] (para. 9 of 13).

based dismissal of certain genres. Claims of derivativeness and distinctiveness, then, can equally influence generic designation.

Returning to the classification of various films of the 1980s and 1990s as *Mad Max* 'rip-offs' in critical and academic discussions,[78] it is also important to recognise that the marketing campaigns behind several of the international exploitation films covered in Broderick's aforementioned narrative model highlighted ties with *Mad Max 2* specifically in order to capitalise upon its commercial success. Numerous releases mention the character in advertising taglines: 'After Mad Max came … exterminators of the 21st century' (*The New Barbarians* [Enzo G. Castellari, 1983]); 'The magic of the Road Warrior is back' (*Empire of Ash* [Michael Mazo and Lloyd A. Simandl, 1988]). *Mad Max 2*'s commercial reputation and the promise of more of the same were clearly valued as these films' strongest selling points. This strategy detracts from the fundamental conceptualisation of genre as a careful balance between 'repetition and variation',[79] and thus obscures attempts to distinguish apocalyptic road narratives as a discrete and diverse entity.

Since the turn of the millennium, however, several reviewers have started to classify individual texts through variations on the term 'apocalyptic road story'. Whilst critics using these terms still represent a minority, the labels are nevertheless increasingly visible. This is especially true of the reception of comics across trade publications, newspapers and fan culture websites, where two of the thesis's principal examples, *Y: The Last Man* and *Sweet Tooth*, have each been labelled as 'a post-apocalyptic road trip',[80] or a 'postapocalyptic [*sic*] American road story'.[81] Combined with Mills' brief discussion of non-apocalyptic road 'stories' in comics,[82] and Brian Ireland's discussion of a major example examined in Chapter 1, the *Judge Dredd* (1977-) serial 'The Cursed Earth' (1978), as an 'apocalyptic road narrative',[83] reviewers' use of medium-neutral terms like 'trip' and 'story' indicates

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[78] Mick Broderick, 'Heroic Apocalypse: *Mad Max*, Mythology, Millennium', in *Crisis Cinema*, ed. by Sharrett, pp. 250-72 (p. 256).

[79] Barry Keith Grant, 'Introduction', in *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. by Grant, pp. xv-xx (p. xv).

[80] Andy Khouri, 'Indie Comics All-Stars Chip in for "Sweet Tooth" #19 (Preview)', *Comics Alliance*, 25 February 2011 <http://www.comicsalliance.com/2011/02/25/sweet-tooth-matt-kindt-nate-powell-emi-lenox/> [accessed 10 July 2012] (para. 2 of 3).

[81] Anon., 'Y: The Last Man: Safeword', *Publishers Weekly*, 10 November 2004 <http://reg.publishersweekly.com/978-1-4012-0232-3> [accessed 10 July 2012].

[82] Mills, pp. 214-16.

[83] Brian Ireland, 'Errand into the Wilderness: *The Cursed Earth* as Apocalyptic Road Narrative', *Journal of American Studies*, 43 (2009), 497-534 (p. 497).

an effort to wrest the concept of the road narrative from its entrenched connections to cinema. The hold this link between genre and medium retains is evident in Michael C. Lorah's review of *Sweet Tooth*: 'I can't recall a comic book quite like this. It's a post-apocalyptic road movie'.[84] However, there is still a reluctance to interrogate in detail the road 'movie's' transition across media, the implications of introducing medium-neutral terms, or precisely how elements of the road and apocalyptic genres are combined, indicating important areas of inquiry for this thesis.

Similar issues emerge in recent film reviews, as exemplified by Kim Newman's account of *Stake Land* (Jim Mickle, 2010) as a 'vampire post-apocalypse road movie'. This term is used only in the review's summative paragraph, with Newman, like many reviewers, preferring to assess and define the film's setting, tone or aesthetic through reference to specific examples. Newman alludes to *The Road*, *Zombieland* (Ruben Fleischer, 2009), *The Book Of Eli* and comic book-derived television series *The Walking Dead* (2010-) in categorising *Stake Land* as an 'archetypal post-apocalypse horror', and *A Boy And His Dog* and *Mad Max 2* in describing its 'low-budget art-exploitation' aesthetic.[85] Showcasing reviewers' tendency 'to locate a film in a more extended past' than is typically the case in marketing,[86] the fact that Newman couches his genre-based assessment of *Stake Land* in apocalyptic science fiction and horror examples stretching back to the mid-1970s supports the decision to commence the thesis's sample of case studies with this period, discussed below. However, Newman does not use these examples to interrogate his use of the term 'road movie' in combination with science fiction or horror. This indicates that even critics who label particular texts as apocalyptic road narratives have not yet developed a recognised vocabulary and framework for discussing and evaluating them as a distinct generic hybrid. The fast-growing adoption of variations on the term to a range of texts across media offers proof of the worth of recognising and exploring this field more intensively.

Bearing in mind Andrew Tudor's fundamental assertion, '*Genre* is what we collectively believe it to be',[87] this reception survey raises other important considerations whilst also underlining certain merits of a research methodology

[84] Michael C. Lorah, 'Review: Sweet Tooth v.1: Out of the Deep Woods', *Newsarama*, 21 June 2010 <http://blog.newsarama.com/2010/06/21/review-sweet-tooth-v-1-out-of-the-deep-woods/> [accessed 10 July 2012] (para. 1 of 5).
[85] Kim Newman, '*The Book of Eli* Review', *Empire*, 249 (March 2010), 68.
[86] Altman, p. 124.
[87] Andrew Tudor, *Theories of Film* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), p. 139 (Tudor's emphasis).

based around textual analysis. On the most basic level, it indicates the timeliness of increased academic attention to apocalyptic road narratives. The critical recognition of certain texts as apocalyptic road stories influenced not only the research topic's formulation, but also the case studies chosen. Yet the thesis also retains a cautiously critical approach to these sources. Setting aside the evaluative agendas that influence reviewers' classifications of individual texts, textual analysis can attend to the specificities of previously overlooked examples like *Waterworld*. It also guards against broad misconceptions of apocalyptic road narratives as a 'new' development that could result from an exclusive focus upon reception. To this end, the thesis's selection of case studies is also influenced by, and engages critically with, other scholars' retrospective redefinition of several older texts as apocalyptic science fiction road stories: a process which Altman terms 'regenrification'.[88]

Crucially, the generic frameworks applied by reviewers emphasise the road story's intersections with other genres beyond apocalyptic science fiction. Qualifying Sontag's assertion that science fiction films 'are about disaster',[89] it is clear that some road-based examples are more preoccupied with this element than others. This can be seen in texts featuring benign extra-terrestrial encounters, like *Starman* (John Carpenter, 1984) and *Paul* (Greg Mottola, 2011), classifiable as non-apocalyptic science fiction road films. Additionally, several apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic road narratives bear clearer ties to horror and supernatural fantasy than science fiction. Recent examples include the comic book series *Preacher* and *The Walking Dead* (2003-), the films *Zombieland* and *Stake Land*, and several seasons of the television series *Supernatural* (2005-). In view of Altman's model of genrification, it is unsurprising and, moreover, encouraging for a study hoping to develop apocalyptic road narratives' standing as a legitimate area of dedicated study to find several co-existing strands. However, these also raise questions about the rationale behind selecting apocalyptic science fiction road narratives as an object of study in preference to other comparable hybrids. Indeed, where the focus upon masculinity is concerned, it should be acknowledged that several themes and tendencies examined within apocalyptic science fiction road narratives in the following chapters also appear in horror examples. *Preacher* engages with themes of male friendship and the gender myths underpinning the western, *Zombieland* and *Stake Land* centre on teenaged boys (the focus of Chapter 3), *The Walking Dead*

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88 Altman, p. 82.
89 Sontag, p. 213.

explores fathering (considered in Chapter 4), and *Supernatural* depicts the relationship between two brothers following in their father's footsteps.

The labels used by reviewers indicate a tendency to bring together apocalyptic science fiction and horror texts under the overarching category of the 'apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic road story'. However, to collapse these various hybrids into a single compound entity within a study of this size would both disrupt the cultivation of a tight focus and neglect the particularities of science fiction and horror. The thesis therefore concentrates on the impact of aspects of apocalyptic science fiction upon the representation of masculinity. One of the most fundamental of these is the role of technology, specifically considered in terms of the industrial, electronic and digital technologies that impact characters' mobility in Chapters 1, 2 and 5. Whilst J.P. Telotte advocates an approach to science fiction that recognises the permeability of its boundaries, especially in relation to horror, he defines science fiction cinema's 'special character' in terms of its 'focus on the concerns of reason/science/technology'.[90] In distinguishing between science fiction more broadly and apocalyptic examples, it is important to note that the particular characterisation and status of technology often differs. Discussing five 'design styles' prevalent across science fiction cinema, 'futurism, retro-futurism, realism, gothic and post-apocalyptic',[91] Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska note that the last of these imagines an aesthetic and technological shift away from 'figuring the future in terms of progress or gleaming new designs' in favour of images of 'the rusting carcasses of beached technologies'.[92] Thus, apocalyptic science fiction road films are to be distinguished from corresponding hybrid strands of apocalyptic horror and non-apocalyptic science fiction.

Ultimately, practical considerations like the greater number of apocalyptic science fiction texts and this compound form's longer history compared to other similar hybrids distinguish them as a logical starting point for dedicated research into the intersection between the road narrative and fantastic genres. To this end, points of comparison with apocalyptic horror road narratives and non-apocalyptic science fiction road texts are acknowledged as appropriate. Nevertheless, a note on terminology is required here. The following chapters will use the more concise label 'apocalyptic road narratives' when referring to apocalyptic science fiction road

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[90] J.P. Telotte, *Science Fiction Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 19.
[91] Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska, *Science Fiction Cinema: From Outerspace to Cyberspace* (London: Wallflower, 2000), p. 72.
[92] King and Krzywinska, p. 77.

narratives, unless specified otherwise in individual instances. This adaptation has been introduced in the interests of ease of reading, rather than as an indication that the observations made in conjunction with the term's use can be applied directly to apocalyptic horror and fantasy road narratives.

The apocalyptic science fiction road narrative: A working definition

From the preceding review, an outline of some of the overarching semantic and structural features of the apocalyptic science fiction road narrative can be developed, along with several problems and points of debate to be considered throughout the thesis. It is first necessary to consider the implications of a terminological shift from the 'road film' to the medium-neutral label 'road narrative'. This is a particularly significant choice where the role of action is concerned. Studies of the road genre like Laderman's *Driving Visions* have hastily dismissed action-based, often race- or chase-centred road films as populist corruptions of a genre synonymous with the counterculture.[93] This makes his refusal to consider the impact of the road narrative's combination with the action genre in his subsequent analysis of *Mad Max 2* all the more curious. More recently, other scholars have begun to question such omissions, as demonstrated by Tico Romao's discussion of the 1970s car chase film as a production cycle 'clearly subsumable under the road movie heading' but hitherto neglected in studies of the genre.[94] Given the role of spectacle within apocalyptic science fiction, this thesis makes a concerted effort to address apocalyptic road stories that incorporate elements of the action genre. The decision to examine action and spectacle as part of the road *narrative* marks a departure from science fiction film scholarship that advocates a movement away from the 'overprivileging of questions around narrative, theme and character' inherited from literary criticism.[95] Brooks Landon in particular encourages a greater attention to science fiction special effects sequences as elements that 'halt rather than advance the narrative', often pointing to a separate extra-diegetic narrative regarding the development of film-making technology in

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[93] Laderman, p. 133.
[94] Tico Romao, 'Guns and Gas: Investigating the 1970s Car Chase Film', in *Action and Adventure Cinema*, ed. by Yvonne Tasker (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 130-52 (p. 131).
[95] Annette Kuhn, 'Part 1: Cultural Spaces – Introduction', in *Alien Zone II: The Spaces of Science-Fiction Cinema*, ed. by Annette Kuhn (London: Verso, 1999), pp. 11-15 (p. 12).

the process.[96] Examining the role of action and spectacle within films like *Waterworld* and comics like the *Judge Dredd* road serial 'The Cursed Earth', however, this study proposes that such elements operate not in isolation but as part of a narrative sequence that directly ties into the representation of masculinity. In this regard, the thesis follows the lead of a recent study of spectacle within the action genre, Lisa Purse's *Contemporary Action Cinema* (2011).

In terminologically and methodologically restricting its attention to films and comics that use the journey as a narrative structuring device, however, the study necessarily excludes from consideration apocalyptic films that use the road solely as the site of intermittent sequences of vehicular combat. This indicates a rather striking conclusion: namely, that *Mad Max 2* and its international spin-offs are not apocalyptic road narratives in the terms established here. However, these texts remain useful points of comparison throughout the study, especially with regard to the different dynamics generated between the male traveller and the wider community within journey-based texts compared to those examples that depict the initially isolated nomad's period of residence within a fixed locale. Moreover, the varying portrayals of masculinity within several texts which do qualify clearly prefigure or are influenced by Max Rockatansky's anti-heroic characterisation.

Semantically, the thesis defines apocalyptic road narratives as texts concerned with terrestrial journeys across spaces previously or still shaped around established transport infrastructures. It does not limit its focus to the conventional setting of the desert wasteland apparent in examples like *A Boy and His Dog*, but rather considers how aspects of genre and gender are affected by the shift to oceanic settings in *Waterworld* and the countryside in texts like *Sweet Tooth*. Similarly, the thesis argues that the means by which each protagonist travels, whether by foot, car, motorbike, horse or sea-craft, and the extent of their mobility are integral considerations. Several chapters discuss how cumulative shifts in the mode of transport correspond to portrayals of masculinity, looking not simply at the paths taken by characters but also shifting interpersonal dynamics within the vehicle as relevant.

Whilst several examples, most obviously the *Judge Dredd* road stories, demonstrate cyclical rather than linear narratives and trajectories, apocalyptic fiction remains synonymous with an emphasis upon endings and destinations that

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[96] Brooks Landon, 'Diegetic or Digital? The Convergence of Science-Fiction Literature and Science-Fiction Film in Hypermedia', in *Alien Zone II*, ed. by Kuhn, pp. 31-49 (p. 38).

theoretically jars with the road genre's traditional refusal to present the journey strictly as a means to an end. This apparent friction is intensified by Zamora's suggestion that, as a genre derived from the teleological character of religious and secular apocalyptic discourse, apocalyptic fiction 'makes the conjunction of meaning and ending its theme', addressing 'the very nature of finality – historical and narrative – more explicitly and emphatically than most plotted narratives'.[97] This may explain the greater number of apocalyptic road narratives set after the end compared to examples looking ahead to a future catastrophe. Even post-apocalyptic texts in which the journey is partly motivated by a desire to find out what caused 'the end', like the comics *Y: The Last Man* and *Sweet Tooth*, frame their eventual discoveries as anticlimactic and ambiguous. As the analysis of their treatments of adolescent masculinity and fatherhood in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively demonstrates, both comics privilege the road narrative's subjective focus above the apocalyptic 'grand narrative'. Moreover, Mills' emphasis upon the volatility of personal identity within post-war road stories seemingly jars with the common fascination with disaster's presumed capacity to expose ordinary people's 'true' natures,[98] whether base and selfish, as in *The Divide* (Xavier Gens, 2011), or enterprising and heroic, as in *Revolver*.

The thesis identifies these points of friction as tensions that prove revealing and productive, whether within an individual film or comic or for the purposes of a critical analysis concentrating on representations of masculinity. As the study will demonstrate, various apocalyptic road narratives establish the journey as a site of resistance to the compromise that endings and the certainties and restrictions they are believed to offer place upon desires for autonomy, self-exploration, and the association of certain identities, including adolescence and fatherhood, with process and transition. Indeed, the following chapters argue that several prior studies of *Waterworld*, *Twelve Monkeys* and the *Judge Dredd* road serial 'The Cursed Earth' have oversimplified these texts' treatment of male heroism and movement through a disproportionate emphasis upon their endings. In addition to the awkward relation between heroic masculine agency and the common positioning of the apocalyptic believer as a passive subject awaiting the disclosure of order and truth from an outside authority, a number of the thesis's case studies are also discussed in terms of how they depict a recovery or interrogation of men's capacity for action on the

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[97] Zamora, p. 14.
[98] Mills, p. 19.

road within circumstances that initially or persistently undermine it. Many case studies also display varying levels of self-consciousness concerning the culturally constructed and performative nature of gender identity and heroism in relation to the notion of a true self uncovered amid apocalyptic upheaval. The thesis, then, uses the study of white masculinity, a construct that patriarchal discourse strives to present as uniform and naturally dominant, to reflect upon the tensions between the road narrative and apocalyptic science fiction as well as their complementary aspects.

The preceding literature review has reflected the fact that most work on the road genre in visual media concentrates on film. However, scholars have recently begun to turn their attention towards the discussion of road narratives and even apocalyptic examples in comics. The following section explains the decision to extend the study of apocalyptic road narratives and their treatment of masculinity to comics.

Tearing up the strip: Examining apocalyptic science fiction road narratives in comics

As previously indicated, road genre histories have tended to limit their discussion of science fiction examples to the early 1980s. Laderman claims that this period is defined by the road film's 'infantilised and comic-book treatment',[99] a quality epitomised by *Mad Max 2*'s 'cartoonish' look, characters and plot, which he suggests 'all reek of comic-book fantasy'.[100] This perception of science fiction and comics as infantile forms is a definite point of interest given the fact that several apocalyptic road comics portraying younger males' travels explicitly engage with these associations. Yet the portrait Laderman paints of comics is also heavily reductive. The thesis seeks to redress these derogatory attitudes by looking at four examples that demonstrate the medium's diverse approaches to the apocalyptic road story: *Y: The Last Man*, *Sweet Tooth*, the various road stories set within a post-apocalyptic American wasteland in the comic strip *Judge Dredd*, and Richard Corben's 1987 adaptations of New Wave science fiction author Harlan Ellison's *Vic and Blood* short stories, including 'A Boy and His Dog' (1969).

Many film scholars who address the road genre in other narrative media usually do so in order to identify precursors to the road movie's consolidation in the

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[99] Laderman, p. 164.
[100] Laderman, p. 139

late 1960s, and subsequently ignore the genre's continued development across media. Indeed, it is conceivable that this thesis could focus upon film alone. However, this approach would understate the genre's adaptability, oversimplify the wider cultural prominence of the apocalyptic science fiction road narrative and its on-going focus on white male subjects, and deny several fascinating examples the scholarly attention they merit. Accordingly, the thesis addresses comics as a separate medium rather than in strict relation to film form, with the exception of Chapter 3's comparative discussion of the comic book and film adaptations of Ellison's *Vic and Blood* stories. The thesis thus seeks to avoid an issue that afflicts even Katie Mills' exemplary historical study of the road genre across media, which only addresses comics from the 1990s onwards and examines them principally as appropriations of past road film imagery. Certainly, comics have their own tradition of post-apocalyptic science fiction stories. For instance, *Sweet Tooth* creator Jeff Lemire lists Jack Kirby's *Kamandi: The Last Boy on Earth* (1972-1978) and Timothy Truman's *Scout* (1985-1987) as generic and narrative inspirations,[101] whilst also noting the stylistic influence of Corben's *Vic and Blood* comics.[102] Whilst the provision of a comprehensive genre history is a separate endeavour lying beyond the thesis's purview, the existence of this tradition underlines the importance of not annexing the study of apocalyptic road stories in comics too closely to film.

Currently, discussions of genre within Comics Studies are secondary to author studies. For instance, essays addressing individual writers and artists outnumber those on individual genres like the superhero comic and romance comics in Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester's *Comics Studies Reader* (2009). Meanwhile, books devoted to genre often concentrate solely on American superhero comics.[103] In comparing the 'decided grimness' of science fiction films of the 1950s and 1960s with similar material in comics, Sontag similarly focuses on titles like *Superman* in which a 'strong invulnerable hero with a mysterious lineage come[s] to do battle on behalf of good and against evil'. This observation and the supposedly 'innocent

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[101] Jeffrey Renaud, 'Jeff Lemire has a "Sweet Tooth"', *Comic Book Resources*, 28 August 2009 <http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=22728> [accessed 18 August 2012] (para. 7 of 34).

[102] Jeff Lemire, 'Jeff Lemire's Favourite Post-Apocalyptic Comics', *Vertigo*, 31 August 2009 <http://www.vertigocomics.com/blog/2009/08/31/jeff-lemires-favorite-post-apocalyptic-comics> [accessed 18 August 2012] (para. 4 of 6).

[103] See, for instance, Scott Bukatman, *Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Supermen in the 20th Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Peter Coogan, *Superhero: The Secret Origin of a Genre* (Austin: Monkeybrain Books, 2006).

relation to disaster' it conveys will be interrogated within the thesis.[104] Superhero and action adventure comics have also dominated popular perceptions of, and research into, gender in comics.

Concerns surrounding representations of gender and sexuality figured substantially in early work on comics from the 1930s to the 1960s. Thierry Groensteen connects this tendency with comics' shift from adult to children's publications in the early twentieth century, which generated a moral panic in education circles concerning the supposed deleterious effects of the medium and its fantastical subject matter upon the literacy and maturation of a young readership.[105] The most famous diatribe, psychiatrist Frederic Wertham's 1954 book *Seduction of the Innocent*, presented a particularly dark view of the medium's treatments of gender and sexuality and played a major role in US publishers' decision to instate the self-regulatory system of the Comics Code Authority, under which certain images, language and themes were prohibited. From the 1960s onwards, research has proven less polemical, and has looked beyond the medium's alleged effects on children. Work like Roger Sabin's *Adult Comics* (1993) and Scott Bukatman's *Matters of Gravity* (2003) has recognised the adolescent and adult address of various comics and their treatments of gender and sexuality. Most of the titles discussed in this thesis are intended for a mature readership: *Y: The Last Man* and *Sweet Tooth* were published by Vertigo, the adult imprint of DC Comics, one of the USA's two biggest comics publishers. The main exception is *Judge Dredd*, a comic strip historically directed primarily at a young, largely pre-pubescent readership but with a strong adult appeal.[106] In several of these apocalyptic texts, characterisations of heroism and masculinity within American superhero comics represent a major frame of reference, and one that is often interrogated visually and narratively. The thesis therefore utilises work on the form and aesthetics of superhero comics to explore how certain structural and gendered aspects of this dominant genre inform certain case studies' treatment of masculinity.

The academic precedent for studying the road genre and connected gender issues within comics is limited. Some discussion of individual road comics features in Christopher D. Morris's 2007 deconstructive study *The Figure of the Road* and

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[104] Sontag, p. 215.
[105] Thierry Groensteen, 'Why Are Comics Still in Search of Cultural Legitimisation?', in *A Comics Studies Reader*, ed. by Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), pp. 3-11 (p. 4).
[106] Roger Sabin, *Adult Comics: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 58.

Mills' *The Road Story and the Rebel*.[107] However, neither scholar examines how the formal properties of the comic have been combined with a genre preoccupied with movement: a remarkable omission given the fact that comics are commonly 'assumed to be a static medium that lacks […] dynamism, kineticism and energy'.[108] In this respect, the academic bias towards road cinema is easily understandable. Research in this field demonstrates the intersecting development of motion pictures and automobiles,[109] and mobility has proven a major factor on and beyond the screen since the advent of early travelling picture shows. Elements considered defining aesthetic conventions of the genre, like the travelling shot,[110] are specifically tied to the development of film, and cannot be smoothly translated into comics.

Rather than treating comics as if they fall short of generic standards set by moving image media, however, this study emphasises the different qualities that comics form brings to the journey's representation, especially within a generic hybrid that frequently imagines the regression or collapse of transport infrastructures. The study thus draws upon a significant strand of what Heer and Worcester describe as 'the new comics scholarship' of the 1990s onwards: the intensified formalist concern with comics' complex treatments of time, movement and space.[111] As a medium in which motion is not captured transparently but is, along with space and time, calculatedly 'broken down' by artists according to a complex graphical grammar, comics provide an especially interesting site for considering how some apocalyptic road narratives interrogate the role of movement, action and stasis in characters' sense of their own manhood. This element will be discussed with reference to both visual and narrative form.

Where narrative is concerned, the study of comics can also help to advance an area of research that has received surprisingly little attention: the road genre's particular relationship with serialised storytelling. Given their episodic structure and greater concern with the on-going journey than with destinations and closure, it would appear that road stories are distinctly compatible with serialisation. Significantly, whilst science fiction television series built around journeys and

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[107] Mills, pp. 214-16; Morris, pp. 175-80.

[108] Angela Ndalianis, 'The Frenzy of the Visible in Comic Book Worlds', *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 4 (2009), 237-48 (p. 238).

[109] Devin Orgeron, *Road Movies: From Muybridge and Méliès to Lynch and Kiarostami* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 13.

[110] Laderman, p. 15.

[111] Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester, 'Introduction', in *A Comics Studies Reader*, ed. by Heer and Worcester, pp. xi-xv (p. xiv).

volatile identities typically favour the connective device of time travel and instantaneous jumps between locations, as epitomised by *Quantum Leap* (1989-1993), the comics addressed in this study devote greater attention to the actions and relationships that develop as characters move between places. The study will reflect upon the different relationships this episodic format creates between 'hero' and community when compared to Broderick's model of post-apocalyptic science fiction cinema, and how it bears upon certain factors of agency and social withdrawal integral to particular constructions of masculinity.

Mills' and Morris's discussions of the road comic focus on Max Allan Collins and Richard Piers Rayner's *Road to Perdition* (1998) and Bryan Lee O'Malley's *Lost at Sea* (2003), texts which fit Sabin's first definition of 'the graphic novel': 'a one-shot book-form publication involving a continuous comics narrative […] published without prior serialisation'.[112] This thesis examines a selection of comics published in different serial formats. The two most recent case studies, the sixty-issue *Y: The Last Man* and the forty-issue *Sweet Tooth*, are 'maxi-series': extended narratives consisting of multiple story arcs that build towards a definite endpoint within monthly comic book instalments. Another, less complex approach to serialisation is demonstrated by Corben's *Vic and Blood* comics, which were originally released in 1987 as two black-and-white comic books covering three stories, the last of which significantly remains unfinished. The twenty-five part serial 'The Cursed Earth' appeared as part of the *Judge Dredd* comic strip, a fixture in the weekly British science fiction comic anthology magazine *2000AD* (1977-). These varying formats shape the presentation of the apocalyptic road story, whether it serves as a structural framework for the entire narrative or, in *Judge Dredd*, as a temporary shift in genre. The selection of these texts, however, has been informed by other factors beyond their varying approaches to serialised storytelling.

Methodology: Agenda for text selection

In introducing the study's mixed methodology, it is necessary to explain further the rationale behind the selection of case studies. As already established, the thesis examines the portrayals of white masculinity in apocalyptic science fiction road narratives through close textual analysis. This approach accommodates the recognition and interrogation of shifts in male characterisations throughout

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[112] Sabin, p. 235.

individual narratives: aspects that are elided in the historical genre models presented by Broderick and Phillips. Nevertheless, the study draws its examples from a definite time period, beginning in 1975 and concluding with the comic *Sweet Tooth*, which ran from September 2009 to February 2013.

1975 represents a logical starting point for several reasons. Some notable literary apocalyptic road texts predate 1975, such as Roger Zelazny's 1969 novella *Damnation Alley*, which recalls the biker films of the 1950s and 1960s that Laderman considers precursors of the road movie.[113] Where films and comics are concerned, however, the mid-to-late 1970s saw the first significant wave of apocalyptic science fiction road narratives. Scholars have isolated two road-based 1975 releases as films that originated fresh cycles within post-apocalyptic science fiction: Phillips begins his historical overview of post-apocalyptic road films with *Death Race 2000*,[114] whilst Jerome F. Shapiro argues that *A Boy and His Dog* represents the first 'post-nuclear holocaust survival film'.[115] Additionally, Sabin notes that the best-selling comics to emerge during the industry's decline in America and Britain during the 1970s were science fiction stories. This trend includes British comics like *2000AD*, which often copied premises and settings from contemporaneous American dystopian and apocalyptic science fiction films, several of them structured around journeys, including the film adaptation of *Damnation Alley* (Jack Smight, 1977).[116]

Damnation Alley's uneasy amalgamation of a downcast apocalyptic premise and elements of the family adventure film emblematises the transition from the dystopian pessimism of films like *Planet of the Apes* (Franklin J. Schaffner, 1968) and *Soylent Green* (Richard Fleischer, 1973) to the rise of the science fiction blockbuster. Chapter 2's discussion of *Waterworld* and *The Postman* examines the post-apocalyptic road narrative's spread into blockbuster cinema. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 extend the thesis's inquiry to several blockbusters and independent films and high-profile comic book series of the early twenty-first century. Partly in response to the terrorist attacks on the USA in 2001, films like *The Road* and *War of the Worlds* and comics including *Y: The Last Man* and *Sweet Tooth* have shown a renewed interest in disaster's psychological and emotional impact on civilians. This

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[113] Laderman, pp. 44-50.
[114] Phillips, p. 266.
[115] Jerome F. Shapiro, *Atomic Bomb Cinema: The Apocalyptic Imagination on Film* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 160.
[116] Roger Sabin, *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels: A History of Comic Art* (London: Phaidon, 1996), p. 134.

aspect forms the focus of Chapter 4's study of father-and-child narratives. The current prominence and profusion of apocalyptic science fiction road stories and their critical reception *as* apocalyptic road narratives underlines the importance of bringing the range of texts discussed as far up to date as is feasible.

Each chapter concentrates on two or three primary case studies, with the exception of Chapter 1, which deals with a single, extensive example, the road serials within the long-running *Judge Dredd* strip. These examples were selected on the combined basis of their prior academic and critical identification as apocalyptic road narratives and their inclusion and detailed treatment of the aspects observed in the working definition outlined above. Care has been taken to include discussion of independent films and comics, art films, popular comic strips and blockbusters. Independent productions may often carry more obvious countercultural messages appropriate to definitions of the road narrative as cultural critique (although such agendas have been debated in several key cases).[117] However, the thesis will demonstrate that even seemingly conservative populist texts include distinct moments of upheaval in their masculine characterisations, as a result of the destabilisation of identity that typifies the road genre. By examining films and comics diverse in budget, aesthetic, tone, thematic focus and structure, the study better represents the variety within apocalyptic road narratives throughout the last few decades.

Overview of methods

The thesis utilises a mixed methodology appropriate to its concern with intersecting matters of genre, gender and medium. It is important to reiterate here that the thesis's overarching objective is not to develop a closed definition of the apocalyptic science fiction road narrative that aims to encompass all its particularities, but to investigate this generic hybrid specifically in terms of its representations of white masculinity on the move. Accordingly, whilst the preceding introductory survey has outlined the precedent and grounds for examining apocalyptic road narratives as a distinct entity, these observations and

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[117] Barbara Klinger, for instance, has examined both the critical and nostalgic, nationalistic aspects of *Easy Rider*. See Klinger, 'The Road to Dystopia: Landscaping the nation in *Easy Rider*', in *The Road Movie Book*, ed. by Cohan and Hark, pp. 179-203.

the use of existing genre criticism and comics theory are necessarily adapted to questions of gender and race in the following chapters.

As already indicated, the study's approach to genre will be informed predominantly by a combined consideration of foundational studies dealing separately with the road narrative and both apocalyptic fiction and science fiction more generally in film and comics. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 also refer to existing work on gender within the action, adventure and teen genres as appropriate to their case studies. Rather than diffusing the study's focus, the recognition of these additional generic intersections highlights a diversity in tone, aesthetic and narrative structure within the apocalyptic road narrative that few academics have interrogated and that significantly impacts the portrayal of distinct masculine subjects.

In its discussion of gender and race, the thesis opts for a character-focused approach that concentrates upon the visual and narrative treatment of the white male American traveller, usually identified as the protagonist. This figure commonly receives the most protracted narrative attention and provides a nexus for various textual and generic themes, and therefore marks a logical starting point for academic research into gender, sexuality and race within the apocalyptic science fiction road narrative. This concentration upon the protagonist helps to ensure a tight focus, but it also risks complicity in the textual strategies by which characters representing other voices, desires, values and interests can be marginalised within texts about the very experience of marginality. Accordingly, the study seeks to show an on-going critical awareness of both the impact of certain masculine characterisations on female, black, gay and child travelling companions and the parallels and contrasts that bring the status of the white male subject in apocalyptic road narratives into clearer focus.

Additionally, by addressing how various apocalyptic road narratives present a space in which the mechanics of identity construction are interrogated, the thesis balances an awareness of how the action and adventure films and comics examined in Chapters 1 and 2, in particular, demonstrate a narrative and physical displacement of male anxieties and perceived vulnerabilities onto vehicles and O/others' bodies with a consideration of the ways in which the discursive 'invisibility' of masculinity and whiteness is challenged. The underlying project of both Masculinity Studies from the 1980s onwards and Richard Dyer's racial study *White* (1997) is to unpick the ideologically imputed naturalness and normativity of heterosexual masculinity and whiteness, so as to interrogate their cultural and social

construction and installation as dominant identities and account for previously concealed contradictions, historical changes and multiplicities. This study similarly assesses how apocalyptic science fiction, with its vivid images of nations and entire worlds in chaos, can serve as a setting for dissecting the 'normal' state of affairs as regards white masculinity. The following chapters theorise that the position of being physically outside a disrupted social structure opens up possibilities for racial, gendered and self-interrogation, even if a text as a whole is not necessarily deconstructive or progressive.

Along with previously mentioned work combining the study of gender and genre, the thesis's discussion of masculinity is primarily informed and contextualised through reference to existing work on cultural representations of masculinity appropriate to the period under discussion. These sources principally include material on representations of the male body, including Peter Lehman's *Running Scared* (1993) and Susan Jeffords' *Hard Bodies* (1994), material on masochistic and narcissistic formations of masculinity in David Greven's *Manhood in Hollywood* (2009) and Kaja Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1992), and studies of fatherhood and boyhood like Stella Bruzzi's *Bringing up Daddy* (2005) and Murray Pomerance and Frances Gateward's edited collection *Where the Boys Are* (2005). The selection of these sources corresponds to overarching themes that concern apocalyptic science fiction road narratives examined in multiple chapters, such as a notable preoccupation with matters of family and the male body as a site of volatility and vulnerability. Secondary reference to sociological studies of masculinity such as Susan Faludi's *Stiffed* (1999) and Lynne Segal's *Slow Motion* (2003) will also prove useful in establishing some of the broader period-specific anxieties, crises and concerns that feed into individual texts. However, this thesis is cautious to avoid too deterministic a connection between work that is often grounded in ethnographic research and cultural constructions and fantasies.

In accounting for the variety within examples, it has been decided that the blanket use of a single strand of gender theory would distort and limit analysis. Accordingly, the bodies of theory that inform individual chapters vary in accordance with those areas emphasised by case studies. For example, Chapter 1 refers to Klaus Theweleit's work on proto-fascist discourses of 'armoured masculinity' when considering *Judge Dredd*, whilst Chapter 3 looks at the deconstructive aspects of *Y: The Last Man* with reference to Judith Butler's key study of the performativity of gender identity, *Gender Trouble* (1990).

Nevertheless, particularly in view of the concern with male masochism and Oedipal family and fathering dynamics that figures especially prominently in Chapters 2, 4 and 5, the study will return at several points to Freudian psychoanalytic theory.

The formal focus of the thesis's approach to comics has already been outlined, and therefore requires only a brief summary here. Whilst it acknowledges the transformations involved in the adaptation process by examining the film and comic book versions of *A Boy and His Dog*, the study primarily examines the particularities of comics' treatments of the apocalyptic science fiction road narrative by combining work on these genres within film with the still-thriving vein of work on comics form sparked by Scott McCloud's foundational book *Understanding Comics* (1993). This discussion encompasses a consideration both of comics' visual form as it relates to the rendering of gendered bodies, motion and stasis, and serial narrative structure. As Daniel Wüllner has recently observed, little theoretical work exists on seriality in comics, indicating and fostering academic disregard for the impact that different modes and formats of publication have upon storytelling techniques themselves.[118] Whilst Wüllner's essay is concerned with providing a historical overview of developments in serialisation, several of the basic principles he observes inform the thesis's discussion of this aspect.

Outline

The following five chapters are arranged so as to facilitate the development of particular threads of discussion concerning technology, family, sexuality and space throughout the course of the study. The thesis begins by examining texts that foreground the traveller's relationship with different technologies, widely identified as a defining aspect of science fiction road narratives. Chapters 1 and 2 examine comics and films that characterise the central male traveller and his transformations throughout the narrative in close connection with a particular vehicle or set of vehicles and associated paraphernalia. Redressing the prevailing academic focus upon the technological augmentation of male cyborgs and road warriors as simultaneously empowering and dehumanising images, these chapters examine apocalyptic road narratives that foreground the failure, loss and destruction of

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[118] Daniel Wüllner, 'Suspended in Mid-Month: Serialised Storytelling in Comics', in *The Rise and Reason of Comics and Graphic Literature: Critical Essays on the Form*, ed. by Joyce Goggin and Dan Hassler-Forest (Jefferson: McFarland, 2010), pp. 42-54 (p. 43).

certain vehicles. Chapter 1 discusses the significant role that intermittent journeys through the post-apocalyptic wasteland have played in the characterisation of *2000AD*'s Judge Dredd, who is usually fixed within a dystopian city setting and the repetitious format of the police procedural narrative. The chapter contends that these road journeys describe apparent narratives of self-transformation and movement beyond institutionally imposed identities that are ultimately defeated by the very terms through which that shift is expressed: the discarding of the bodily and vehicular armour synonymous with Dredd's authoritarian persona.

Chapter 2, conversely, examines the self-mythologising, self-made protagonists of *Waterworld* and *The Postman*. The chapter situates these apocalyptic action/adventure road films in relation to the co-existing narcissistic and masochistic tendencies that David Greven observes within contemporary Hollywood representations of masculinity and which prominently shape Kevin Costner's star persona. The discussion centres on the role that the destruction, violation, abandonment and transformation of certain vehicles throughout each film plays in constructing a sexual narrative of (re-)ascendant white masculinity. As part of this analysis, the chapter considers how the alignment of the films' protagonists with female and African-American characters purports to reimagine national politics and even leads to some striking transformations in the gender identity of *Waterworld*'s Mariner. However, these texts ultimately awkwardly combine imagery of rebellion and the celebration of the marginal community with a conservative celebration of white patriarchy.

Chapter 3 examines how post-apocalyptic road narratives at once accommodate and complicate male 'coming-of-age' narratives. Focusing upon the post-apocalyptic disruption of the usual adolescent rituals of societal and paternal induction, this discussion examines the compensatory strategies featured in the film and comic book adaptations of Ellison's *Vic and Blood* short stories and the comic book series *Y: The Last Man*. Responding to critical analyses that have suggested that the film *A Boy and His Dog* carries a clear rebellious agenda and poses a clear dichotomy between the pleasures of the homosocial bond and a contempt for women, the chapter's first half observes that the same qualities of paternal guidance that the dog Blood offers to Vic continually circumvent the possibility of the teenager's socialisation, productive agency and emotional development. The chapter's second half addresses the more productive interrogation and critique of

those generic, heroic, hegemonic and phallic ideals that inform and distort the adolescent traveller's ideas regarding love, sex and manhood in *Y: The Last Man*.

Whilst previous chapters address tendencies spanning several decades, Chapters 4 and 5 discuss two trends specific to millennial apocalyptic road narratives. Chapter 4 examines the anxiety over the psychological and moral consequences of the child's exposure to violent spectacle and the father's capacity to protect their charge that preoccupies recent travelling father-and-child stories. Focusing on *War of the Worlds*, *The Road* and *Sweet Tooth*, this discussion illustrates that the child's gaze introduces not only unease but also a special, reparative insight that requires that fathers develop new attitudes towards travelled space in order to recover filial and social bonds.

Chapter 5 analyses an increasingly prominent anxiety surrounding the decentralisation or compromise of the road journey that is predominantly attached to white male subjects in film and popular culture more generally. The chapter concentrates on *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys*, in which road journeys are combined with forms of traversing time and space and constrictive itineraries that elide the experience of the journey itself. The chapter examines these transformations' ramifications for each male protagonist's sense of self and the resistance they find within other, solipsistic modes of travel that provoke nostalgic and social withdrawal. This aspect is compared with the distinct experiences of the road journey and its distortion undergone by their more socially engaged fellow female travellers. Finally, prefiguring the Conclusion's attention to adjacent areas of future inquiry, Chapter 5 brings the debate concerning the impact of digital telecommunications and technologies upon road travel up to date by considering its increasingly prominent characterisation as a male anxiety in non-apocalyptic science fiction action cinema.

1
'A Machine? A Myth? Or a Man?'
Armoured Masculinity in the *Judge Dredd* Road Serials

As indicated in the Introduction, the prevailing image of the science fiction road story addressed in road genre studies is the 'hyperindustrialized, pre-cybernetic fusion of car and driver'. David Laderman describes examples like *Death Race 2000* (Paul Bartel, 1975) and the Hollywood action blockbuster-influenced *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* (George Miller, 1981) principally as celebrations of this merging of organic and mechanical bodies.[1] Imagining a shift from assembly-line production to a more hands-on, bricolage aesthetic fostered by post-apocalyptic technological regression, such texts superficially resonate with Cynthia Golomb Dettelbach's suggestion that the peculiarly American 'dream of possession – of appropriating and mastering objects and making (or remaking) them in [one's] own image – finds its most natural expression in the possession of a car'.[2] Yet Dettelbach also observes that such fantastical cultural constructions of the automobile as an instrument of social and physical liberation and empowerment are often accompanied by fears of the driver's possession or entrapment by his property.[3] In those post-apocalyptic action texts that thrive on the spectacle of 'autogeddon', to use Karl Phillips' suitably hyperbolic term,[4] images of armour-plated road warriors are as expressive of a fundamental anxiety regarding the loss of the autonomous ego as the car crash's fatal fusion of body and bodywork.

Such ambivalent perceptions of automotive technology are more pertinent to a study of apocalyptic road stories than characterisations of the automobile as the fantasised 'extension of man that turns the [driver] into a superman' described by Marshall McLuhan or,[5] as in cod-psychoanalytic interpretations, an 'extension of male [sexual] potency'.[6] Instead, this study's first two chapters consider how the frequent destruction or collapse of certain vehicles variously threatens, transforms,

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[1] David Laderman, *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), p. 18.

[2] Cynthia Golomb Dettelbach, *In the Driver's Seat: The Automobile in American Literature and Popular Culture* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. 120.

[3] Dettelbach, p. 120.

[4] Karl Phillips, 'We're Virtually There: SF Film on the Road to Ruin', in *Lost Highways: An Illustrated History of Road Movies*, ed. by Jack Sargeant and Stephanie Watson (London: Creation Books, 1999), pp. 266-74 (p. 273).

[5] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 241.

[6] Ron Eyerman and Orvar Löfgren, 'Romancing the Road: Road Movies and Images of Mobility', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 12 (1995), 53-79 (p. 65).

consolidates and suppresses the post-apocalyptic male traveller's ego, building upon Katie Mills' assertion that road narratives create a space not for discovering a true self per se, but 'investigat[ing] how one *constructs* a sense of self'.[7]

Chapter 1 introduces the thesis's character-centred focus by examining these themes' treatment in a comic that is structured around an established character brand. The following discussion considers the integral place of serialised stories built around journeys through the post-apocalyptic wasteland within *Judge Dredd*, a comic strip which has run since March 1977 in the weekly science fiction comics anthology magazine *2000AD* (1977-). Though a British creation, as addressed below, *Judge Dredd* takes place in a dystopian USA following a devastating nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union and a civil war. Much of the surviving population lives in three 'Mega-Cities' spanning America's East and West coasts and the state of Texas, which are governed by the Justice Department. The enforcers of this totalitarian police state operate individually as judge, jury and, occasionally, executioner, the most brutally efficient and uncompromising representative being Mega-City One's Judge Joseph Dredd. Dredd's repeated suppression of civilians who commit crimes, whether out of deliberate malicious intent, accidental or casual transgression, or desperation to improve their quality of life amid the city's squalor and inequalities, forms the backbone of the strip.

Whilst much of *Judge Dredd* follows a repetitive police procedural format, it is punctuated with moments of crisis often explored and articulated through road narratives that unfold within the 'Cursed Earth', the radioactive wasteland that separates the Mega-Cities. This chapter examines how these prominent generic transitions and the interconnected roles they assign to various vehicles, associated paraphernalia and travelling companions create a space for negotiating fractures in Dredd's relationship with his institutional identity: a machine-like persona which is synonymous with his oppression of others and the repression of his own emotional and psychological autonomy. The discussion centres on the strip's first extended serialised story, 'The Cursed Earth', written by Pat Mills and *Judge Dredd* co-creator John Wagner, illustrated by Mike McMahon and Brian Bolland, and published in 25 instalments between July and October 1978. The serial drew its underlying premise from American author Roger Zelazny's 1969 novella *Damnation Alley*, in which incarcerated biker Hell Tanner is tasked with

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[7] Katie Mills, *The Road Story and the Rebel: Moving Through Film, Fiction, and Television* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2006), p. 19 (Mills' emphasis).

transporting a vaccine through a nuclear wasteland. As Dredd embarks on a cross-country journey to deliver an antidote following the outbreak of a devastating virus in Mega-City Two, the comic leaves its urban setting for the first time and explores the wasteland's dangers and communities. Occasional reference will also be made to another major example, Wagner and artist John Ridgway's *The Dead Man*, a 1989-1990 spin-off story which only revealed its connection to *Judge Dredd*'s narrative in later instalments.

In examining the comic's treatment of (anti-)heroic masculinity, the chapter draws upon the concept of 'armoured masculinity', a gender ideology rooted in European proto-fascist aesthetic, military and political discourses. Klaus Theweleit's extensive study of the gendered psychology of the Weimar *Freikorps* paramilitary forces forms the chapter's primary point of reference. As Scott Bukatman summarises, Theweleit's work identifies within the *Freikorps*' rhetoric of hardness, speed, aggressive control and bodily reinforcement a desperate desire to defend the male ego against the female-identified threat of 'the soft, the liquid, and […] feared libidinal energies that are not beholden to reason'.[8]

Whilst Theweleit's work may appear a historically and nationally specific study, scholars have also examined discourses of armoured masculinity within the representation of cyborgs in contemporary science fiction films like *The Terminator* (James Cameron, 1984) and *Robocop* (Paul Verhoeven, 1987): texts showcasing the 'hard body' of the Reagan-era action man examined by Susan Jeffords.[9] Notably, Bukatman describes the Terminator as a figure that 'adorns itself in leather and introjects the machine, becoming part punk, part cop, part biker, part bike, part tank'.[10] This synthesis is integral to the following discussion of the *Judge Dredd* road serials. *Judge Dredd* co-creator Carlos Ezquerra's designs show that Dredd's overall appearance, especially his visored helmet and black leather uniform, was originally conceived in close relation to his monstrously bulky 'Lawmaster' motorcycle. The comic therefore explicitly echoes McLuhan's account of the automobile as 'a superb piece of uniform' that has inherited the suit of armour's historical function as a signifier of social status, giving the modern-day 'cavalier his horse and armour and haughty insolence in one package'.[11] Accordingly, this

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[8] Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 303.
[9] Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), p. 105.
[10] Bukatman, p. 306.
[11] McLuhan, p. 243.

chapter explores *Judge Dredd*'s treatment of armoured masculinity by considering the interconnected roles played by vehicular and bodily armour.

In focusing upon the road journey, the following analysis emphasises different aspects of armoured masculinity from those considered in Bukatman and Claudia Springer's discussions of cinematic cyborgs. Both scholars identify Robocop and the Terminator as reactions to what Springer describes as the supersession of the 'phallic model' of 'physically forceful or massive' industrial technology by 'the "feminized" computer with its concealed, passive, and internal workings'.[12] Whilst gendered insecurities regarding the impact of digital technologies will be considered further in Chapter 5, this first chapter is more concerned with another dimension of armoured masculinity described by Theweleit: 'men's compulsion to subjugate and repulse what is specifically human within them'.[13] Whilst the *Freikorps* projected their fears of fluidity and softness onto female bodies and sought to exorcise such anxieties through rhetorical and physical violence towards women, Theweleit stresses that the same threat is always latent in the soldier himself, whose 'muscle armour' struggles to contain his id and the 'sloppy mush' of 'his own seething interior'.[14] 'The Cursed Earth' unambiguously bears out Timothy Corrigan's assertion that the road genre focuses 'on men and the absence of women',[15] notably preceding stories that introduce major female characters like the telepathic Judge Anderson, who repeatedly exposes herself to bodily penetration as she attempts to control supernatural threats by trapping them inside her mind. This chapter observes how a similar concern with bodily boundary control in 'The Cursed Earth', where the virus Dredd sets out to contain compels infected people to suck out other humans' body fluids, is exclusively played out within and between male bodies.

The following discussion addresses those aspects of process, transformation and the simultaneous dissolution and formation of the ego that are emphasised by Theweleit but overlooked by Bukatman and Springer. These scholars present a visual analysis of the cyborg bodies of *The Terminator* and *Robocop* that largely neglects the transformations they undergo throughout each narrative. Conversely,

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[12] Claudia Springer, *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age* (London: Athlone, 1996), p. 104.

[13] Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 2: Male Bodies: Psychoanalysing the White Terror*, trans. by Chris Turner and Erica Carter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p. 162.

[14] Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, trans. by Stephen Conway (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), pp. 242-43.

[15] Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture after Vietnam* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. 143.

this chapter argues that 'The Cursed Earth' uses the post-apocalyptic road journey as a space in which Dredd's armoured identity is progressively relaxed, threatened and consolidated. Though visually 'rock-solid',[16] these bodies are not narratively inert but rather intensely volatile.

Road stories provide a major forum for exploring this volatility because, as Laderman observes,

> Cars and motorbikes often evolve in the narrative as a kind of prosthetic limb or 'buddy' for the driver. Road movies may develop character by showing some kind of interaction between car and driver, the latter channelling desire or anger through the former. Cars […] possess characters, aid them, or destroy them.[17]

Laderman crucially recognises that not all road narratives describe a close correspondence between the traveller and a specific vehicle. Indeed, with the arguable exception of *Twelve Monkeys* (Terry Gilliam, 1995), no such connections exist in the case studies addressed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Meanwhile, the first two chapters' analyses of the *Judge Dredd* road serials, *Waterworld* (Kevin Reynolds, 1995) and *The Postman* (Kevin Costner, 1997) show that their protagonists' masculine identities are developed through distinctive narrative trajectories in which certain vehicles do not simply form an empowering point of identification for the traveller, but are destroyed, discarded, consumed, remoulded or ostensibly substituted for other vehicles and identities. The vehicle and associated paraphernalia serve as objects, spaces or, indeed, characters through which certain values, desires, anxieties and vulnerabilities are expressed, displaced and exorcised. As explained in the Introduction, this aspect invites an analysis of science fiction action and spectacle that recognises their function as part of the narrative rather than as elements 'bracketed' off from it.[18]

As a text that has made only intermittent use of road stories throughout its run, *Judge Dredd* may appear an atypical case study with which to begin the thesis's textual analyses. Yet various factors merit its early inclusion. As explained in the introductory chapter, the study does not follow a linear chronological

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[16] Springer, p. 109.
[17] Laderman, pp. 17-18.
[18] Michele Pierson, *Special Effects: Still in Search of Wonder* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 123.

trajectory. However, the fact that Mark Williams' 1982 road genre filmography and, less understandably, Laderman, Katie Mills, and Jason Wood restrict their discussions of the allegedly intuitive connection between science fiction and road stories to films from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s indicates a natural starting point for a study aiming to expand upon this literature. Just as these scholars' historical focus and choice of examples appear symptomatic of the contemporaneous rise of the Hollywood science fiction blockbuster, 'The Cursed Earth' and *2000AD*'s inception were influenced by the boom in science fiction cinema's popularity, and especially by those dystopian and apocalyptic examples that emerged before and during the period of transition in the late 1970s that hinged on the release of *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977). As Martin Barker notes of *Action* (1976), the comics magazine founded and edited by Pat Mills that directly preceded *2000AD*, story ideas were often ripped from recent American films and television series in order to satisfy the demand for a British boys' comic that would keep pace with major US-influenced developments and trends in British youth tastes.[19] A similar rationale informed the 1975 proposal for *2000AD*'s creation advanced by the International Publishing Corporation's (IPC) Kelvin Gosnell. Looking to rejuvenate a genre considered a relic of the 1950s and unattractive to young British readers,[20] Gosnell emphasised the number of American science fiction films then in production and the narrative and commercial potential of capitalising upon trends like the vogue for post-apocalyptic 'survivors' fiction.[21]

As noted above, 'The Cursed Earth' is clearly influenced by Zelazny's novella *Damnation Alley* and, secondarily, director Jack Smight's loose 1977 Hollywood adaptation. *Judge Dredd*'s place within the development of apocalyptic road narratives is consolidated by its inspirations and its own influential status, especially where the figure of the armoured road warrior is concerned. For instance, co-creator Wagner chose a poster advertising *Death Race 2000* as a key reference for Ezquerra's original designs of Dredd.[22] Showing *Death Race 2000*'s protagonist Frankenstein (David Carradine) behind the wheel and clad in the leather costume and helmet that conceal his face and body throughout the film, this image anticipates the symbiotic bond between character and vehicle that informed Dredd's

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[19] Martin Barker, *Comics: Ideology, Power and the Critics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 19.
[20] Colin M. Jarman and Peter Acton, *Judge Dredd: The Mega-History* (Harpenden: Lennard Publishing, 1995), p. 15.
[21] Jarman and Acton, p. 15.
[22] Jarman and Acton, p. 21.

design and characterisation. In addition to clear cinematic descendants like *Robocop*, Wood regards Dredd as a precursor to *Mad Max 2*'s road warrior.[23] Such chains of influence demonstrate the importance of combining the study of comics and films in discussing apocalyptic road stories as a repeatedly re-emerging trend.

Judge Dredd also represents a useful opening example because it provides an opportunity to examine the road genre's development within comics alongside a form that continues to dominate genre and gender studies surrounding that medium, the superhero narrative. Whilst *Judge Dredd* resists neat categorisation as a superhero comic, its emphasis upon a central character brand, its overall structure and some of the iconography it uses and subverts mark clear points of comparison. As Theweleit indicates by illustrating his study with panels from American superhero comics, this genre is also an informative point of reference because it reveals the historical persistence of images and discourses of armoured masculinity and associated anxieties throughout Western culture. The chapter addresses the ramifications of this additional generic connection for *Judge Dredd*'s relationship to common definitions of the road narrative as a genre concerned with self-transformation and the often liberating uncertainties and potentialities of the journey. Examining *Judge Dredd* in relation to work on superhero comics also fosters a greater awareness of the impact of the text's British origins and perspective upon its portrayal of American masculinity. In addition to the past failures and, at present, very limited success creators have found in their attempts to introduce the comic strip to the American direct sales market, two very different feature film adaptations performed poorly at the US box office. The most recent and faithful of these, the independent British/South African co-production *Dredd* (Pete Travis, 2012), which reneged on the Hollywood blockbuster *Judge Dredd*'s (Danny Cannon, 1995) attempt to recreate Dredd as a wronged hero by instead indicating his complicity in the suffering of the populace he ostensibly protects, illustrates one of the major difficulties facing the property's Transatlantic translation: Dredd's unsympathetic and brutal characterisation.

However, underlying Dredd's behaviour is another major American inspiration, the right-wing anti-hero of *Dirty Harry* (Don Siegel, 1971).[24] Dredd emblematises the same contradiction that Seth Cagin and Philip Dray observe throughout such 1970s vigilante films, for in 'resorting to violence, he [too]

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[23] Jason Wood, *100 Road Movies* (London: BFI, 2007), p. 111.
[24] John Wagner, 'I Invented Judge Dredd', *BBC*, 28 February 2002
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1820832.stm> [accessed 10 February 2012] (para. 5 of 17).

undercuts the very social order he purports to defend' and thus 'obliterates coherent politics'.[25] Indeed, compared to later developments in the strip, narratively and thematically 'The Cursed Earth' is more conspicuously concerned with images and spaces drawn from American history and popular culture. Only during the 1980s did the strip develop into the critique of Thatcherism for which it is particularly famous, as numerous stories emerged concerning the Justice Department's role in creating and perpetuating social problems like mass unemployment and housing shortages. As this chapter observes, however, the contradictory politics noted by Cagin and Dray are only deepened by Dredd's ostensible recreation as a more humane heroic figure in 'The Cursed Earth'.

Unlike later chapters, the following discussion focuses on a single text. This is partly due to the sheer wealth of material that comprises *Judge Dredd*. Accordingly, in contrast to Brian Ireland's 2010 study of 'The Cursed Earth' as an apocalyptic road narrative, the chapter does not examine the *Judge Dredd* road serials in isolation but rather stresses the importance of reading these road journeys' treatment of armoured masculinity in the context of the strip's overall structural framework. In concentrating on an example from the late 1970s, the thesis does not pretend that armoured masculinity is solely a feature of apocalyptic road stories from this era. The 1980s saw the release of multiple international *Mad Max* spin-offs and a spate of post-apocalyptic men's pulp fiction about military men fighting across radioactive American wastelands, like Jerry Ahern's series *The Survivalist* (1981-1993). In addition to the fact that they lie outside the thesis's medium- and genre-specific purview, the chapter does not address these texts or the increasingly prominent road narrative elements in the first three *Terminator* films and Dark Horse spin-off comics (1990-1999) because it seeks to avoid re-treading ground already extensively covered by work on action bodies in 1980s and early 1990s American cinema and science fiction comics. Such studies include Yvonne Tasker's *Spectacular Bodies* (1993), Jeffords' *Hard Bodies* (1994) and Springer's *Electronic Eros* (1996). Rather, this chapter seeks to extend associated discussions to other images of armoured masculinity preceding this period.

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[25] Seth Cagin and Philip Dray, *Hollywood Films of the Seventies: Sex, Drugs, Violence, Rock 'n' Roll and Politics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), pp. 215-16.

Judge Dredd: Armoured new man *par excellence*?

This thesis argues that apocalyptic science fiction road stories initially rose to (relative) prominence in film and comics within the latter half of the 1970s. Many scholars gloss over this period as a 'lull' following the road film genre's consolidation across the late 1960s and early 1970s,[26] arguing that road films released between the mid-1970s and late 1980s merely 'recycled' the formulae established in the genre's formative years.[27] However, critical literature concerning the early 1970s is rife with disagreements concerning the precise nature of these standardised formulae. For Thomas Elsaesser, road films like *Five Easy Pieces* (Bob Rafelson, 1970) and *Two-Lane Blacktop* (Monte Hellman, 1971) emblematise this period's 'radical scepticism about American virtues of ambition, vision, drive'.[28] Conversely, Cagin and Dray consider these films expressive of a 'truly original American idea': the individual's freedom to resist the dictates of surrounding social institutions and pursue a different path and notion of self, according to his own conscience and desires.[29]

Whichever argument one considers more persuasive, it is clear that the *Judge Dredd* road serials diverge from both by focusing on an authoritarian traveller. Even departing from another contemporaneous treatment of armoured masculinity on the science fiction road, *Death Race 2000*, which mocks a spirit of revolt as openly as it satirises institutions of celebrity and a media fascination with violence, Dredd's road journeys are not motivated by, or expressive of, a rebellious agenda. Rather, the distance that the road grants from Dredd's usual urban jurisdiction presents an arena for negotiating the tension between his armoured body and suggestions of an underlying personal self that has shaped Dredd's characterisation throughout the strip's history. It is therefore necessary to preface the analysis of the road serials with an outline of this conflict.

As the 1984 story 'A Case for Treatment' demonstrates, the similarities between Dredd's characterisation and the proto-fascist rhetoric studied by Theweleit are uncanny. In this story, Dredd undergoes a psychiatric examination

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[26] Laderman, p. 130.
[27] Mills, p. 159.
[28] Thomas Elsaesser, 'The Pathos of Failure: American Films in the 1970s: Notes on the Unmotivated Hero', in *The Last Great American Picture Show: New Hollywood Cinema in the 1970s*, ed. by Thomas Elsaesser, Alexander Horwath and Noel King (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), pp. 279-92 (p. 282).
[29] Cagin and Dray, p. 89.

after expressing doubts over his conduct in a case that led to a child's death. The regression therapy Dredd undergoes shows his own lack of a conventional childhood. A clone of one of the founders of the Justice Department cultivated *in vitro*, Dredd incarnates the 'new man' discussed by Theweleit (not to be confused with Masculinity Studies' typical use of this label to describe a paradigm of sensitive masculinity formulated in response to second-wave feminism): 'a true child of the drill-machine [here, 'drill' refers to military discipline], created without the help of a woman'.[30] Trained from childhood to fulfil the duties of a Judge, he appears to be defined entirely by function, seemingly fitting Theweleit's description of the armoured male as a soldier whose 'knowledge of being able to do what he does is his only consciousness of self'.[31]

Moreover, both Dredd's genetic non-uniqueness and his body armour recall proto-fascist constructions of the armoured male's ego not as 'a psychic agency pertaining to the person' but as 'a social ego' simultaneously defined and absorbed by a 'totality', a social order composed of many men whose bodies and being are devoted to a national cause.[32] Dredd's place within the 'totality' of the Justice Department is most obviously signalled by his uniform, a carapace that simultaneously extends and suppresses the underlying human body. Three inset panels on the cover of the *2000AD* issue in which 'A Case for Treatment' appeared question whether Dredd is 'A machine? A myth? Or a man?', and accordingly dissect his body into close-ups of his 'Lawgiver' gun, his badge and his jutting cleft chin, the only part of his flesh that is consistently exposed.[33] Dredd is thus characterised as a compound figure marked by a rupture between his armour and the 'man' underneath. Unlike the masked superheroes of American comics, however, Dredd has no discrete alter-ego. Indeed, whilst the strip has become increasingly relaxed about showing other Judges' faces, especially those of female characters, the upper half of Dredd's face is always concealed by his helmet, a hat or bandages, or is otherwise cropped from individual panels. Barker and Kate Brooks have argued that this consolidates the distinction between a 'machine-like'

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[30] Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 2*, p. 160.
[31] Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 2*, p. 162.
[32] Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 2*, p. 222.
[33] John Wagner, Alan Grant, Kim Raymond, Ron Smith, Brett Ewins, Steve Dillon, Ian Gibson, Robin Smith, Cam Kennedy and Ian Kennedy, *Judge Dredd: The Complete Case Files 08* (Oxford: Rebellion, 2007), p. 321. The collected editions of *Judge Dredd* referred to in this chapter are unpaginated. Page numbers have been assigned here for the purposes of clear referencing, starting from each volume's first right-hand interior page.

being who lacks any private or emotional life and 'only exists to serve', and the strip's true 'living being[s]', Mega-City One's criminals and civilians.[34]

Yet the distinction between man and machine is not as stable as Barker and Brooks suggest. At the conclusion of 'A Case for Treatment' the psychiatrist observes, 'No matter how hard we try to control it, sooner or later the human being behind the mask always starts to come out'.[35] Unlike the many American superhero comics where, with the exception of isolated series like Frank Miller's Batman story *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986), characters remain frozen in time or are continually rejuvenated through retellings of their origin stories, Dredd has aged in real time over the strip's 36-year history. Progressively, Dredd's ageing body and growing doubts about the legal system and his own behaviour have threatened his 'machine-like' functionality from within. Accordingly, the presentation of his armoured trappings has assumed an increasingly hysterical aspect. Whereas Dredd's body is sleek and lithe in early stories like 'The Cursed Earth', several later renderings of the character have bulked him and his uniform up substantially, aligning his body even closer with the monolithic, curiously immobile appearance of his motorcycle, which has long been drawn with impracticably large tyres. The Judges' armour, then, functions visually and narratively to contain and compensate for the supposed weaknesses introduced by the individual's flesh and flashes of emotional, moral and psychological self-awareness.

Communal engagement in 'The Cursed Earth'

The on-going tension between an emergent independent conscience and Dredd's machine-like and mythical qualities is writ large in the relationship of road-based stories to the strip's repetitive overarching structure. Most short instalments follow a similar formula: a civilian commits a crime and is apprehended, the strip deriving much of its tongue-in-cheek humour from the fact that Dredd punishes major and minor offences with the same excessive harshness. The strip therefore utilises the 'iterative scheme' that Umberto Eco observed throughout the *Superman* comics in his foundational 1962 essay 'The Myth of Superman'. The iterative scheme eschews character evolution and any sense of long-term consequence, instead repeating the same type of strictly externalised conflict and resolution, 'each event

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[34] Martin Barker and Kate Brooks, *Knowing Audiences: Judge Dredd, Its Friends, Fans, and Foes* (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1998), p. 257.
[35] Wagner et al., *Judge Dredd 08*, p. 97.

tak[ing] up again from a sort of virtual beginning, ignoring where the preceding event left off'.[36] Eco connects this structure to myth's persistent ideological function as a means of simultaneously gratifying and safely displacing readers' power fantasies,[37] stating that the 'mythic character embodies a law, [a notion Dredd epitomises in his famous refrain, 'I am the law!'] or a universal demand, and therefore must be in part *predictable* and cannot hold surprises for us'.[38]

Although Eco observes the same pattern in the stories of Hercules, Sherlock Holmes and numerous other European characters, John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett specifically identify the rise of narratively repetitive serialised comic strips as a 'decisive factor' in the formation of the American monomythic superhero.[39] This figure is defined by anonymity, 'a redemptive task, and extraordinary powers'.[40] Lawrence and Jewett argue that the renunciation of sexual gratification, marriage and the total social integration it entails, and, in short, any personal life beyond the hero's duty are necessitated by a format that thrives on the promise of adventure in each instalment, without the inconvenience of 'creating a new redeemer figure' each time equilibrium is restored.[41] However, the theme of self-denial produces a major structural tension within *Judge Dredd*. As Colin M. Jarman and Peter Acton note, Wagner has long argued that 'to change Dredd's personality, to give him more depth of character, […] would destroy the Dredd mythos altogether'.[42] Nevertheless, the fact that *Judge Dredd* has passed between various writers, artists and editors has spawned stories where creators have sought to introduce a more human aspect.

These moments of transformation and crisis within Dredd's fulfilment of the terms of armoured masculinity and the American superhero monomyth both trigger and emerge within road journeys. In the most obvious instance, which leads to the events of *The Dead Man*, Dredd receives a letter from a subsequently murdered boy exposing the Justice Department's destructive impact upon innocent civilians. He decides to reflect on his resultant doubts about the dictates of the law by taking 'the

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[36] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 117.

[37] This has proven a delicate point where Dredd is concerned. As John Wagner recounts, several young readers have unequivocally idolised Dredd and the 'hard-right stance' the comic seeks to satirise rather than celebrate, generating a need for stories and characters that explicitly contested the Justice Department's politics. See Wagner, 'I Invented Judge Dredd', para. 7 of 17.

[38] Eco, p. 109 (Eco's emphasis).

[39] John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), p. 36.

[40] Lawrence and Jewett, p. 47.

[41] Lawrence and Jewett, pp. 36-37.

[42] Jarman and Acton, p. 113.

Long Walk', a ritual in which retired Judges wander into the Cursed Earth with the ostensible purpose of bringing order to the lawless. As a form built around movement and a critical engagement with the traveller's relationship to the social order from which they absent themselves, road narratives relate uneasily to the iterative structure through which the mythic character 'necessarily become[s] immobilised'.[43] Although most instalments of 'The Cursed Earth' continue to follow an iterative format in depicting Dredd's repeated efforts to resolve the problems faced by the wasteland communities, the use of the journey as a structuring device presents a distinct opportunity for exploring Dredd's volatile relationship with his armoured identity even at this early point in the strip's history.

Whilst the Mega-Cities themselves have been struck by various disasters throughout the comic, the Cursed Earth is consistently characterised as the barren industrial (or, in some places, pre-industrial) desert common to road stories and post-apocalyptic science fiction. As Jack Sargeant and Stephanie Watson observe, the road genre treats the desert, with its heat haze-generated mirages and open horizons, as a setting where 'identity loses its previous boundaries[,] […] long-established meanings vanish, […] and nothing is as it once seemed'.[44] These qualities allow the *Judge Dredd* road serials to interrogate the protagonist's subjectivity. As Pat Mills, the principal author of 'The Cursed Earth', states of the contrast between the strip's urban spaces and the radioactive wasteland, this story and its setting are intended to represent the loss and limitations of the control that the Judges exert over Mega-City One. The Cursed Earth therefore presents a space in which 'the different halves of Dredd's psyche', the machine/myth and the man, may be exposed and negotiated.[45] Ireland has even argued that 'The Cursed Earth' represents a pivotal rite of passage in which Dredd is 'cleansed, reborn and transformed into a fairer, less inflexible, character'.[46] In addition to interrogating the road genre, the vehicle and the community's roles within this apparent transformation to a further degree than Ireland allows, however, the following analysis stresses the constraints that the road serial's positioning within the strip's overall iterative scheme place upon its exploration of armoured masculinity.

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[43] Eco, p. 110.

[44] Jack Sargeant and Stephanie Watson, 'Looking for Maps: Notes on the Road Movie as Genre', in *Lost Highways*, ed. by Sargeant and Watson, pp. 5-20 (p. 14).

[45] Pat Mills, cited in Jarman and Acton, p. 86.

[46] Brian Ireland, 'Errand into the Wilderness: *The Cursed Earth* as Apocalyptic Road Narrative', *Journal of American Studies*, 43 (2009), 497-534 (p. 521).

Both 'The Cursed Earth' and *The Dead Man* emphasise changes within Dredd's interactions with underprivileged communities. In *The Dead Man*, the eponymous unnamed, badly scarred amnesiac traveller, later identified as Dredd, is accompanied by Yassa, a young African-American boy from an isolated commune who narrates the story. Since Dredd is defined by his reactions to external problems and stimuli, the creators' use of 'The Cursed Earth' to offer a social cross-section of its inhabitants is especially significant. Illustrating one approach to the productive tension regarding the scale and scope of apocalyptic science fiction and the road story indicated in the Introduction, 'The Cursed Earth' both develops the master narrative of the comic's apocalyptic history by offering initial insight into the political causes and consequences of the USA's nuclear devastation, and uses the road story's more intimate focus to chart the inequalities, beliefs, corruption and lifestyles of the wasteland's mutant, alien and otherwise socially marginalised populations. However, as Barker and Brooks indicate in distinguishing between Dredd and the varied human face presented by Mega-City One's criminals and civilians, this cross-sectional aspect is not unique to the road serials.[47] Rather, what distinguishes the representation of Dredd's relationship with 'the people' in 'The Cursed Earth' is the discrepancy between his modes of navigating the city and the wasteland, and the resultant impact upon his ordinarily detached characterisation.

Dredd's usual mode of transport within Mega-City One, his Lawmaster patrol bike, affords him both omnipresence and remoteness. In the serial's second instalment, in which he tracks down Spikes Harvey Rotten, a convict whose experience in travelling across the Cursed Earth is forcibly enlisted by Dredd, it is implied that Dredd has a precognitive sensitivity to criminal activity. The borderless panel showing Dredd racing towards a school where the apparently reformed punk biker is undertaking community service frames the panels in which a disturbance subsequently unfolds, as if to suggest that Dredd is already at the crime scene before the violence erupts, his motorcycle bursting out of the linear sequence of events. Yet Dredd's rapid movement across the city also generates a removed attitude. The 1989 story 'A Child's Tale' presents two different accounts of an incident in which Dredd runs down a boy's mother whilst pursuing a robber and promptly abandons the scene. Whilst Dredd's single-page report describes the event efficiently and detachedly, a longer version narrated and drawn by the child shows the accident's traumatic consequences. A causal link, then, is drawn between

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[47] Barker and Brooks, p. 257.

Dredd's treatment of the citizenry as a faceless mass and his mode of navigating the city.

Both the role of the vehicle and Dredd's interactions with civilians alter significantly in 'The Cursed Earth'. One of the serial's most striking aspects is the slight, even counterproductive role played by the armoured 'Land-Raider' vehicle carrying the antidote for Mega-City Two, as both a weapon and a setting for action. In its first appearance, the absurdly named 'Killdozer', one half of the Land-Raider, explodes out of a double-page spread, cutting through surrounding panels' borders and firing on its own android reinforcements. McArthur, a Judge who acts like an over-enthusiastic car salesman, lists the tank's armaments in a manner reminiscent of the film adaptation of *Damnation Alley*, in which an all-male group of soldiers play with their visually similar 'Landmaster' vehicles' technical capabilities. Whereas this sequence foreshadows the hazards that the soldiers encounter later in the film, the vivid display of the Land-Raider's arsenal only highlights the ineffectiveness of its weapons during the journey. McArthur's nonsensical dialogue underlines the spectacle's emptiness: 'Oooh! I get so excited just looking at its multi-level kill power!'.[48] The implicit sexual aspect of his language also recalls the nostalgic desire for an industrialised era when 'an insecure man needed only to look at technology to find a metaphor for the power of phallic strength' incarnate, observed within 1980s cyborg science fiction films by Springer.[49] Indicating a notable departure from this adulation of industrial technology as a masculine crutch, the sight of the excessively reinforced vehicle reduces McArthur to a state of bodily disorderliness and implicit arousal, panting as he struggles to keep pace with a distinctly unimpressed Dredd as they walk around the vehicle testing ground.

From this early stage, 'The Cursed Earth' departs from the 'American vernacular of the road flick' wherein, as Sarah S. Jain observes, cars 'become a means for the homosocial transmission of power vis-à-vis their role as a male prosthetic to get the girl [or to stand in for the girl] to impress the guys'.[50] The social and displaced sexual bonds men form through piloting the Landmaster, described as a real 'mother', in the *Damnation Alley* film are denied in 'The Cursed Earth' (where Dredd rebuffs McArthur's over-familiarity) just as they are in

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[48] Pat Mills, John Wagner, Chris Lowder, Brian Bolland, Dave Gibbons, Mike McMahon, Brendan McCarthy, Brett Ewins, Garry Leach and Ron Smith, *Judge Dredd: The Complete Case Files 02* (Oxford: Rebellion, 2009), p. 13.
[49] Springer, p. 111.
[50] Sarah S. Jain, 'Violent Submission: Gendered Automobility', *Cultural Critique*, 61 (2005), 186-214 (p. 197).

Zelazny's *Damnation Alley*, where the impression of inexhaustible mechanised power developed over a lengthy paragraph listing the vehicle's arsenal is defused by a single line: 'But Tanner kept his own counsel, in the form of a long, slim SS dagger'.[51] On one level the Land-Raider is evidently treated as a source of spectacle, drawn in typically lavish detail by Mike McMahon in the 'splash' panels (panels that occupy all or most of a page) devoted to its initial appearance. Subsequently, however, 'The Cursed Earth' contrasts the mere appearance of power with the hard-bodied individual's functionality and independence, as the Land-Raider regularly malfunctions, proving a liability in need of protection rather than an asset. At least in its treatment of the vehicle, the serial thus begins to dissect armoured masculinity as a gender ideology grounded in a hysterical desire to gain the outward appearance of hardness and strength, and especially to display these qualities to other men as a bonding ritual and a repudiation of the insecurity underpinning that ideology.

The repeated abandonment of the lumbering armoured vehicle has an obvious graphical purpose. The fact that an individual instalment of the *Judge Dredd* strip occupies only seven pages of each week's issue of *2000AD* necessitates the rapid development and resolution of narrative and character conflict and the promise of enough fast-paced action to hold readers' attention across multiple issues. Accordingly, McMahon and Bolland compensate for the Land-Raider's unyielding, non-articulated form by frequently showing Dredd and Spikes speeding ahead on their motorcycles, stream-lined vehicles that better accommodate an impression of rapid motion whilst maintaining the repartee between characters.

The technical failure and desertion of the Land-Raider also narratively allows for a pronounced softening of Dredd's usual characterisation. The breakdowns create scenarios where, in contrast to his detached efficiency in the city, he is obliged to spend time with, and develop a sympathetic understanding of, several socially disenfranchised inhabitants. His interactions with a black-identified alien named Tweak, a captive of barbaric Southern slave traders clothed in imagery historically reminiscent of the Transatlantic slave trade, represent a particularly powerful demonstration of Dredd's increased openness to the voices of marginalised persons on the road. As Ireland notes, 'The Cursed Earth' acknowledges and overturns the 'Sambo' stereotype of 'the docile [and unintelligent] male slave' perpetuated by historians into the mid-twentieth

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[51] Roger Zelazny, *Damnation Alley* (New York: Berkley, 1969), p. 27.

century.[52] Tweak is not silent cargo, but rather displays a keen intellect that enables him to learn English rapidly, tell his own story, and challenge the prejudices of the white patriarch who considers himself an impartial judge yet initially fears that Tweak may be a barbaric animal.

Tweak's ultimate insistence upon returning to his home planet and preventing further dangerous contact between humans and his people, rather than educating the world about his role in delivering the antidote, can be read as an example of the message of exclusion ('A/aliens, go home or die') that Charles Ramírez Berg observes throughout science fiction films that identify extra-terrestrials as immigrants:[53] an ultimatum that also hangs over various marginalised road story travellers. It may also, however, be interpreted as a positive appropriation of a historical shift Bennet Schaber has observed within American and European road films' representation of 'the people' on the roadside and the nature of the travelling protagonist's interactions with them. Schaber argues that whereas pre-war road films describe an effort 'to bring the people across and out of the desert, to shepherd them across the Jordan into the fullness of their meaning/identity', as per the Book of Exodus, many post-war road films follow a tragic 'apocalyptic' mode that denies any promise of the people's salvation.[54] Whilst Dredd delivers Tweak from the wasteland, the serial does not treat the black male traveller as a figure who seeks freedom yet must be saved from his own poor decisions by a white 'shepherd': an aspect observed in *The Postman* in Chapter 2.

This refusal to let the white male outsider overrule marginalised persons' interests and dominate communal transformation is partly due to the serialised format. Mark Alvey notes a comparable restriction of the white male travellers' agency in the television series *Route 66* (1960-1964). As part of a 'semi-anthology' series, *Route 66*'s cross-country journey functions as a framing device that allows each episode to present a new localised conflict in which the travellers 'try to help, but ultimately have no real power, and thus no effect'.[55] The similar brevity of Dredd's encounters with the Cursed Earth's inhabitants operates to distinct effect. As Ireland notes, Dredd is 'a right-wing, authoritarian antihero, rather than the

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[52] Ireland, p. 525.
[53] Charles Ramírez Berg, 'Immigrants, Aliens, and Extraterrestrials: Science Fiction's Alien "Other" as (Among Other Things) New Hispanic Imagery', *CineAction*, 18 (1989), 3-17 (p. 8).
[54] Bennet Schaber, '"Hitler Can't Keep 'Em That Long": The Road, The People', in *The Road Movie Book*, ed. by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 17-44 (p. 39).
[55] Mark Alvey, 'Wanderlust and Wire Wheels: The Existentialist Search of *Route 66*', in *The Road Movie Book,* ed. by Cohan and Hark, pp. 143-64 (p. 147).

drop-out antiheroes of *Easy Rider*'.[56] Accordingly, Dredd's necessarily limited intervention within each community encountered on his journey does not produce the tragic expression of individual powerlessness common within road narratives about comparatively liberal antiheroes. Neither, however, is he strictly akin to Hell Tanner in Zelazny's *Damnation Alley*, who undertakes his mission of mercy not out of any sense of civic duty but in exchange for a pardon for previous crimes. Instead, the road story formally restricts Dredd's normally oppressive authoritarianism.

One integral feature distinguishes the Cursed Earth's communities, and Dredd's representation in turn, from the Mega-City civilians: their capacity for a state of independence that is facilitated but not controlled by the centralised authority that Dredd represents. That Dredd's appearances in each place on his route are necessarily fleeting and involve a refusal of the role of the Moses-like deliverer described by Schaber means that his interventions are limited. In one instalment the convoy enters a future Las Vegas presided over by the mafia, who have assumed the Judges' uniforms and insignia. Dredd discovers an underground anti-gambling movement that has been passively waiting, as its apocalyptic scripture dictates, for 'a man in black' on 'a steed […] of iron' to deliver the city.[57] Yet rather than supporting this apparent dependence upon an outsider, Dredd deposes the mafia boss with the movement's assistance and encourages the group to 'finish the job yourselves'.[58] Dredd, then, is only the catalyst for their liberation from corruption. Although the strip remains unwavering as to the correctness of his decision to invite certain people to take control of their own communities, that Dredd promotes self-governance tempers his oppressive totalitarian conduct elsewhere in the strip. It can therefore be argued that 'The Cursed Earth' presents a more even-handed image of white male authority by decentring the crutch offered by technology in discourses of armoured masculinity.

However, whilst 'The Cursed Earth' also follows the community-friendly lead of the 1977 film adaptation of *Damnation Alley* in centring upon a group of travellers rather than a single anti-heroic outsider, as per Zelazny's novella, the contrasts and connections drawn between Dredd, Spikes and three fellow male Judges reintroduce a conservative obsession with preserving the armoured male body's integrity. Indeed, although he grants Las Vegas's anti-gambling league the opportunity to reform their city, Dredd's original motivation for intervening is the

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[56] Ireland, pp. 513-14.
[57] Mills et al., *Judge Dredd 02*, p. 116.
[58] Mills et al., *Judge Dredd 02*, p. 120.

recovery of the Justice Department's regalia from its misappropriation by criminals. The anxieties over penetration and the spread or eruption of body fluids associated with the outbreak that motivates Dredd's journey lend this body-armour a particularly anxious aspect. The virus afflicting Mega-City Two's population causes its victims to regress to cannibals obsessed with sucking out others' 'juices'. Dredd narrowly escapes this danger when an infected pilot, quarantined inside a membranous, curiously prophylactic-like bubble, attacks him through the plastic in the serial's first instalment. The entire serial is thus premised upon an anxiety over bodily border control. However, rather than exclusively characterising bodily and vehicular armour as defensive reinforcements, the concluding instalments, in which a mechanical army left over from a battle between the previous US government and the Justice Department attempts to destroy Dredd, secure his corporeal and masculine integrity through the transferral of both this armour and the emasculating threat of its removal onto his travelling companions' bodies.

From buddy to decoy: The constraints of the iterative scheme

In later instalments of 'The Cursed Earth', the place of the various vehicles and uniforms within the travellers' relationships jar with the character trajectories often observed in same-sex 'buddy' journey narratives. Discussing 'the odd-couple movie', Micheline Klagsbrun Frank observes that the premise of a cross-country journey in which two sharply contrasting characters are stuck together in a car often catalyses the embryonic emergence of self-sacrificing brotherly feeling, if not the total dissolution of their original antagonism.[59] Certainly, Dredd and Spikes' relationship as cop and criminal progressively softens throughout the serial. While Spikes saves Dredd from several seemingly inescapable predicaments, Dredd ultimately respects Spikes' punk identity rather than attempting to reform him. Yet Spikes and the other Judges, Jack, Patton and Gradgrind, also suffer the risk of destruction and the potentially emasculating consequences of the loss of the armoured body's material reinforcements in a way that shields Dredd from those dangers.

The defence of Dredd's masculinity relies upon a strategy of displacement familiar from discourses of armoured masculinity and attempts to stabilise and

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[59] Micheline Klagsbrun Frank, 'Unchained: Perspectives on Change', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 18 (1990), 122-29 (p. 125).

normalise white heterosexual masculinity more generally. As Lynne Segal observes, the 'power of the dominant ideals of masculinity […] do[es] not derive from any intrinsic characteristic of individuals, but from the social meanings which accrue to these ideals from their supposed superiority to that which they are not'.[60] The patriarchal discourses that seek to cast white heterosexual masculinity and masculinist rule as natural tendencies rely upon a process of negation and denial whereby female, coloured and queer subjects are 'Othered', becoming a site for the displacement and disavowal of white patriarchy and masculinity's anxieties and contradictions. With the exception of the black-identified Tweak, Dredd's travelling companions are white males, yet they function narratively as inferior doubles or decoys through which the risk of the central male body's collapse is exorcised and its dominance is affirmed. Throughout *Judge Dredd*, the anonymity granted by Dredd's armour generates multiple stories of mistaken identity that pit him against robotic, undead and genetically engineered doppelgängers. One such episode unfolds at the same time as the events covered by *The Dead Man*. As Dredd departs for the wasteland, the comic indicates the presence of a personal essence that cannot be reduced to the character's paraphernalia or even his pre-determined genetic characteristics. When his badge is conferred upon another Judge cloned from the same bloodline in order to uphold Dredd's presence as 'a symbol to [notably, not *for*] the people',[61] the visually identical replacement's corruption by the evil influence of yet another doppelgänger, the Judda, necessitates the true Dredd's return.

At the same time as they treat bodily and vehicular armour as accessories that prove Dredd's unique power through their disposal, both *The Dead Man* and 'The Cursed Earth' celebrate the anonymity of the mythical identity this paraphernalia confers. The role of Dredd's travelling companions within these contradicting developments in the 1978 serial presents a striking variation of 'the gradual stripping of material effects' that Frank observes in buddy road comedies.[62] Whilst these films' characterisations are initially 'based on the splitting off of unwanted attributes that are then objectified in the partner', such behaviour gives way to the more socially advantaged partner's realisation that he needs to look inward and modify his 'self-concept' and attitude so that the pair can accomplish

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[60] Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, 3rd edn (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. xxxiv.
[61] John Wagner and John Ridgway, *The Dead Man* (Oxford: Rebellion, 2009), p. 86.
[62] Frank, p. 124.

their overarching goals.[63] If Dredd's interactions with Tweak require him to become more sensitive, the serial's later instalments defend him from the lethal consequences of any meaningful self-sacrifice and bolster his machismo by combining the 'stripping' and 'splitting off' described by Frank.

After Spikes is fatally injured by the mechanical army baying for Dredd's blood, the Judge uses his companion's corpse as a decoy, dressing it in another Judge's uniform and piloting it towards the army aboard the explosives-rigged Land-Raider. Dredd's armour thus becomes a (partly literal) vehicle through which he displaces the danger of his own corporeal dissolution. As Dredd disposes of the Land-Raider and bikes and later loses much of his uniform, however, the comic emphasises his vulnerability. Again using a travelling companion's death as a means of both realising and offsetting this emasculating threat, 'The Cursed Earth' notably presents it as much in terms of the exposure of the individual ego behind the armour as the body's destruction. In this regard, the serial significantly departs from the thematic role of technology that Jonathan Rayner has observed within *Mad Max* (George Miller, 1979). *Mad Max* 'illustrates a fear of a loss of identity that outstrips a fear of death', whether the automobile devastates the body, reducing Max's friend Goose to a 'blackened [yet, most horrifyingly, still alive] "thing"', or completes Max's transformation into a 'zombified' avenger as he begins his violent campaign in the V8 Interceptor.[64] Conversely, in a scene from 'The Cursed Earth' where the sole remaining Judge from Dredd's convoy, Judge Jack, deserts the group in the Killdozer and surrenders to the army out of fear, the renouncing of his helmet and badge is presented as a gesture that obliterates his masculine hardness as it reveals his identity. The softly organic and 'hairy' quality of McMahon's line work and the exaggerated grotesqueness of his renderings of human faces here recall the characterisation of 'the human being of old' that the *Freikorps'* 'man of steel' frantically seeks to 'dam in': a 'horribly disorganised jumble of flesh, hair, skin'.[65] Unlike Dredd's immobile shielded face, Jack's bodily organs seem to extrude even before he and his vehicle are blown to pieces, his eyes bulging and his mouth gaping in a hysterical scream. This image upsets the already tenuous balance to which the armoured male aspires as a body that 'erupts outward [in gunfire or the

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[63] Frank, p. 125.

[64] Jonathan Rayner, *Contemporary Australian Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 40.

[65] Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 2*, p. 160.

internal rush of blood and adrenaline], but […] remains compacted and contained'.[66]

Indeed, the distinction between Jack's emasculating exposure and the use of the loss of Dredd's vehicles and uniform as a means of both interrogating and frantically stabilising his hard-bodied identity is slight, underlining the contradictions of armoured masculinity. Whereas Chapters 3 and 4 observe that the treatment of adolescent and paternal masculinities is shaped by the creative refusal to imagine the male traveller's (re)integration back into society in the wholly road-based *Vic and Blood* comics (1987), *Y: The Last Man* (2002-2008) and *Sweet Tooth* (2009-2013), *Judge Dredd*'s iterative structure requires that each road serial restore Dredd to his usual jurisdiction. Whilst earlier stories present Dredd as a fully-formed (anti-)hero, both 'The Cursed Earth' and *The Dead Man* accordingly conclude with sequences that describe, in miniature, the narrative of 'the hero's "becoming-powerful"' and the associated 'physical and emotional trajectory towards achieving full occupation of the heroic action body' that Lisa Purse observes within contemporary action cinema.[67] 'The Cursed Earth' may seem to discard the machine-like qualities of armoured masculinity in this process by building towards an image of the traveller's triumphant *exposed* body. However, both this image and the true Dredd's return from the wasteland in *The Dead Man* do not so much mark the consolidation and perfection of an underlying 'true' self as its suppression.

In the final issue of 'The Cursed Earth', Dredd is separated from Tweak, his sole surviving companion. As in the action films discussed by Purse, the first few panels introduce 'a physical or psychological trauma' as a 'trigger' for the process of 'becoming'.[68] Dredd is shown struggling on foot with the antidote towards Mega-City Two, his uniform torn and his mind on the brink of collapse. In the sequence that follows, he is required to outpace an enemy that shares his machine-like qualities. As the remaining mechanical soldiers pursue Dredd and lead him to fire at his own leg in order to escape their grasp, a parallel forms between the crawling Dredd and the legless androids, compounded by two city guards' initial misrecognition of the former as 'somethin'' that only '*looks like … a man*'.[69] Yet Dredd's dialogue, his exposed flesh, and his deliberate destruction of the remaining

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[66] Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 2*, p. 192.
[67] Lisa Purse, *Contemporary Action Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 33.
[68] Purse, p. 33.
[69] Mills et al., *Judge Dredd 02*, p. 157 (my emphasis).

vehicles in preceding instalments also frame the sequence as a struggle between those human and mechanised qualities increasingly at war within the character himself: 'It's … who … dies … first! Man … or … machine!'.[70] Accordingly, despite the animalistic regression it outwardly threatens, the image of Dredd squatting on his haunches and knuckles like an ape on the cover of the corresponding issue of *2000AD* is presented as an affirmation of Dredd's individual identity through its juxtaposition with a speech balloon in which the words 'I am […] Judge Dredd!' are highlighted.[71]

However, the sequence in the strip itself is not one of unequivocal self-affirmation, but rather a demonstration of the ultimate suppression of an individual identity separable from the persona conferred by Dredd's armour. The final issue casts the wasteland itself as an adversary, as the mentally exhausted Dredd, visited by hallucinations of the foes he has encountered throughout his journey, declares that he has 'beaten all of you' and thus 'beaten the Cursed Earth'.[72] The disabling injury that Dredd must physically overcome to complete his voyage, though, is self-inflicted rather than something directly caused by the environment. Tellingly, the mechanical soldiers chasing Dredd vanish as quickly as his hallucinations. That Dredd deliberately destroys his vehicles, maims himself and triumphs over enemies that, mystifyingly, are not noticed at all by the city guards presents the serial's ostensible affirmation of his exceptional strength and the indication that he is 'special, even for a Judge' as a victory over the self, rather than over external obstacles.[73]

Contravening Ireland's interpretation of 'The Cursed Earth' as a crucial stage in Dredd's character development in which he is 'cleansed, reborn and transformed',[74] this masochistic quality invites comparison with the function of blackouts and disciplinary beatings within the proto-fascist military drills examined by Theweleit. Theweleit argues that the '"ego" of these [soldiers] cannot form from the inside out', but is instead 'forced upon them' as they are pushed to the point of collapse. He expresses this process thus: 'I feel pain, therefore I am. Where pain is, there "I" shall be'.[75] Theweleit notes how *Freikorps* rhetoric treated this pain as the

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[70] Mills et al., *Judge Dredd 02*, p. 157.
[71] Mills et al., *Judge Dredd 02*, p. 318.
[72] Mills et al., *Judge Dredd 02*, p. 156.
[73] Mills et al., *Judge Dredd 02*, p. 157.
[74] Ireland, p. 521.
[75] Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 2*, p. 164.

foundation for forming 'a new body' that,[76] far from being exclusively artificial, comprises a seamless synthesis of muscle, skin and metal, simultaneously 'all armour' and 'naked'.[77] The corporeal transformation that Dredd seemingly undergoes in the process of uncovering, or rather reasserting 'I', through the voluntary exposure of his body to pain, then, only serves to neutralise the conflict between man and machine by reiterating how firmly the armoured identity imposed upon him from birth defines his entire sense of being.

On the one hand, the road story presented in 'The Cursed Earth' represents a key stage in the *Judge Dredd* comic strip's individuation. As a serial that develops a post-apocalyptic setting with proven potential for further adventures, all clothed in the strip's increasingly distinctive tongue-in-cheek wit, it marks a threshold in the development of a comics magazine that was initially expected to live or die primarily by the level of continuing audience interest in science fiction cinema, rather than its own merits.[78] The strip's longevity and iterative formula, however, have also precluded the possibility of Dredd's own individuation beyond the bounds imposed by his armoured identity. Enacting a shift into a genre concerned with the mechanics of constructing one's sense of self, road serials like 'The Cursed Earth' and *The Dead Man* offer a major forum for exploring the character's experiences on the cusp of substantial emotional, psychological, political or moral crises and transformations. Indeed, *The Dead Man* presented the strongest opportunity thus far for Dredd's development of an independent self, since it removes its amnesiac protagonist entirely from the role of law-enforcer and places him within one of the wasteland's marginalised communities. In each instance, though, the iterative structure requires that these crises and transformations be abruptly reversed, often in extremely jarring fashion. Alongside the aforementioned use of Dredd's genetically identical replacement as a demonstration that armour, however powerfully symbolic, does not make the man, *The Dead Man*'s Dredd is preoccupied with rediscovering his institutional identity, something he can only accomplish by finding his uniform, motorcycle and badge, rather than through internalised reflection. Moreover, the introspective concerns that motivated his journey into the wasteland abruptly dissolve in the face of an altogether more clear-cut external conflict with evil supernatural forces in the subsequent story arc 'Necropolis' (1990). Even as they relocate Dredd to a place where his oppressive behaviour,

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[76] Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 2,* p. 169.
[77] Theweleit, *Male Fantasies, Vol. 2,* p. 192.
[78] Jarman and Acton, p. 15.

prejudices, moral and political doubts and machine-like qualities can be interrogated, 'The Cursed Earth' and *The Dead Man* exorcise the conflict between machine and man.

Conclusion

Introducing a tension between the external imposition of mythic personas, restrictive social duties and the cultivation and expression of an independent sense of self that will be explored further in subsequent chapters, this analysis has examined how the road story has been intermittently used in a long-running comic strip to highlight, partially dissect yet ultimately exorcise the ambivalent tension between man and machine considered an integral feature of the science fiction road story. Resisting a simple understanding of the automobile and the armoured male's machine-like qualities as elements that reinforce, empower and extend the body, the *Judge Dredd* story 'The Cursed Earth' instead emphasises the failure, destruction and divesture of armed vehicles and body armour. Throughout Judge Dredd's journey through the wasteland, these losses produce interruptions that offset his usual emotional detachment and oppressive behaviour and instead pave the way for the development of a more humane and sensitive protagonist who invites self-government within several communities. However, the chapter also showed that the character's evolution is precluded by the strip's overall iterative format: a restriction which leads the later instalments of both 'The Cursed Earth' and *The Dead Man* not simply to reinstate his armoured identity, but to do so in ways that imply its domination of his entire sense of being and that rely upon the destruction of allies. Each road story, then, is ultimately obliged to explore not the mechanisms by which an independent sense of self is constructed, but those that construct and reinforce an armoured male persona that demands the suppression of the individual ego. Continuing this discussion of the relationships between changing and destroyed vehicles and male identities, Chapter 2 considers how the 1990s post-apocalyptic blockbusters *Waterworld* and *The Postman* seek to present an outwardly more optimistic view of their white male travellers' capability for transformation in line with communal interests.

2
Crises of Social Adaptation in *Waterworld* and *The Postman*

Deemed 'a bald-faced exercise in cinematic self-deification' by the *New York Times*' Stephen Holden, *The Postman* (Kevin Costner, 1997) is one of two post-apocalyptic blockbusters starring Kevin Costner that were released during the 1990s to varying levels of critical and commercial scorn.[1] Its precursor, *Waterworld* (Kevin Reynolds, 1995), was similarly regarded by the *San Francisco Examiner*'s Barbara Shulgasser as 'a cautionary tale' not about global warming, but the consequences of 'Costner's limitless vanity'.[2] This narcissistic quality is borne out in remarkably explicit fashion by *The Postman*'s opening titles. Here, the unnamed protagonist (Costner) and his pack mule wander through a desert wasteland, to the accompaniment of a cacophony of recorded voices offering a brief confused exposition that hints at the causes of America's devastation and, significantly, emphasises the transport infrastructure's dissolution. Whilst these disembodied voices have no clear diegetic point of origin, a subsequent scene in an abandoned petrol station frames the white male traveller as the source from which all images and messages flow, as the protagonist imagines the sights and sounds of former vehicular activity and communication emanating from a dilapidated petrol station's mirrors and defunct television set.

In one regard, both this sequence and *Waterworld*'s opening, in which the self-sufficient Mariner's (Costner) masterful piloting of a custom-built trimaran draws his enemies' awe, simply appear to introduce these nomadic protagonists from the outset as self-reliant, self-made or, at the very least, intensely solipsistic men. Certainly, the Postman and the Mariner are distinctly different from Judge Dredd, discussed in Chapter 1 as an anonymous figure onto whom certain national and gendered myths are grafted through his vehicular and body armour. However, *The Postman* and *Waterworld*'s opening scenes also articulate an underlying anxiety over the white male subject's stability and social standing. The protagonist's hallucinations of an old world in *The Postman* introduce him as a man

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[1] Stephen Holden, '*The Postman* Film Review: Neither Snow, Nor Rain, Nor Descent to Anarchy…', *New York Times*, 24 December 1997 <http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9B02E5D7123EF937A15751C1A961958260> [accessed 9 December 2011] (para. 7 of 7).
[2] Barbara Shulgasser, '*Waterworld* Review', *San Francisco Examiner*, 28 July 1995 <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/e/a/1995/07/28/WEEKEND11191.dtl> [accessed 9 December 2011] (para. 2 of 11).

losing control both of his mind and his place in history. As explained below, the Mariner's escape from his piratical pursuers in *Waterworld*'s first action sequence reveals the volatility of vehicular and territorial control and, by extension, self-control. Portrayed by Costner, these characters would appear to embody numerous qualities of the hegemonic American ideal of masculinity identified by sociologist Erving Goffman: white, Northern, middle-class, heterosexual, and, by virtue of Costner's association with sports dramas like *Field of Dreams* (Phil Alden Robinson, 1989), athletic.[3] However, *Waterworld* and *The Postman* introduce Costner's characters as socially ostracised or apathetic strays who wander aimlessly on the margins of racially and ethnically diverse communities and later find their paths determined by the pivotal actions undertaken by resourceful women. Through these premises, the films speak to the anxieties of heterosexual white men who feel uncertain of their social place and, in the most reactionary instances, threatened by post-war transformations in the social rights, roles and status of women and black people. Rather than simplistically blaming disaster upon such transformations, though, *The Postman* in particular indicates white masculinity's need to adapt and condemns aggressive retaliation, its very first line indicating that the apocalypse directly resulted from a rash of racially motivated attacks by white men.

The paranoid belief that whiteness is losing its ideological power is certainly not exclusively a male concern. Nevertheless, it is telling that Richard Dyer is cautious to stress that his 1997 cultural study of whiteness as a racial category is not intended to consolidate further the centrality of white subjects by positioning them as a 'new victim group': the same concern surrounding contemporaneous work examining a 'crisis of masculinity' apparently stemming from the failure of post-war generations of men by their fathers, such as Susan Faludi's 1999 study *Stiffed*. Dyer emphasises that his study is not a statement of support for 'the white equivalent of "Iron John"',[4] a reference to the 1990 text central to the mythopoetic men's movement of the 1980s and early 1990s. In *Iron John*, Robert Bly exhorts men to undertake homosocial retreats in order to recover a wild masculine essence corrupted or denied by the social changes shaped by second-wave feminism. As acknowledged in the introductory chapter, post-apocalyptic fantasies ranging from *Panic in the Year Zero!* (Ray Milland, 1962) to the 1980s cycle of men's survivalist fiction and Matt Kindt's comic miniseries *Revolver* (2010) have offered uncritical

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[3] Erving Goffman, *Stigma* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963), p. 128.
[4] Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 10.

endorsements of such notions of a 're-masculinising' escape into the wilderness, and indeed insistently focus on white protagonists. Studies of whiteness and (predominantly white) masculinity, then, are closely intertwined in both their attendant risks and the ideological project of opening up to interrogation identities constructed as normative and natural and thus somehow exempt from discussions of gender and race.

Various scholars, including Martin Fradley, David Savran and David Greven, have observed that the mentality of perceived victimisation acknowledged by Dyer's work on whiteness and Faludi's study of contemporary American masculinities manifests itself within popular culture in a mixture of masochistic and narcissistic impulses. Discussing the image of white masculinity as under siege from other subjects' emergent voices, Fradley notes an obsession with 'the fall, abjection and subsequent rise of white masculinity through the metonym of the wounded male hero' especially commonplace within Hollywood action and adventure films of the 1990s.[5] This masochistic narrative trajectory simultaneously describes a drive towards '*hyperindividualism*'.[6] If American discourses of individualism picture the self-reliant individual heading into the wilderness to fulfil his independent manly destiny, the hyperindividualist fantasy concerns a solipsistic consolidation of white masculinity's ideological centrality, realised through 'anxiously re-cohering the world, quite literally, around *itself*'.[7]

Fradley's list of action films in which 'Average White Guys' are redeemed through the torment or destruction of their bodies emphasises apocalyptic disaster films like *Armageddon* (Michael Bay, 1998).[8] Perhaps because of their generally poor critical and commercial reception, *Waterworld* and *The Postman* are regularly overlooked in academic work discussing late 1990s apocalyptic action/adventure cinema. Instead, scholars like Stephen Keane have tended to focus on millennial apocalyptic science fiction disaster films.[9] Yet *Waterworld* and *The Postman* engage in an exceptionally vivid manner with the notion of white masculinity's feared relegation to the margins and the prospect of the white male traveller's social adaptation to a landscape of seemingly transformed racial and gender politics,

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[5] Martin Fradley, 'Maximus Melodramaticus: Masculinity, Masochism and White Male Paranoia in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema', in *Action and Adventure Cinema*, ed. by Yvonne Tasker (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 235-51 (p. 240).
[6] Fradley, p. 239 (Fradley's emphasis).
[7] Fradley, p. 238 (Fradley's emphasis).
[8] Fradley, p. 242.
[9] Stephen Keane, *Disaster Movies*, rev. edn (London: Wallflower, 2006), pp. 85-95.

mixed with an intensely hyperindividualist quality. Envisaging post-apocalyptic environments and protagonists poised visually and ideologically between a potentially progressive future and a past marked by the divisive legacy of an aggressive white patriarchy, these films use the journey as a space for engaging with the white male subject's relationship to a community that travels with or alongside him rather than focusing on survivalist themes. In this regard, they extrapolate upon the post-apocalyptic narrative form that Mick Broderick identifies throughout 1980s films, in which a socially estranged, usually male 'messianic hero-saviour annihilat[es] an oppressive tyranny, and liberat[es] an elect into a new reign of communal harmony'.[10] As indicated in the Introduction, Broderick's examples typically set the action within a fixed locality, strongly recalling numerous westerns in which a heroic outsider defends a small town from invasion and thus helps a pre-established pocket of civilisation to thrive. Indeed, *Steel Dawn*'s (Lance Hool, 1987) treatment of the relationship between a young boy and the Nomad (Patrick Swayze) directly echoes *Shane* (George Stevens, 1953). *Waterworld* and *The Postman*, however, engage more extensively throughout the narrative with the relationship between journeys and restored communications networks, respectively, and the roles and transformations white male travellers adopt in order to help forge what appear outwardly to be more egalitarian civilisations but which re-centre white male authority.

Waterworld in particular privileges the development of a sense of social responsibility aboard its central vehicle, the Mariner's elaborate custom trimaran, rather than through intermittent encounters with static enclaves of civilisation. Set within an oceanic wasteland where seemingly all landmasses have been submerged beneath a worldwide deluge caused by the melting of the polar ice caps, the narrative follows the quest undertaken by Costner's reluctant Mariner, an amphibious humanoid mutant, and two inhabitants of a devastated artificial atoll, orphan Enola (Tina Majorino) and her guardian Helen (Jeanne Tripplehorn). Helen saves the Mariner from death in exchange for passage to the rumoured 'Dryland', the Edenic island from which Enola was reputedly dispatched as a baby. Throughout the Mariner's and his female passengers' journey they are pursued by the Smokers, a predominantly male colony of pirates seeking to kidnap Enola (whose back is tattooed with a cryptic map) to satisfy their own, exploitative

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[10] Mick Broderick, 'Surviving Armageddon: Beyond the Imagination of Disaster', *Science-Fiction Studies*, 20 (1993), 362-82 (p. 375).

designs upon Dryland. *The Postman* follows another unnamed protagonist, who poses as a postal worker and concocts an elaborate story about a 'Restored United States' government and communications network in order to gain food and shelter from isolated communities. As the Postman's ruse gains momentum, he is required to take responsibility for the violent conflict it has generated between civilians and the Holnists, a white supremacist, fascistic army seeking to take full control of the devastated country.

Both films notably deal with themes of performative artifice and myth: the Mariner's capacity for sympathetic relationships comes into focus as his defensive performances of male humanness and misanthropic toughness are chipped away, whilst the Postman is characterised as an actor and a self-mythologising hero. In this regard, the films' elements of narcissism and masochism very explicitly tie into a contemporary trend. Across American cinema from 1989 through to the present, David Greven observes a new self-consciousness surrounding 'chiselled' masculinity's nature as performance. This has given rise to a '*split masculinity*' that treats manhood as 'both monolith *and* joke'. However, Greven is cautious not to equate self-consciousness with self-knowledge, for he claims that the latter remains obscured by 'the alternate techniques of ironic distance and violence'.[11] Kevin Costner's star persona seems to embody this split in remarkably condensed form. Yvonne Tasker has observed a historical shift within the performances, roles and personas of Hollywood action stars like Sylvester Stallone across the 1980s and early 1990s, using the action-comedy *Tango and Cash* (Andrey Konchalovskiy, 1989), which coincides with the start of the wider trend identified by Greven, as an example of a transition from sincere portrayals of hard-bodied masculinity to self-parody.[12] Meanwhile, Costner is regarded within discourses of reception as a star who consistently combines narcissistic and self-deprecating qualities. Reviewing *The Postman*, *Entertainment Weekly*'s Lisa Schwarzbaum remarks that Costner has long appeared to be simultaneously following two 'alternative career[s]'. One casts him as a star with an 'ageing-jock charm', playing off the 'welcome self-awareness' of *The Postman*'s script.[13] Filmed on the cusp of Costner's entrance into middle-age, *Waterworld* and *The Postman* announce the decline of his earlier athleticism,

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[11] David Greven, *Manhood in Hollywood: From Bush to Bush* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), p. 16 (Greven's emphasis).
[12] Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 89.
[13] Lisa Schwarzbaum, 'Movie Review: *The Postman*', *Entertainment Weekly*, 9 January 1998 <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,281477,00.html> [accessed 9 December 2011] (para. 4 of 4).

whether in the incongruity between Costner's muscular arms and his barely concealed 'midriff bulge' noted in Shulgasser's review of *Waterworld*,[14] or the star's active mockery of his increasing age in scenes that jokingly contrast the energy of the Postman's earnest young disciples with his own weariness. Schwarzbaum also describes Costner as 'one of [Hollywood's] oddest movie talents', prone to unbridled narcissistic eccentricity.[15]

Whilst discussions of transformative male masochism in American film by scholars like Fradley, Savran,[16] and Susan Jeffords have focused on the spectacle of redemptive bodily suffering,[17] the following discussion examines how *Waterworld* and *The Postman* articulate their travellers' anxieties and attempts to adapt to, and find a place within, the transformed landscape through the loss, rejection, substitution and recovery of certain vehicles. Although not all of these instances are presented as moments of spectacle, those that are provide useful opportunities for considering how action and spectacle have been deployed within these blockbuster examples of the apocalyptic road narrative. The following analysis identifies and investigates four distinct stages in the representation and role of the means of travel within the two films. These include the initial presentation of the white male traveller as a self-interested drifter, the revelation of concerns surrounding each protagonist's potential social and sexual obsolescence through the desecration of his original vehicle, the hero's progression beyond his dependence upon the vehicle, and his transition to a vertical axis of motion that describes his literal ascendance to a reclaimed state of patriarchal authority. Rather than arguing that they are strictly reactionary, the discussion considers how these transformations develop the protagonist's relationships and identifications with adversaries representative of a bigoted and self-destructive white masculinity and with female and African-American travellers whose desire to find or build a new future gives the nomad direction. The chapter will argue that through the protagonists' association with the latter groups and communal interests, *Waterworld* and *The Postman* use the road genre's preoccupation with marginalised and rebellious subjects to suggest a revision of white men's sense of self and their social roles, whilst reinforcing individualist and phallocentric agendas.

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[14] Shulgasser, para. 1 of 11.

[15] Schwarzbaum, para. 4 of 4.

[16] David Savran, *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism and Contemporary American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 147-48.

[17] Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), p. 52.

'No place in the new world': Obsolete vehicles and the sexual threat of unstable subjectivities

In contrast to the institutionally sanctioned nature of journeys into the post-nuclear wilderness within the *Judge Dredd* comics examined in Chapter 1, *Waterworld* and *The Postman* introduce their protagonists as self-interested drifters. These characters' identities, social attitudes and even their refusal of apparent sexual responsibilities are established through the representation of their vehicles and the travellers' relationships to them. The dynamics of identification developed within the two films' opening sequences serve to position a subsequent moment of crisis in which the vehicle is violated as a critical turning point in the characterisation of the Mariner and *The Postman*'s initially nameless (because role-less) protagonist. The initial portrayal of each character's vehicle, then, plays a crucial role in establishing internal conflicts and anticipating the means of their resolution.

     The Postman's generic affiliation with the adventure film in its combination of post-apocalyptic science fiction and the 'genre of rebellion' represented by the road narrative is reflected in its use of a character type familiar from the historical adventure genre.[18] The film invites comparisons with this genre through the aesthetic of historical and technological regression commonplace within post-apocalyptic science fiction, along with an analogical association with the Civil War discussed later. As Brian Taves has observed, the older adventure hero is often initially presented 'inauspiciously as a bumbler',[19] 'an outsider, living apart in rugged surroundings with a devil-may-care demeanour' and an overriding interest in his own welfare.[20] *The Postman* introduces its initially nameless protagonist as a clownish drifter accompanied by a mule which serves less as a functional vehicle than as part of his theatrical double-act and a pet with which he shares absurd projected dialogues. Whilst conveying the decline of technology, the replacement of the automobile with an animal emphasises a life driven by the short-term and strictly self-preservationist demands of the id. Indeed, the man who later becomes the Postman is introduced as a parasitic coward who reluctantly performs butchered renditions of William Shakespeare in order to gain food. Accordingly, the use of the mule as a pack-animal places more emphasis upon the transport of possessions than

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[18] Katie Mills, *The Road Story and the Rebel: Moving Through Film, Fiction, and Television* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2006), p. 2.

[19] Brian Taves, *The Romance of Adventure: The Genre of Historical Adventure Movies* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), p. 116.

[20] Taves, p. 113.

swift, purposeful travel; continually shown dragging the animal along by its reins, the protagonist lacks the impression of dignified control and the subjection of animal nature later communicated through horse-riding.

Particularly through his association with the mule, the protagonist is originally identified with the distinctly apocalyptic figure of 'the last man', as conceptualised by Friedrich Nietzsche and developed within Francis Fukuyama's critique of liberal democracy.[21] Uninvolved and disinterested in conflict, social transformation or ambitious ventures, the last man is defined by consumption and passivity and is described as Fukuyama as little more than an animal, 'content to sleep in the sun all day provided he is fed'.[22] As noted in the introductory chapter, Jonathan Bignell understands Fukuyama's account as expressive of an apocalyptic and misogynistic fear of the allegedly effeminising loss of 'the productive effectivity which conferred social value on men'.[23] Indeed, *The Postman* is book-ended by scenes of the protagonist wandering through the Utah desert in the shadow of a billboard advertising suntan lotion to women and picking through vending machines, and arriving at a dam, a sight that proclaims simultaneously the return of lush nature and the technological harnessing of its power. Yet introducing a discussion of *The Postman* in relation to this Nietzschean concept also anticipates an essential contradiction within the text's treatment of gender and race explored throughout this chapter. Fukuyama reads the twentieth century's last man as symptomatic of a democratic society where the aspiration to 'be like everyone else' in social, legal and material terms encourages complacency with regard to the realisation of the individual's full potential.[24] *The Postman*'s traveller progresses from 'just passing through' the hamlets looted by the fascistic Holnists (a socially disengaged mentality common in road narratives and discussed further in Chapter 4) to birthing a future civilisation formed and informed by the interests of women and black people. Thus, the film seems to follow a democratic project wrapped around the 'shift from cynicism to altruism' on the road that typifies the older adventure hero's characterisation.[25] However, it simultaneously seeks to re-assert a narcissistic image of leadership under a white patriarch as a natural state. This

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[21] This figure should be understood as separate from the common post-apocalyptic figure of 'the last man on Earth' considered in Chapter 3.

[22] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 311.

[23] Jonathan Bignell, *Postmodern Media Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 69.

[24] Fukuyama, p. 304.

[25] Taves, p. 113.

contradiction and its relationship to transformations in the vehicle and associated themes of performance will be examined throughout the following analysis.

Whilst *The Postman*'s journey describes its traveller's shift from a parasitic consumer to a self-mythologising man, *Waterworld* immediately establishes the Mariner as a figure who simultaneously manufactures a sense of place and self through his one-man trimaran. *Waterworld* would appear to distort the semantic accounts of the road 'genre' discussed in the Introduction most dramatically. Yet in imagining the loss of not only a pre-existing infrastructure but also *terra firma* altogether, the film engages extensively with the fantasies of self- and environmental reinvention to which Susan Sontag believes post-apocalyptic cinema speaks,[26] and which are invited by the characterisation of the liminal spaces travelled in road stories, such as the highway and the desert, as 'a *tabula rasa*, the last true frontier'.[27] Indeed, *Waterworld*'s treatment of the maritime voyage diverges substantially from the traditional historical perception of the sea as a space 'to be endured […] in the quest for distant coasts' and trade, rather than as a zone that merits exploration.[28] This attitude bears comparison with the distinction observed within the Introduction between texts that treat the road journey as a means to an end and the road narrative's particular investment in the experience of travel itself. Whilst the external conflict between the Mariner, Helen and Enola and the Smokers manifests in a race to find Dryland, *Waterworld*'s central journey is actually dominated by scenes of *in*action. In these integral episodes, the Mariner espouses the value of passively drifting and listening to 'the sound of the world', and internal conflicts are negotiated through the development of a caring bond with Enola that actually privileges the liminal space of the journey above the anticipation of reaching their destination.

Both the antisocial barriers that the Mariner originally erects aboard his trimaran and their re-negotiation and relaxation within later scenes arise from the open sea's trackless, ever-changing nature and its superficial lack of points of orientation. This distinguishes *Waterworld*'s setting from many post-apocalyptic images of literal roads, where stopovers at disused petrol stations like the one observed in *The Postman* suggest continued conformation to an existing infrastructure. Depicting a world in which virtually all natural landmasses and thus any definite notion of nationhood have been submerged, *Waterworld* vividly

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[26] Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), p. 215.
[27] Manohla Dargis, 'Roads to Freedom', *Sight & Sound*, 1.3 (1991), 14-18 (p. 16).
[28] John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion, 2011), p. 16.

realises the broader literary and hymnological perceptions of the sea as 'a space not a place' noted by John Mack. In Mack's usage, 'place' refers to a concrete, lived-in site imbued with a specific identity, as distinct from the more abstract concept of 'space'.[29] In its portrayal of an intensely territorial nomadic masculinity, *Waterworld* presents the Mariner's initial impulse to demarcate his own sense of place upon the trimaran as both a freedom and an act of anxious resistance stimulated by the seascape's apparent lack of stable geographical differentiation.

Movements and actions *within* the trimaran, quite aside from its traversal of the seascape, play an integral role in communicating the Mariner's attempted creation of a self-sustaining and stable territory and masculine self. Defying John Donne's adage 'No man is an island', *Waterworld*'s opening sequence depicts the self-reliant lifestyle that the Mariner, a humanoid mutant whose gills and webbed digits signal his unique adaption to these post-apocalyptic conditions, has cultivated aboard his trimaran. In a grotesque display of self-sufficiency and possessiveness, he is first shown converting his urine into potable water, a mouthful of which he spits onto a potted lime tree on deck in a gesture that is both nurturing and reminiscent of animals' use of urination to mark their territory. Not merely a possession, however, the trimaran is also presented as an extension of the Mariner's body, most obviously in the anthropomorphic appearance of the Heath Robinson-like contraption that purifies his urine, a kind of altered male renal system composed of a series of tubes and kidney-shaped distillation flasks and ending in a protruding tap. This relationship is also expressed kinetically. David Laderman has argued that 'special close-ups of the car's machinery "working" to race down the road' represent a common means of establishing the automobile as a 'prosthetic limb or "buddy" for the driver' within road cinema.[30] In road-based action films, however, tensions can form between such close-ups and the presentation of the action body. For example, the penetrative views of engines thundering into life in the street-racing action film *Fast & Furious* (Justin Lin, 2009) appear curiously insubstantial and disconnected from external views of each car and the driver's actions given the heavy use of abstracted computer-generated imagery. The same film franchise also consistently struggles to overcome the essentially sedentary nature of driving in order to satisfy the generic imperative of displaying the action body, evident in the thrusting, leaping and twisting performed by drivers' bodies in

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[29] Mack, p. 16.

[30] David Laderman, *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), p. 18.

ever-more audacious stunts. Conversely, *Waterworld*'s trimaran requires and visually amplifies its operator's initially near-constant state of activity, tilting and turning in response to the Mariner's leaps and swings between its outriggers and the forceful blows that set its mechanisms in motion. Along within frequent tracking shots that trace in close-up the exposed circuits of levers, pedals and pulleys powered by intense human labour and the waves and wind rather than fuel, these images and actions convey a symbiotic bond between vehicle and operator. The trimaran itself thus vividly dramatises self-reliance and the construction and cultivation of an environment in the individual's own image.

The sea simultaneously feeds and threatens this on-going process of territorial and subjective consolidation. Whilst the flow of energy around the craft initially appears seamless, the chase that follows actually describes the volatility of the boundaries the Mariner attempts to uphold. The artefacts that the Mariner retrieves from the submerged ruins of the forgotten old world during his unseen dive in this opening scene provide practical tools and objects of trade, usually of greater exchange value than use value. The Mariner thus exemplifies Michael S. Kimmel's definition of 'the Self-Made Man' as an image of American manhood defined by 'geographic and social mobility' and wealth,[31] for the fortune he gains from the artefacts affords him great power within the atolls' barter-based economy. In a more literal manner, however, the Mariner is also similarly a 'man on the go […] desperate to achieve a solid grounding for a masculine identity' that is continuously at risk of erosion,[32] here less from market forces than from the same environment that sustains his wealth. His absence underwater enables another drifter to trespass upon and rob his craft. The following chase, in which the Mariner both pursues the thief and is pursued by Smokers, accordingly characterises him as an exceptionally literal incarnation of Julia Kristeva's 'deject', a male-identified subject who lives by a continuous process of 'abjection':[33] the attempt to produce and maintain the ego's integrity by expelling anything, external or internal, that 'disturbs identity, system, order'.[34] Since the 'fluid confines' surrounding the deject 'constantly question his solidity', this 'stray' subject obsessively relocates in order

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[31] Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, 2nd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 13.
[32] Kimmel, p. 13.
[33] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 8.
[34] Kristeva, p. 4.

to grant himself the illusion of separation from threatening elements.[35] Similarly, the Mariner's flight announces not only his physical mastery over the environment and the trimaran's unique strengths but also, following the threat of intrusion, a desperate effort to stabilise his territory and, by extension, the self defined by and through it. This desire for boundary control is pronounced by the camera's taut focus upon his craft and bodily exertions rather than the boundless water the Mariner traverses. The apparently self-sustaining lifestyle aboard the trimaran is thus configured in specifically gendered terms as ultimately unsustainable.

The subsequent violation of the first vehicle used by each traveller plays an integral role in outwardly differentiating between the protagonists and their antagonistic doubles. In one of few critical analyses of *Waterworld*, Patrizia A. Muscogiuri has argued that Enola embodies a positive incarnation of the original, female/mother-identified Enola Gay who bears not nuclear annihilation but the promise of a new, recuperative 'feminine' world on Dryland,[36] a lush environment resembling a 'miniature reign of Gaia'.[37] Meanwhile, the Smokers aboard the wreckage of the *Exxon Valdez* represent an obsolete, destructive 'male-dominated world'.[38] However, this strictly binary model overlooks the image of masculinity and the ambiguities introduced by the Mariner, a figure Muscogiuri discusses very little. The aforementioned characterisations developed through the Mariner and the Postman's initial relationships with their vehicles parallel aspects of both films' villains. Like the Mariner, *Waterworld*'s Smokers have built their colony on volatile foundations. The Smokers' dependence upon jet skis, planes and ships powered by dwindling oil supplies and their chain-smoking habits atop the tanker characterise them as an unsustainable and suicidal society. In what would appear an affirmation of Muscogiuri's interpretation, the Mariner and the Smokers are also shown to objectify women and girls. The Smokers' verbal and physical abuse of Enola echoes the Mariner's initial misogynistic behaviour, culminating in a particularly disturbing scene where he nearly prostitutes Helen in exchange for some useless papers. Similarly, like the protagonist of *The Postman*, Holnist general Bethlehem (Will Patton) lives off isolated communities by taking a share of their food and men to sustain the Holnists' ranks. Previously a salesman, Bethlehem is also broadly

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[35] Kristeva, p. 8.

[36] Patrizia A. Muscogiuri, 'Cinematographic Seas: Metaphors of Crossing and Shipwreck on the Big Screen (1990-2001)', in *Fictions of the Sea: Critical Perspectives on the Ocean in British Literature and Culture*, ed. by Bernhard Klein (Aldershot: Aldgate, 2002), pp. 203-20 (p. 207).

[37] Muscogiuri, p. 219.

[38] Muscogiuri, p. 207.

characterised as a caricature of grotesque vanity who celebrates the apocalyptic disaster as an event that has allowed him to reinvent himself as a military leader.

Subsequent vehicular transformations simultaneously affirm and begin to exorcise these parallels. Rather than imposing the binary gender distinctions observed by Muscogiuri, both *Waterworld* and *The Postman* seek to distinguish two incarnations of white masculinity. They envisage a new frontier where the white hero struggles with an internal evil or savagery externally embodied not by natives of another race as per the standard frontier myth as described by Richard Slotkin,[39] but by an adversary representing the destructive qualities of an imperialistic white patriarchal tradition. Portrayed by Dennis Hopper, the Smokers' autocratic leader, the Deacon, seeks the (home)land not in the dismayed hopes of finding some unifying national essence, as in *Easy Rider*'s (Hopper, 1969) fractured America, but in order to destroy it in the name of colonial and industrial 'progress' and a continuation of the same attempt to control nature that presumably contributed to the apocalyptic flood. Bethlehem and his Holnists are defined by their secession from any notion of a recovered United States and their fascistic system of dictatorship, militarism and obsession with white racial purity. Though a masculinist colony, their insistence upon repeatedly watching *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965), apparently ignorant of its anti-Nazism, characterises them as effete 'babies', and indicates an association with Europe, the exhausted and corrupt 'old world' of the frontier myth.[40]

Waterworld's and *The Postman*'s central journeys, meanwhile, describe their protagonists' reinvention as benign family men who usher in a new, supposedly egalitarian civilisation whilst remaining mobile within the wilderness. Couched in the common post-apocalyptic aesthetic of historical and technological regression, the ideological project informing the division between the protagonists and antagonists appears akin to Jean Baudrillard's thesis regarding the millennial disintegration of history into 'a catastrophic process of recurrence' and 'reversal'. Here, Baudrillard observes a contemporary impulse 'to remake a clean history, to whitewash all the abominations' in the hopes of producing 'a universally positive balance sheet (the reign of human rights over the whole planet, democracy everywhere, […] and, if possible, the obliteration of all "negative" events from our

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[39] Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), p. 14.
[40] Slotkin, p. 11.

memories)'.[41] *Waterworld*'s and *The Postman*'s lack of concern with the causes of the original catastrophes already contributes to the last of these transformations. Both films, however, also bear some comparison with Eric Lichtenfeld's assertion that 'regeneration is not an act of rewriting the past' but of 'retaining' it in post-apocalyptic action films of the 1980s.[42] Although the subsequent discussion will consider the sympathetic relationships and even the identifications *Waterworld* and *The Postman* develop between their travellers and socially disenfranchised parties and their interests through shifting treatments of travel, both these associations and the ultimate displacement of the aggressive, divisive and oppressive legacy of white patriarchy onto the Smokers and the Holnists will also be discussed as a strategy by which the films aim to differentiate their heroes from the past whilst asserting white patriarchy's inevitability and naturalness.

Significantly, in the role they assign to vehicular transformations *Waterworld* and *The Postman* develop the division between negative and redeemed images of white masculinity through sexual terms. The films therefore diverge markedly from the monomyth of the American superhero described by John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, first discussed in Chapter 1. Though similarly characterised as anonymous outsiders presented with 'a redemptive task' by imperilled communities, the Mariner and the Postman do not undertake the same renunciation of 'sexual fulfilment for the duration of the mission' that Lawrence and Jewett identify as a key aspect of the American superhero.[43] Instead, *Waterworld* and *The Postman* anxiously seek to differentiate images of white masculinity on the specific basis of an abiding anxiety concerning male impotence, infertility and castration that is negotiated primarily through transformations in the vehicle.

The conflation of ideological conflict with sexual conflict is not unusual within post-apocalyptic film. Whilst lengthy narratives like the television series *Survivors* (1975-1977) and Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore and Charlie Adlard's comic *The Walking Dead* (2003-) explore the technical, social and ethical challenges involved in societal recovery, several post-apocalyptic films have suggested the shape and viability of a 'new' future through the formation of one or

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[41] Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End*, trans. by Chris Turner (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 11-12.

[42] Eric Lichtenfeld, *Action Speaks Louder: Violence, Spectacle, and the American Action Movie* (Westport, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), p. 156.

[43] John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), p. 47.

more fertile, heterosexual couplings, usually as part of a contest between two men. Several films that follow the '"New Adam and New Eve" theme' identified by Peter C. Hall and Richard D. Erlich, in which the couple figuratively and literally fertilises a barren wasteland,[44] afford this struggle a distinct ideological bent wherein the relationship formed implicitly dictates the political course of the new world. For instance, *Five* (Arch Oboler, 1951) dramatises the competition for dominance between the personal, political and racial legacies of a fascistic and destructive European white villain, poisoned by the radioactive metropolis in a post-war refashioning of the frontier myth's 'scenario of [Transatlantic] separation',[45] and the constructive and communally-minded all-American white hero. The victor is last shown recovering a new life of self-sufficiency in the countryside with the white heroine who, having renounced her past familial relationships, is reduced to a blank slate for literally birthing his ideological legacy.

In *Waterworld* and *The Postman*, sexual potency appears to have shifted from its earlier status within post-apocalyptic film as merely the inferred means of perpetuating a certain worldview to an area of considerable anxiety in its own right. *Waterworld*'s Deacon and *The Postman*'s Bethlehem are insistently characterised as castrated or impotent. Bethlehem states, 'I'm going to be the father of a new nation. And do you know why it will be me? Because I can', yet it subsequently emerges that he *can't*: after a period of captivity under the Holnists, heroine Abby (Olivia Williams) tells the Postman that Bethlehem's attempts to rape her failed because he suffers from erectile dysfunction. Moreover, Bethlehem appears to have displaced this anxiety onto another, emasculated body, a man whose tongue and genitals Bethlehem cut off when he challenged the general for leadership. That the castrated man ultimately kills Bethlehem presents the general as a narcissistic individual destroyed by his own sexual weakness, unable to meet the reproductive demands post-apocalyptic science fiction often imposes upon masculinity. A similar sexual defectiveness is signified by the Deacon's loss of his eye during the Smokers' attack on the atoll in *Waterworld*. A subsequent scene punctuated by grotesque low-angle shots that emphasise the Deacon's oversized codpiece as he is fitted with a poorly painted glass eye, a ridiculous attempt to conceal a lack, recalls Sigmund Freud's interpretation of images and neuroses concerning blindness as 'a substitute

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[44] Peter C. Hall and Richard D. Erlich, 'Beyond Topeka and Thunderdome: Variations on the Comic-Romance Pattern in Recent SF Film', *Science-Fiction Studies*, 14 (1987), 316-325 (p. 317).
[45] Slotkin, p. 12.

for the fear of castration', in accordance with the myth of Oedipus.[46] The tension of earlier post-apocalyptic films imagining a contest between ideologies is defused somewhat by the assurance that the destructive male order has no reproductive future; indeed, the Holnists' implied disbandment after Bethlehem's death in *The Postman* simplistically suggests that their politics perish along with this impotent figurehead. Rather, the fundamental anxiety that drives both films' treatment of male sexuality concerns the ability of white masculinity to adapt to a changing social landscape in accordance with the interests of those travelling rebels and outsiders who usually form the focus of road stories whilst retaining power.

The protagonists' apparent separation from their adversaries begins with scenes in which the Mariner and the Postman are captured and watch passively as the trimaran and the mule are violated in some manner. The Mariner is incarcerated by the atoll community he visits in search of trade following the discovery of his mutant features, whilst the Postman is kidnapped by Bethlehem and the Holnists as he tries to leave a hamlet unseen and is taken to their camp as a new recruit. As discussed below, both scenes of violation are presented as a consequence of the traveller's refusal to perform the primary narrative function of the post-apocalyptic drifter hero observed by Broderick throughout 1980s examples: the salvation, mobilisation or, most significantly here, fertilisation of an isolated community 'in danger of collapse through [its] own inertia'.[47]

The relationship between traveller and vehicle anticipated by the bodily and subjective identification constructed between them, and developed within these pivotal scenes of vehicular damage, carries conspicuously gendered and sexual connotations as a result of the masochistic dynamic they resemble. Jeffords has argued that scenes of bodily suffering and self-healing commonplace within 1980s Hollywood action cinema provide affirmative tests of the male hero's superhuman resilience and strength.[48] Conversely, the positioning of *Waterworld* and *The Postman*'s protagonists as passive caged spectators whilst the trimaran is looted and the mule is beaten, slaughtered and eaten recalls the third phase in the development of 'feminine masochism' described within Freud's 1919 paper 'A Child is Being Beaten'. This developmental process shifts from memories or fantasies of one's father beating a childhood rival for his affections and the experience of being beaten oneself (perceived as both a punishment for incestuous desire and a proof of the

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[46] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Oenguin, 2003), p. 139.
[47] Broderick, p. 377.
[48] Jeffords, p. 52.

father's love) to a third scenario, formulated thus by Kaja Silverman: 'Some boys are being beaten. (I am probably looking on)'.[49] Here, as Freud explains, a vicarious pleasure is taken in a violent 'event which takes the place of a sexual act'. When a male subject engages in masochistic behaviours, Freud argues that he is accordingly feminised and repositioned as passive.[50] As Silverman notes, such a dynamic unsettles voyeurism's usual associations with 'masculinity, aggression, and sadism' throughout Western culture, qualities which are instead identified with the 'punishing father-surrogate' who beats the anonymous boys. By contrast, the 'onlooker is more mastered than mastering […] less the site of a controlling gaze than a vantage point from which to identify with the group of boys'.[51] Whilst aspects of desire for the aggressor and incest are elided within the comparable scenes in *Waterworld* and *The Postman*, save perhaps for each traveller's complicity in perpetuating the stagnation of communities increasingly crippled by endogamy, identification with the violated vehicle and its pleasurable or beneficial qualities shape the cautionary and affirmative narrative function of these scenes concerning the white male subject's sexuality.

The similar positioning of *Waterworld* and *The Postman*'s male travellers as powerless, implicitly feminised or emasculated witnesses is compounded by certain aspects of each vehicle and their relationship to it that correspond to the aforementioned fear of the infertile or impotent male body. The Mariner is incarcerated and his body is repositioned as abject as a result of the atoll community's doubt regarding his sexual credentials. Intent on just passing through, he refuses the increasingly inbred and impoverished community's request to impregnate a Southeast Asian couple's daughter. This raises suspicion among the elders because 'no man stays out that long and turns down a woman', and in attempting to detain him and interrogate him as a possible Smoker spy they discover that he is a mutant. In a text that mystifyingly presents the racially diverse population of the atoll as increasingly inbred yet raises no such concerns about the tiny 'elect' of exclusively white settlers who are finally left on Dryland, a conservative taboo about interracial sexuality is abruptly turned back on the white body. The Mariner is caged so that the community may later drown him in a pit of

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[49] Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 201.
[50] Sigmund Freud, '"A Child is Being Beaten": A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversions', in Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, vol. 17 (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 175-204 (p. 199).
[51] Silverman, pp. 204-5.

putrid 'fertiliser', an ultimately unsuccessful act intended to dissolve a body that disturbs the ontological boundaries between fish and man. This sequence casts the Mariner's previous lifestyle upon his craft as self-destructive precisely because it involves a denial of social engagement, whether with humans or other mutants, and thus sexuality. Immediately after his trimaran is plundered, the Mariner is interrogated about the unconfirmed existence of other '*icthyus sapiens*' by the atoll's eccentric inventor Gregor (Michael Jeter). Gregor's irritated insistence that there will eventually be others despite the Mariner's belief that he has 'no kind' presents an implicit reminder of a reproductive responsibility to which, tellingly, the nomad refuses to answer. The juxtaposition of this conversation with the vehicle's violation and the community's prejudices accordingly presents a condemnation of those subjects, both static and mobile, who seek to enforce exclusionary boundaries and define themselves through abjection. Similarly, the connection *The Postman*'s protagonist draws between his animal and the lower body as he jokingly lists 'things I like about my ass' during their initial travels on the road extends beyond this throwaway pun. Following its slaughter, the mule is dismissed thus by one Holnist: 'Sterile offspring of horse and donkey. […] There's no room in the new world for a bastard like that'. Once again, the vehicle's violation becomes a reflection upon the traveller's socially unproductive, self-interested and isolationist lifestyle, indicating its devastating consequences, albeit in strictly individual rather than societal terms in *The Postman*.

The very nature and pleasure of these masochistic dynamics is, of course, narcissistic: the traveller is subject to the sight of an object synonymous with his own body being invaded or destroyed. In particular, the displacement of violence defends the body of the Postman, though repeatedly beaten unconscious by the Holnists, from annihilation. Whilst the Deacon and Bethlehem are swiftly revealed to be obsolete physically as well as ideologically, the aforementioned scenes simultaneously warn of the destructive consequences of not assuming a productive social role and, partly by the same token, dispel any anxiety that the heroic white male body may struggle to find a place and future within the new world. Instead, these predicaments and the means the protagonists find of escaping them prompt the development of those social roles and intentions that enable the traveller to adapt to post-apocalyptic social circumstances.

Prefiguring a recent development in post-apocalyptic road narratives discussed in Chapter 4, subsequent shifts in vehicles indicate that the recovery of a

viable place for white masculinity in the 'new' future is to be achieved less through communal interactions than the formation of (non-incestuous) familial relationships. In *The Postman*, the recognition of family values is signalled by encounters with automobiles. This connection is first established in the early scene at a petrol station, where the Postman glances confusedly between his mule, the symbol of sterility, and a window reflecting a scene of a large family refuelling their car (evidently a hallucination and therefore arguably a barely conscious acknowledgement of a procreative social imperative). However, the fact that family bliss is located within a car rather than a house guards against any suggestion that the nomad settles down. In addition to emphasising the vulnerability of static communities, *The Postman* explicitly identifies a later moment of crisis, where the protagonist tries to disband the postal service and take his pregnant love interest Abby to the rumoured coastal idyll St. Rose, as a point at which he fails to be 'a man'. Accordingly, his dedication to his cross-country job is ultimately demonstrated by the fact that he never again looks for this destination. Conversely, as Sarah S. Jain observes, the car has historically been marketed and culturally characterised as a space that balances domestic paternity with an 'assertion of masculinity through technology' that enables 'escape from the family', thus balancing familial security with the compulsion to travel.[52] Similarly, though not a family vehicle, the postal van in which *The Postman*'s protagonist takes refuge after escaping the Holnists prompts him to assume both a new life on the road and an increased sympathy for family ties. After burning and sneering at the content of the van's undelivered letters, he is touched by the intimate correspondence between a little boy and his grandfather, and consequently adopts the trappings of the postman not simply as a means of gaining warmth but as a new identity and a social and ultimately moral duty. Whilst the later analysis of *The Postman* focuses on the racial aspects that inform the Postman's apparent adaptation to the interests of a fledgling civilisation, the heterosexual family and the male potency that ensures it remain central. *Waterworld* more persistently emphasises the pseudo-familial relations and greater respect for female needs and desires that develop between the Mariner and Helen and Enola after the women rescue him from his cage and the Smokers' assault on the atoll. The following section accordingly examines the extent to which further transformations in the nomads' vehicles and trajectories

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[52] Sarah S. Jain, 'Violent Submission: Gendered Automobility', *Cultural Critique*, 61 (2005), 186-214 (pp. 195-96).

build a connection between the protagonist and the interests and actions of socially disenfranchised persons that announces white masculinity's capacity for adaptation.

Renegotiated boundaries and the promise of unstable subjectivities in *Waterworld*

As established in the introduction to this chapter, the narratives specifically constructed around the vehicle and the means of movement itself in both *Waterworld* and *The Postman* feature two more pivotal stages: the intentional sacrifice of a vehicle and the transition from a horizontal trajectory to a vertical axis of movement. This discussion begins with a study of an often critically neglected extended passage in *Waterworld* where the Mariner ostensibly yields his previously established spatial and subjective boundaries to the needs and desires of Helen and Enola, before considering the narrative and ideological function of a sequence of vertical movement in *The Postman*.

It is crucial to consider how these sequences position white male travellers relative to the actions, desires and motivations of the female voyagers in *Waterworld* and the Postman's eager disciple, the African-American youth Ford (Larenz Tate), in *The Postman*. Chapter 1's discussion of 'The Cursed Earth' considered how certain travelling companions serve as a means of displacing the armoured hero's anxieties. Discussing several road films of the 1980s, Katie Mills also notes the common characterisation of female characters as helpmeets introduced to aid 'a young man [in] explor[ing] his rebellions' yet denied transformation or liberation themselves.[53] In these post-apocalyptic films, however, Helen and Ford travel not simply out of personal curiosity or to support a male traveller, but in order to discover or harness the means of positive social change. Helen's insistence upon finding Dryland stems from her belief in a human evolutionary imperative: 'we weren't meant for the sea. Got hands and feet. We're supposed to walk'. Along with Gregor, she attempts to persuade the survivors of the besieged atoll of Dryland's existence and their collective need to find it, albeit unsuccessfully due to their continued prejudices. Ford's strong belief in the promise of unity and purpose he perceives in the Postman's stories of a restored US government is tied in part to the value he places on the road within his own adolescent search for identity. He explains that he renamed himself 'Ford Lincoln

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[53] Mills, p. 175.

Mercury' because he wishes to drive cars, and subsequently sets this aspiration aside in favour of becoming the first mail carrier inspired by the Postman's dubious example. During the Postman's absence as he recovers from a bullet wound, Ford actually makes the fictional postal network a reality, recruiting others to the cause and using it both as a connective force and a mode of resistance against the oppressive Holnists. Whilst the Mariner and the Postman's primary reasons for travelling are short-term, self-centred concerns like securing supplies, then, Helen and Ford are driven by the long-term goal of forming a new future.

As indicated previously, this future is realised through a revisiting and apparent revision of pasts, both historical and biological, the latter pointing to a return to evolutionary beginnings that marks the most extreme example of the millennial 'mania for origins' discussed by Baudrillard.[54] In the two post-apocalyptic films addressed here, this development is both enabled and undercut by those shifts in the protagonist's vehicle or mobility that ostensibly represent the development of a social conscience. The Mariner's changing attitudes towards territorial boundaries throughout *Waterworld*'s voyage re-appropriate post-apocalyptic science fiction's common characterisation of the sea and coast as sites of regression and social isolation. As most vividly illustrated in novels like H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* (1962) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Galápagos* (1985), the sea typically invites a de-evolutionary transition from 'man's active life as an air-breather to amniotic unconsciousness and oblivion'.[55] *Waterworld*, meanwhile, uses the return to an 'amniotic' state, conveyed as much through Helen and Enola's interactions with the Mariner in the water as through the sea itself, to describe the formation of a sense of community through a shared embrace of marginalised experience and subjectivities, albeit one that is still ultimately exclusionary.

The Mariner's initial interactions with his passengers remain indicative of his similarities with Kristeva's deject. When Enola steals some crayons from the cabin and draws on the trimaran's mast, the Mariner aggressively re-asserts the boundaries of his property, his need for continuous if aimless movement, and thus his sense of self: 'This is mine! You don't touch anything of mine! […] You take up space and you slow me down'. This territoriality extends to his exploitation of the sea's association with the abject as threatening fluidity. As Mack notes, in Western

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[54] Baudrillard, p. 12.
[55] W. Warren Wagar, *Terminal Visions: The Literature of Last Things* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 188.

maritime tradition transoceanic travel has been culturally celebrated as a test of masculine bravery, endurance and ingenuity,[56] in which a woman's presence becomes synonymous with the risk of catastrophe and sexual transgression at sea.[57] Indeed, the Mariner's decisions to throw Enola overboard, threaten to abandon her and Helen in hostile waters, and cut off their long hair are presented as abjections of femininity. These attacks specifically retaliate against Enola's incessant girlish chatter (which he angrily compares to 'a storm', in keeping with gendered maritime superstition) and Helen's hijacking of the trimaran's harpoon gun in one of several efforts to protect Enola that the Mariner perceives as maternal actions.

In focusing upon the renegotiation of territorial and vehicular boundaries throughout the journey and, indeed, privileging the voyage above its resolution in reading *Waterworld* as an apocalyptic road narrative, points of ambiguity overlooked in previous readings can be observed. Jerome F. Shapiro has argued that the film's misogynistic qualities intensify after the Mariner cuts off Helen and Enola's hair, suggesting that the act renders them 'passive, even silent' in comparison with earlier moments of agency. He then characterises the voyage as a period of learning and 'crisis' that Helen and Enola must 'endure' because it 'eventually prepares them for their future'.[58] Whilst the Mariner's subsequent attempt to prostitute Helen marks the culmination of his misogynistic behaviour, however, he is not strictly presented as either an obstacle or an aid to reaching a destination or external goal. If Muscogiuri's analysis of *Waterworld* focuses on the formation of binary divisions between land and sea and femininity and masculinity on Dryland, the journey itself vividly exemplifies the connection she draws between the film's chaotic seascape and the dissolution of the divisive 'logocentric categories' of the old world that the atoll community perpetuate in ostracising the Mariner, Enola and later Helen.[59]

The basic problem underpinning Muscogiuri and Shapiro's readings is their focus upon the spiritual and historical allusions surrounding Enola's name and origins rather than what the journey reveals about this child character's desires and experience, and their impact upon the Mariner's spatial interactions with her and Helen.[60] This aspect is considered further in Chapter 4's study of tensions between

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[56] Mack, p. 16.

[57] Mack, p. 162.

[58] Jerome F. Shapiro, *Atomic Bomb Cinema: The Apocalyptic Imagination on Film* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 237.

[59] Muscogiuri, p. 206.

[60] Muscogiuri, p. 207; Shapiro, pp. 237-39.

travelling fathers and children in recent apocalyptic road narratives, yet it is also crucial when examining *Waterworld*'s treatment of adult masculinity. As Enola hums music-box tunes and draws land-dwelling flora and fauna that she does not consciously remember, her frequent situation in the foreground of corresponding shots and sequences emphasises her total immersion in the act of creating itself and her total disinterest in attempts made by Helen, Gregor and the Smokers in the background to decode the markings on her back and those she makes herself as clues showing the way to Dryland. Enola's fascination with the present rather than the past or a future destination and the function that she personally assigns to the act of drawing demonstrate a striking synthesis of the road narrative's intermediate focus and the alienation of familiar spaces and geographies within science fiction.

With the exception of the *Exxon Valdez* and Dryland's vague identification as the peak of Mount Everest, the land's submersion in *Waterworld* de-emphasises the subversion of familiar monuments' social, historical, national and political associations that Miranda J. Banks observes throughout apocalyptic science fiction cinema especially.[61] The sea's aforementioned 'placeless' quality instead explicitly imagines the shifting focus from 'monuments', structures aspiring to permanence, to 'documents', isolated movements, mappings and gestures within shared spaces,[62] that concerns Giuliana Bruno's work on 'emotional geographies' and, in particular, the perception of spaces and places as permeable palimpsests invested with multiple subjective 'claims and demands'.[63] Whilst Chapters 4 and 5 address the ways in which different characters navigate, represent and engage with shared spaces and journey trajectories according to emotional interests rather than practical ones, especially in terms of an apparent division between adult and child subjectivities, the emotional geographies established aboard *Waterworld*'s trimaran represent less a set of contesting values than a developing dialogue. Although the Mariner's initial attempt to erase Enola's pictures from the metalwork expresses his frustration at an apparent incursion upon his property and connected sense of self, her drawings are not intended to overwrite or erase his claims upon the vehicle as per the typical understanding of the palimpsest, but to engage the taciturn traveller in dialogue. Not only does she explain that she drew the pictures 'for [him]', but the fact that she

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[61] Miranda J. Banks, 'Monumental Fictions: National Monument as a Science Fiction Space', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 30 (2002), 136-45 (p. 139).
[62] Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002), p. 354.
[63] Bruno, p. 356.

uses the same mysterious markings that have led the atoll community to reject her as a 'freak' to this end anticipates the connections that the male traveller and his passengers similarly forge through liminal identities and spaces.

Upon learning of Enola's similar experience of ostracism, the Mariner increasingly yields previously rigid vehicular boundaries to her and Helen, first giving her the crayons and later introducing the passengers to the water in an altogether more sympathetic fashion. Viewing the mutant body as an object of horror, Shapiro hastily interprets the Mariner as a figure of self-loathing.[64] Yet it is a shared experience of marginalisation that both brings the Mariner and Enola together and forms the focus and means of their union. Enola's wish that she had webbed 'feet like [the Mariner's]' so that she would be better equipped to learn how to swim, another marker of her terrestrial origins that has attracted other humans' suspicion, leads the previously rejected amphibious body to be re-envisioned as an outwardly regenerative means of breaching vehicular and gendered boundaries.

Waterworld's journey describes the opening of both the male domain and body to feminine needs, influences and even functions. In three separate scenes, the Mariner bonds with Enola by teaching her to swim and escorts Helen under the sea in order to enlighten her about the forgotten submerged world and later to protect her. These scenes illustrate a newfound tenderness and compassion, especially in the gentle scoring and slow-motion rendering of the Mariner and Enola's swim together, in which their bodies are in near-continuous contact. Emerging abruptly and offering a moment of tranquillity dramatically at odds with the action sequence that immediately follows it, this episode resists interpretation as a simple means of preparing Enola for acceptance within the wider human community, *pace* Shapiro, a development which does not after all occur. Rather, pleasure and an emotionally fulfilling sense of communal interaction are found in the act of transgressing boundaries.

This marks a significant departure from the film's apparent conformation to certain aspects and dynamics familiar from the constructions of armoured masculinity examined in Chapter 1. In his psychoanalytic study of Western images of masculinity, Antony Easthope extends this discourse beyond literal body armour to the formation of place. Easthope argues that the obsession with self-fortification and surveillance apparent within Leonardo Da Vinci's castle designs and Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison presents macrocosmic 'model[s] of the masculine ego

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[64] Shapiro, p. 240.

itself' and its 'ceaseless struggle to keep itself together, to close all gaps' against 'feminine' intrusions.[65] As Easthope recognises, however, the hysterical nature of this defensiveness suggests that the male ego has always already been 'infiltrated [from] within, as it must [be] because of the bisexual nature of every individual'.[66] The masochistic dynamic created between traveller and violated vehicle early in both films can be read as a simple equation of a feminine subject position with passivity and a fear of emasculation in *The Postman*.

Through its treatment of the renegotiated boundaries of vehicles and bodies, however, *Waterworld* resists such an unequivocal interpretation. Here, the reconfiguration of the previously hostile sea as a hospitable amniotic site of connection contributes to a series of gestures that imbue the Mariner with certain antenatal maternal qualities. Across the underwater scenes, the Mariner forms an umbilical connection with Enola by supporting the swimming girl with one arm at her navel and escorts Helen to the seabed in a wet diving bell visually and functionally redolent of a womb. His identification with the maternal culminates with the apparent devastation of his armour, as he foregoes the opportunity to prevent the Smokers' destruction of his trimaran and, instead, conveys Helen to safety underwater. As the Mariner abandons the domain that has hitherto defined and consolidated his sense of self, *Waterworld* realises something of the transformative potential that Karen Beckman associates with the car crash's exposure of road cinema's traditionally male traveller to 'touch, penetration, vulnerability', without annihilating the body in the process.[67] The extraordinary shot in which the Mariner 'breathes for two' underwater by pressing his lips to Helen's and circulating air between her lungs and his gills is a nurturing gesture of self-sacrifice that confirms his *amphi*-bious nature as a matter of gender as well as genetics. Significantly, the Mariner's moments of analogical cross-gender identification are held up as productive transformations rather than moments of emasculation that the Mariner must overcome. At *Waterworld*'s conclusion, the Mariner returns to the sea, still a man in flight from civilisation and relationships (and, one may speculate, an unborn child conceived during his sexual encounter with Helen). Yet a visual emphasis upon threshold spaces of ambiguity and

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[65] Antony Easthope, *What a Man's Gotta Do: The Masculine Myth in Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 39.

[66] Easthope, pp. 42-43. Here, 'bisexuality' refers to the co-existence of masculine and feminine attributes within the individual.

[67] Karen Beckman, *Crash: Cinema and the Politics of Speed and Stasis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 19.

volatility persists. In the film's final sequence, Enola insists that both she and the Mariner 'belong here' as they sit together, not inland but within the swash zone of Dryland's beach, where sand and water intermingle. Even at its conclusion, then, *Waterworld* does not close down liminal identities and the spaces that accommodate them altogether.

The scenes in the water are not wholly progressive, however. Though not configured as retaliation against the maternal subject position the Mariner has assumed, the scene in which the trimaran is destroyed also involves the insistent reinforcement of a hegemonic ideal of controlling heterosexual masculinity. This is provoked precisely by the emasculation and self-loss threatened by the reduction of the trimaran to a toppled and tattered cylindrical hull where previously its towering mast and a shot in which it shears the sail off another man's smaller vessel suggested phallic superiority. In view of these anxieties, it is significant that the Mariner's nurturing act towards Helen also resembles a forced kiss and is swiftly followed by the consummation of a spontaneous sexual attraction between the pair.

This presents a superficial variation upon a narrative formula familiar from 1980s post-apocalyptic films in which a loss of vehicular armour devastates those people and bodily boundaries taken to signify the protagonist's heterosexual identity. In the revenge narratives of *Mad Max* (George Miller, 1979) and *The New Barbarians* (Enzo G. Castellari, 1983), the murder of Max's wife and child, reduced to futilely fleeing a motorcycle gang by foot, and the villains' anal rape of *The New Barbarians*' Scorpion after the loss of his car lead each protagonist to acquire a new or retooled vehicle that enables the destruction of his nemeses. The build of each car carries aggressive phallic connotations, whether in the supercharger that erupts from the bonnet of Max's V8 Interceptor or the lance attached to Scorpion's futuristic Pontiac that impales his earlier assailant from behind. These retaliatory scenes have a distinctly hysterical quality, permeated by disturbingly nihilistic homophobic overtones in *The New Barbarians*. This derives from their treatment of industrial machinery as a masculine prop in a manner akin to the 1980s cyborg films examined by Claudia Springer, which enact a desperate return to an era in which 'an insecure man needed only to look at technology to find a metaphor for the power of phallic strength'.[68] Like 'The Cursed Earth', examined in Chapter 1, *Waterworld* is anxious to circumvent such technological dependency. In replacing

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[68] Claudia Springer, *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age* (London: Athlone, 1996), p. 111.

the acquisition of a new phallic vehicle (Gregor's unruly and cumbersome dirigible, which the Mariner and Helen subsequently board, would hardly fit this profile) with an abrupt sex scene aboard the wreckage, the film depicts a desperate rechanneling of masculine power from the vulnerable industrial crutch to the superhuman male body. However, in its apparent rejection of the hysterical imagery of armoured masculinity, this scene only renders the continued identification of the ship's destruction as not simply a call to progressive transformation but also an assault on male potency more glaring. Certainly, the slow dissolve from an aerial shot of the Mariner and Helen lying down on the wreckage to a shot of the horizon in which the still-visible shape of the hull projects vertically from the sea indicates a lasting attachment to the terms of armoured masculinity even as the armour itself is set aside, recalling Chapter 1's observations regarding the conclusion of 'The Cursed Earth'.

Subsequent scenes accordingly contrive to reposition the Mariner as an independent warrior driven by the determination to save Enola from her piratical kidnappers rather than self-preservation. In the process, Helen is transformed from Enola's primary carer and a woman capable of taking vital actions to save all three travellers to an altogether more passive helper. This troubling loss of female agency is compounded by the fact that the redemption and social intimacy the Mariner finds through maternal identification appear contingent upon the displacement of Enola's relationship with Helen, who is repeatedly mistaken for the girl's mother. This is most apparent in the scene where the Mariner teaches Enola to swim, an area in which Helen has evidently failed. As Helen watches from the trimaran, her and Enola's faces are framed in disconnected close-ups that lack matching eye-lines and depict Helen as an unreactive mute onlooker even when Enola waves to her. This detachment consolidates the Mariner's continuing circumscription of Enola and Helen's movements, as they remain stranded in his domain, unable to venture safely between the trimaran and the sea without his support.

As part of this simultaneous rise of male control and decline of female agency, the Mariner becomes the abuser rather than the abused party in a new female masochistic relationship that consolidates male control rather than threatening it. Enola's bond with her 'mother' is broken by her election of the Mariner as a paternal love object, with whom she is determined to connect after he punishes her for her overfamiliarity. Indeed, in appealing to Enola's literally submerged instinct as he tells her to 'let the water tell [her] arms and legs how to

move', the 'father's' intervention does not interrupt the pre-Oedipal bond between mother and child, but rather reawakens it at the expense of eclipsing Helen. Whilst the Mariner's occupation of a curiously maternal capacity in addition to a paternal one can be read as an example of the elasticity of identity during the 'road' journey that strengthens the small community of travellers, it is also framed as a usurpation of a feminine relationship that cuts the maternal woman herself adrift. Moreover, the characterisation of bodily gestures of compassion and intimacy as maternal limits the exploration of specifically paternal forms and images of nurturing that Stuart C. Aitken sees as an important alternative to the dominance of restrictive media representations of fathers as 'hard, impervious' bodies throughout the 1990s.[69] This topic is considered further in Chapter 4. Just as it is never clarified whether the Mariner's hybrid body is the product of human evolution or de-evolution, then, his adaptations can also be interpreted as barriers to a progressive gender politics.

'The mailman's more important than the mail': Travel as image, travel as action, and hyperindividualism in *The Postman*

Although the simultaneous shift and consolidation of vehicular and bodily boundaries observed above imagines the male appropriation of a maternal role, *Waterworld* remains distinctive in its use of the Mariner's hybrid body to imagine a mode of supportive male interaction with parties granted less power within contemporary society. *The Postman* presents an altogether more problematic relationship between the representation of the hero's travels and the development of a future civilisation modelled on the interests and efforts of women, a young generation and, in particular, black people. These difficulties are especially evident in the shift from the road narrative's horizontal trajectory to movements and compositions emphasising verticality.

Towards their conclusions, *The Postman* and *Waterworld* incorporate aspects of the 'new digital verticality' that Khristen Whissel argues became prevalent within many 1990s blockbusters as a result of advances in computer-generated special effects. Whilst Whissel associates movement along a horizontal plane with 'continuity', she observes that many blockbusters narratively associate

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[69] Stuart C. Aitken, *The Awkward Spaces of Fathering* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), p. 80.

vertical movement with 'a temporal-historical break',[70] a notion integral to apocalyptic texts, especially those seeking to imagine changes within white masculinity. In Whissel's model, this crisis resolves into either 'a leap towards a new future', visually symbolised by the ascent of a party who challenges the old order, or 'the rapid approach of [that obsolete system's] inevitable end', signified by descent.[71]

Both aspects are present in *Waterworld*, when the Mariner escorts Helen to the submerged ruins and later bungees down from Gregor's dirigible to rescue Enola from the Smokers' clutches, and *The Postman*, when the Postman travels through a canyon in a cable car as his disciples gather support for the final battle against the Holnists. *Waterworld*'s images of descent confirm the Smokers' association with the fallen civilisation on the seabed that 'did something terrible' to bring about the apocalypse; the Deacon similarly destroys himself when he collides with two other jet-ski drivers. By contrast, the adaptive Mariner finally ascends to Gregor's dirigible, a vehicle in which he is less an independent controlling authority than part of a communal unit that includes Helen, Gregor and the atoll's peace-keeper (R.D. Call) and works together to rescue Enola from the Deacon and the exploding *Exxon Valdez*. The airship also grants the perspective needed to find the way to Dryland and the future it represents. Even in *Waterworld*'s protracted underwater sequence and *The Postman*'s cable car scene, the protagonists' downward movements are represented through compositions that produce the illusion of the heroic body rising or flying. Throughout these episodes, the Mariner and the Postman are either fixed within the foreground or at the centre of a medium shot as they pass over submerged skyscrapers and ski slopes or a deep canyon. Together with the travelling matte effects that conspicuously separate these figures from the vast scenery added in post-production, such arrangements present each man as an untouchable monolithic figure who is never engulfed by the landscape even as he moves down into it, but rather floats above it.

These compositions contrast sharply with the spectacular abandoned city's initial representation in *The World, The Flesh and the Devil* (Ranald MacDougall, 1959). Examining this example of the 'last man on Earth narrative', a trend discussed in Chapter 3, Susan Courtney regards the stark high-angle and low-angle shots of Ralph (Harry Belafonte) wandering among the towering buildings of a

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[70] Khristen Whissel, 'Tales of Upward Mobility: The New Verticality and Digital Special Effects', *Film Quarterly*, 59.4 (2006), 23-34 (p. 24).
[71] Whissel, p. 25.

deserted New York as expressive of 'the enduring power of white regimes of vision and space to encode and enforce black subjection', even in the absence of white people.[72] Conversely, the aforementioned sequences from *Waterworld* and *The Postman* visually and narratively convey their white travellers' privileged status. *Waterworld*'s drowned world and the knowledge and wealth it confers are only accessible to one superhumanly mobile white man, whilst the human population mistakenly believes that the Earth was created as one uninterrupted mass of water. In one of several troubling gestures apparently calculated to suggest that the multi-racial atoll community is doomed unless its members defer to white wisdom and guidance, only American and European white men from the group of remaining survivors accompany Helen and the Mariner on their mission to rescue Enola from the Smokers and find Dryland. Meanwhile, the terrified sceptics, represented most vocally by a guard played by Rick Aviles, a black actor of Puerto Rican descent, are left stranded and unsaved, for there is no indication as the Mariner finally returns to the sea that he plans to challenge other humans' antiquated prejudices and direct them to Dryland.

Similarly, shots of the Postman standing tall and leaning forward within the cable car draw upon constructions of an idealised white male physiognomy apparent throughout American and European genre cinema: a rigid body 'forever striving upwards', to quote Dyer.[73] Whilst height receives one significant mention as a marker of virility when Abby literally sizes the Postman up as a potential surrogate father, the situation of that figure within a particular type of landscape is also significant. The contrast Jane Tompkins draws within westerns between the forest setting that 'confuses itself with [the hero] by its vertical composition' and the expansive desert that 'flatters the human figure by making it seem dominant and unique, […] vertical against horizontal' is explicitly incorporated into a narrative of ascension and re-mobilisation as the Postman moves from a period of convalescence within a dense wood where he regards himself as 'nobody' to open landscapes as he recovers his ability to walk and his role as a courier.[74] The Postman's transition to vertical movement, then, marks the culmination of the film's narcissistic qualities, transforming a white male body which has previously

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[72] Susan Courtney, *Hollywood Fantasies of Miscegenation: Spectacular Narratives of Gender and Race, 1903-1967* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 236-38.
[73] Dyer, p. 152.
[74] Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 74.

been knocked down and had its erectness challenged both directly and figuratively into a towering figure of authority.

Just as the Mariner's dive with Helen represents the growing trust between them, the re-ascendent body within the cable car sequence is presented as the result of an intensified solidarity with the network of couriers inspired by the Postman's example. This connection is reinforced by dissolves between his face and shots of teenaged followers racing across the state, rallying communal support at his behest. Yet the contrasting representations of travel offered here and throughout *The Postman* underline the uneasy tension between social change and the glorification of white patriarchy that permeates the film. This distinction is most pronounced in the comparisons the film draws between the Postman and the African-American youth Ford, his first disciple, and, significantly, one of very few of the predominantly teenaged male and female couriers who are actually identified by name. Although its action is confined to Oregon, *The Postman*'s Baudrillardian project of 'remak[ing] a clean history' implicitly refers back to the Civil War in the contrast drawn between the Holnists,[75] concerned with recruiting white men 'of suitable ethnic foundation', based in the southern part of the state and clad in the 'butternut' yellows and browns of the Confederacy, and the postal service wearing the blues of the Union.

This subtext is further indicated by the connotations of slavery that accompany the re-purposing of the Postman's misquoting of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (the protagonist says 'At least we'll die with the harness off our backs', whilst the original line reads 'the harness on our backs') by multiracial Holnist recruit/captive Woody (Brian Anthony Wilson) in a final act of retaliation against a captain who repeatedly addresses him with the common antebellum racist epithet, 'boy'. In both this instance and Ford's adoption and embellishment of the Postman's charade in order to enlist others to help create an actual communications infrastructure that secondarily serves as a means of circulating propaganda, black men appropriate white language as an instrument of resistance against white supremacists. That the actual realisation of a project of national reconstruction depends upon the labour and risk-taking of rebellious individuals with less social power in contemporary culture hypothetically opens up a space not only for the emancipation of a force composed of 'mostly women and young people' and a

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[75] Baudrillard, p. 11.

black leader but also for these subjects to remake their world according to their own desires and needs.

However, *The Postman* echoes other fantastical cinematic expressions of a millennial 'desire for healing among the races' that Krin Gabbard has observed in 'white Hollywood'.[76] Here, Gabbard reads a contemporary body of films in which 'black angels' bestow protection and gifts upon white protagonists as 'updated versions of the many American stories in which a dark-skinned man is the loyal retainer to a white male hero' yet acts in total isolation from an African-American culture.[77] Similarly, *The Postman* removes Ford from any kind of black community and stresses his loneliness and the wish to be 'part of something' that can only be granted by the Postman, and casts the actions and mistakes of black characters as gestures that support the white male traveller in his final, reluctant decision to stand against the Holnists. In turning the gun he was ordered to use against the fleeing protagonist on the racist captain, Woody enables the Postman to survive at the cost of his own life. In (mis)using language as a weapon against the Holnists and seeking revenge, Ford is used narratively as support for his white male senior's automatically supposed right to power, at the expense of fully recognising those actions that transformed the Postman's lie, never publically admitted, into a socially beneficial reality. Here, the denial of historically grounded injustices' 'character, [and] meaning' and the racial bias implicit in Baudrillard's talk of the millennial desire to 'whitewash' the past become most pronounced.[78]

Where matters of genre, race and gender are concerned, the film's treatment of language is particularly significant. Karl Phillips has argued that *The Postman* represents a shift in apocalyptic road films, wherein it is no longer 'the road travelled that is important, nor the traveller, but the information that has been transmitted'.[79] Yet for a film that ostensibly celebrates the socially connective power of words, *The Postman* conspicuously distinguishes between travellers who have the authority and responsibility to control language and the flow of information and those who apparently do not. In a less critical manner than *Waterworld*'s treatment of the Mariner's territoriality, *The Postman* indulges a post-

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[76] Krin Gabbard, *Black Magic: White Hollywood and African American Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p. 11.
[77] Gabbard, p. 174.
[78] Baudrillard, pp. 11-12.
[79] Karl Phillips, 'We're Virtually There: SF Film on the Road to Ruin', in *Lost Highways: An Illustrated History of Road Movies*, ed. by Jack Sargeant and Stephanie Watson (London: Creation Books, 1999), pp. 266-74 (p. 269).

apocalyptic fantasy of reinventing a ravaged world according to one's personal desires. As the Postman travels around Oregon, he assumes the authority to invent a new geography, christening a nameless town Elvis and speaking of his desire to find St. Rose, a fabled New Eden on the coast that becomes a reality in the film's final scene.

Despite the aforementioned physical jokes at the expense of Costner's ageing body, *The Postman* conservatively casts language as an instrument of white patriarchal authority that is denied to youths like Ford. This generational and racial distinction lends itself to a reading through the terms of Jacques Lacan's discussions of language and 'the Name-of-the-Father', or the concept of the father in the Symbolic order. The Postman ultimately identifies himself with 'the Law' of the Symbolic order as he rewrites the Holnists' rules of conduct after defeating Bethlehem, the first new law accordingly being a prohibition, 'No more killing'.[80] The act recalls Moses' delivery of the Ten Commandments, the principal difference being that it is the Postman who writes his own national and moral constitution, usurping a divine authority. Meanwhile, the film condemns Ford's management of the power of language. As indicated previously, whilst the Postman initially uses the power language confers upon him for personal gain, whether delivering letters or performing fragments of Shakespeare plays, Ford imbues road travel with a rebellious agenda by rewriting the United States postal service's famous credo as a declaration of post-apocalyptic resistance: 'Through flood and plague we cannot fail; no Holnist trash will stop the mail'. Yet Ford's distribution of propaganda and notes attacking Bethlehem also exacerbates existing tensions and motivates the Holnists to slaughter innocents as revenge, leading to the Postman's attempted disbandment of the postal service.

Ford's error is framed less as the inevitable fallout from the Postman's already dubious example than as the basis for a disturbingly essentialist division between a white man who can harness the law to restorative and peaceful effect and a young black man who, whilst he is an altogether more proactive individual driven by altruistic motives, inadvertently abuses the same power in assuming it. Indeed, after the Postman overpowers Bethlehem, he has to restrain Ford from shooting the general in accordance with the Holnists' murderous laws. Since only those recruited by the Holnists, like the Postman, are permitted to invoke their laws, Ford is

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[80] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), pp. 66-67.

positioned explicitly as the wrongful user of even a destructive code. Although Ford helps rewrite the laws by stating a new one, albeit essentially a reiteration of the Postman's first law ('Live and let live'), he then hands his gun to the Postman. In keeping with the 'split masculinity' that Greven observes throughout contemporary American cinema,[81] *The Postman* simultaneously mocks Bethlehem's hunger for war as a means of regeneration, recognised by the Postman as vain macho posturing, and binds together violence and the more peaceful force of language through the monolithic figure of the white patriarch. The latter is achieved through the accompaniment of the cable car sequence with Costner's paraphrasing of a famous speech from Shakespeare's *Henry V* ('In peace, nothing so becomes a man as modesty and humility; but when the blast of war blows in our ears, then imitate the action of the tiger'), the irony of which remains unacknowledged. Ford's final surrender of the gun, then, conveys the relinquishing of violence and communication as connected symbols of phallocentric power which the black man recognises he cannot responsibly control. As in *Waterworld*, the white male traveller is repositioned as the individual best-equipped to bring a supposedly new order into being, operating on behalf of, rather than alongside, disenfranchised parties.

The renegotiation of vehicular and territorial boundaries presented in *Waterworld* brings about scenes, however limited, of the Mariner's direct and involved interaction with Helen and Enola as individuals rather than intrusive inconveniences or objects of trade. *The Postman*'s later representations of travel function differently. The Postman's installation as the white male face of a new, supposedly egalitarian order develops as the result of a dubious distinction between travel as narcissistic image and travel as social action. Although Phillips' argument will be interrogated further in Chapter 5's examination of several films in which the experience of physical road travel itself is contested, his suggestion that *The Postman* marks the decreasing importance of the road within millennial apocalyptic road films offers a crucial consideration.[82] Scenes depicting the movements of the young couriers emphasise collective action and the exchange of information, and are frequently composed of long shots that emphasise the vast distances travelled. Meanwhile, representations of the Postman's later travels typically focus upon isolated gestures pregnant with analogical and symbolic import, the camera pivoting

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[81] Greven, p. 16.
[82] Phillips, p. 269.

tightly around him rather than the landscape and route ahead. Reviewer Roger Ebert's criticism that the cable car scene 'serves absolutely no purpose except to allow [Costner/the Postman] to pose as the masthead on the ship of state' is telling.[83] In maintaining the Postman's centrality and visibility compositionally and through the use of dissolves rather than cuts as the couriers' actions are interspersed with his trip, this scene frames the mere fact of his movement as the momentum that drives national unity and transformation, figuratively rather than directly. The impression of movement in a vacuum created here is compounded by the scene's dissection within a dedicated DVD visual effects feature. This represents one of various strategies by which Michele Pierson claims that science fiction cinema's special effects are 'bracketed off for audiences', removed from their immediate narrative context and positioned as attractions in their own right.[84] Yet unlike *Waterworld*'s use of action as the primary basis for spectacle, the illusion of riding through a monumental space is supplanted by the monumentality of the restored white patriarch, a tendency consolidated by the eventual freezing of the Postman's motion in a bronze statue where he rides a charging horse.

The final battle sequence seeks to reverse this distinction between narcissistic image and collective action through extreme long shots of the postal service's vast ranks that position them as a static mass visually testament to the individual's influence. The Postman's decision that the battle should 'be fought just by the assholes who started' it, himself and Bethlehem, presents both an eventual recognition of personal culpability for the destructive consequences of the original lie and a prelude to the film's most absurdly hyperindividualist image, where the two leaders wrestle on the ground in slow-motion whilst their armies remain spectators. In such instances, then, one must be wary of simply identifying apocalyptic texts' resonance with particular spiritual traditions and intertextual frameworks, as Shapiro does in his discussion of *Waterworld*. Rather, it is crucial to recognise how the use of familiar cultural imagery that positions the white male body in motion as innately heroic undercuts parallel portrayals of travel as a rebellious act in *The Postman*.

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[83] Roger Ebert, '*The Postman*', *Chicago Sun-Times*, 25 December 1997 <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19971225/REVIEWS/712250304> [accessed 9 December 2011] (para. 4 of 6).
[84] Michele Pierson, *Special Effects: Still in Search of Wonder* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 123.

Conclusion

Waterworld and *The Postman* use aspects of post-apocalyptic science fiction, with its themes of adaptation and rejuvenation, and the road narrative's concern with rebellious and marginalised identities and spaces to respond to anxieties over the social place of white masculinity amid post-war transformations in gender and racial politics. The few scholars who have discussed these films tend to regard *Waterworld* as a text that ultimately reinstates an essentialist division between masculinity and femininity and *The Postman* as a film about communication as a means of social cohesion.[85] By examining the films' shifting uses of particular vehicles and their representations of travel, however, one can develop a firmer appreciation of the unresolved ambiguities and contradictions that characterise their narratives of white male travellers ostensibly searching for a role within futures contingent upon the improved circumstances of women in *Waterworld* and black people in *The Postman*.

Especially where *The Postman* is concerned, these contradictions develop around the split masculinity that Greven observes throughout American cinema of the 1990s and early twenty-first century and which is succinctly embodied by Kevin Costner's schismatic star persona. In the final battle, the Postman is characterised as a more knowing and clear-sighted man than Bethlehem because he recognises that they are 'a couple of frauds', happily laying his persona as a messianic road warrior open to attack. In both *The Postman* and *Waterworld*, vehicles and the transformations and substitutions they undergo are used in one respect to expose rather than bolster the constructed nature of identity and demonstrate the capacity to reformulate and adapt white male behaviour for the enhancement of marginalised people's lives. *Waterworld* in particular identifies both the journey through a landscape lacking any definite sense of place and the vehicle shared by the Mariner, Helen and Enola as sites for breaking down divisive gendered boundaries and celebrating liminal identities. However, the films also cling to quite literal images of the white male traveller as a monolithic authority. Whilst *Waterworld* and *The Postman* emphasise the hero's ability to transcend the crutch provided by his vehicles, the anxious manner in which they do so indicates a continued attachment to the connotations of patriarchal and phallic superiority afforded by the trimaran and the cable car. The distinctions these films draw between impotent white villains

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[85] Phillips, p. 269.

and the unrealised potential of fertile heroic white bodies seemingly emphasise the importance of developing a will to effect social change over a consolidation or strengthening of the action body. However, *The Postman* especially stresses images over actions and refuses to interrogate their artifice. The same gestures used to express each nomad's increased solidarity with women and African-American characters act to reinstate what is uncritically regarded as the natural superiority and necessity of white patriarchal authority. Thus, the divisions *Waterworld* and *The Postman* seek to present between a domineering and self-interested white masculinity and an image of communally-minded heroism fail to surface fully, although aspects like the 'queering' of the Mariner's gender remain fascinating points of openness within a pair of films that are frequently overlooked by scholars.

Chapter 3's study of adolescent masculinity on the road continues to examine performativity and the rupture between wider generic and cultural characterisations of adult masculinity and the post-apocalyptic figure of the last man on Earth and the traveller's individual understanding and experience of their gender and sexual identity. Chapters 1 and 2 have focused upon post-apocalyptic road stories that foreground action heroes and the use of particular vehicles and their destruction and loss as a means of consolidating the images of macho independence and patriarchal power *Judge Dredd*, *Waterworld* and *The Postman* present. Chapter 3, meanwhile, marks the first of several discussions surrounding apocalyptic road narratives where the correlation between individual action and communal development comes under firmer scrutiny.

3
Coming and Coming Hard:
Sexuality and Thwarted Maturation
in Post-Apocalyptic Adolescent Journeys

Numerous historical studies have emphasised the road genre's ties with youth culture. Just as the biker and hot rod films of the 1950s and 1960s that prefigured road cinema catered to adolescents who frequented drive-in movie theatres,[1] Katie Mills writes that recent road stories in comics, video games and television are principally about, and directed at, teenagers and young adults.[2] Fictional road narratives have treated the road as a prime site for the exploration and celebration of identities in transit(ion), including the uncertainty over gender and sexual identity that David Greven observes throughout contemporary teen comedies, several of which feature road trips. Greven argues that recent teen films demonstrate a remarkable openness about male sexual insecurity and homosocial and homoerotic behaviours in particular. The very transience of adolescence renders displays of male vulnerability and sexual experimentation ideologically permissible, as it offers the reassurance that 'nothing ever has to "stick"'.[3]

Simultaneously privileging detours over direct routes to adulthood and foregrounding a major technological yardstick used to measure maturation in the post-war era, the road story accommodates perceptions of adolescence as both a time of sexual and social self-reinvention and experimentation and an end-directed period of preparation. The generic emphasis upon the moment-to-moment experience of the journey coheres with Jon Lewis's suggestion that, as individuals suspended between 'an idealisation of youth and […] the inevitable future of adulthood' with its attendant 'sense of loss', teenagers 'consciously focus on the present'.[4] Indeed, the term 'coming of age', literalised in a genre preoccupied with mobility, privileges the process of maturing over a definite point of 'arrival' at adulthood. Whilst the ability to drive enables teenagers to move beyond the jurisdiction of the adult authorities that ordinarily restrict their behaviour at home and school, however, Steve Bailey and James Hay have also argued that the car

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[1] Katie Mills, *The Road Story and the Rebel*: *Moving Through Film, Fiction, and Television* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2006), p. 117.
[2] Mills, p. 206.
[3] David Greven, 'Dude, Where's My Gender? Contemporary Teen Comedies and New Forms of American Masculinity', *Cineaste*, 27.3 (2002), 14-21 (p. 21).
[4] Jon Lewis, *The Road to Romance and Ruin: Teen Films and Youth Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 10.

offers an arena for testing characters' maturity in 1980s and 1990s teen cinema.[5] More specifically, Ron Eyerman and Orvar Löfgren note that the acquisition of a licence and one's own vehicle has long been regarded as 'the *sine qua non* of manhood in the United States'.[6]

The road journey, then, may function as both a period of technological induction into adulthood and a tangential interlude before the serious business of growing up. As indicated by Greven's observations regarding teen comedies, maturity is frequently equated with entrance into heteronormative codes of behaviour. With occasional exceptions like *Transamerica* (Duncan Tucker, 2005), what happens on the road stays on the road where adolescent detours from heterosexuality are concerned. This is exemplified by the divergent teen trajectories of *My Own Private Idaho*'s (Gus Vant Sant, 1991) street hustlers. This film adheres to the Freudian model of male development, in which masculinity and heterosexuality are predicated upon the son's separation from the mother and the search for a maternal substitute as a sexual partner that arises from his identification with the father. Whilst mayoral heir Scott (Keanu Reeves) finally inherits his father's fortune and acquires a girlfriend, gay protagonist Mike (River Phoenix), who lacks the same social mobility and has been disappointed in his love for Scott and his search for his mother, finds himself trapped on the road. Whilst such definitions of adulthood are restrictive, some travellers equally find the volatility of adolescence unnerving. The protagonist of Brian Lee O'Malley's graphic novel *Lost at Sea* (2003) worries that the teenage insecurities exposed by her road trip will indelibly mark her future. Evidently, adolescence's characterisation as a detour preceding adulthood is as emotionally and ideologically reassuring as it is bittersweet.

This chapter examines several post-apocalyptic road stories that disrupt the transience and paternal assurance of adult male socialisation that inform many teen road narratives. Since maturity is 'first and foremost a social phenomenon and only secondarily a biological one', as Thomas Hine observes,[7] conceptualisations of adolescence as a transient period of self-exploration or a process of becoming that precedes societal assimilation are complicated by the common post-apocalyptic

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[5] Steve Bailey and James Hay, 'Cinema and the Premises of Youth: "Teen Films" and their Sites in the 1980s and 1990s', in *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, ed. by Steve Neale (London: BFI, 2002), pp. 218-35 (p. 229).

[6] Ron Eyerman and Orvar Löfgren, 'Romancing the Road: Road Movies and Images of Mobility', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 12 (1995), 53-79 (p. 78).

[7] Thomas Hine, *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (New York: Avon Books, 1999), p. 46.

phenomena of massive social upheaval and the absence of a regular, purposeful sense of time (in one of this chapter's case studies, *Y: The Last Man* [2002-2008], each issue begins with a caption identifying the geographical location of the events depicted, followed not by a specific date but an ambiguous 'Now'). Such complications are mirrored in the apocalyptic mood observed throughout contemporary youth culture. Mick Broderick notes that several Cold War-era apocalyptic films reflect the correlation between concerns over 'impending nuclear war' and fatalistic, self-destructive adolescent behaviour and diminished long-term ambition described within psychiatric and sociological studies from the early 1980s.[8] Similarly, Richard Benjamin observes 'an ill-defined sense of purposelessness and […] anomie' throughout non-science fiction 'youth apocalypse' films of the 1990s.[9] Whilst the individual survives, or is born after, catastrophe in post-apocalyptic science fiction and horror texts, the potential permanence of social escape in these texts threatens to transform the road story's freedoms and focus upon the present into a similarly deadening aimlessness.

Not all post-apocalyptic teen stories have proven so pessimistic. The post-apocalyptic horror road film *Stake Land* (Jim Mickle, 2010) concludes as vampire hunter and surrogate father Mister (Nick Damici) leaves teenager Martin (Connor Paolo) to follow his own path with a new girlfriend, having taught him how to drive and how to master the stake (read: the phallus). Similarly, *Night of the Comet* (Thom Eberhardt, 1984) presents its older teenaged heroine's transition into adulthood (synonymous here with motherhood) as smooth and instantaneous once she discovers a male lover and two children among the survivors of a cosmic disaster. Whereas Martin is rendered vulnerable by his sexual inexperience throughout *Stake Land*, *Night of the Comet* anticipates the gendered distinction that Greven notes throughout contemporary teen comedies, where girls appear more sexually secure than their male peers.[10]

The male-centred narratives that concern this chapter remove the assurances of the boy's technological and filial induction into manhood upheld in *Stake Land*. The chapter's first half examines the film *A Boy and His Dog* (L.Q. Jones, 1975) and Richard Corben's 1987 *Vic and Blood* comic books, adapted from Harlan

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[8] Mick Broderick, *Nuclear Movies: A Critical Analysis and Filmography of International Feature Length Films Dealing with Experimentation, Aliens, Terrorism, Holocaust and Other Disaster Scenarios, 1914-1989* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1991), p. 45.

[9] Richard Benjamin, 'The Sense of an Ending: Youth Apocalypse Films', *Journal of Film and Video*, 56.4 (2004), 34-49 (p. 35).

[10] Greven, p. 15.

Ellison's short story 'A Boy and His Dog' (1969), its prequel 'Eggsucker' (1977) and its sequel 'Run, Spot, Run' (1980). The chapter's second half addresses Brian K. Vaughan and Pia Guerra's comic book maxi-series *Y: The Last Man*. Each narrative offers distinct responses to what Mike Chopra-Gant describes as a 'key trope concerning the formation and maintenance of masculine identities' and the post-war 'crisis of masculinity' in the West: the absence of the father.[11] Ellison's *Vic and Blood* short stories and their film and comic adaptations envisage a world ravaged by nuclear war, where the surface is occupied by 'parentless young boys' and towns built underground are populated by men who either cannot conceive sons (in the original story 'A Boy and His Dog' and its comic book adaptation) or are completely infertile (in the film).[12] *Y: The Last Man* opens with a biological disaster that kills every male mammal on Earth simultaneously, save for Yorick Brown, a young New Yorker insecure in his manhood, and his pet monkey Ampersand. As Chopra-Gant observes, several contemporary films have depicted attempts to replace the father's role in the son's induction into adult society with 'symbolic rituals that [are perceived to] guide young men through liminal phases into normative mature masculine identities'.[13] These compensatory strategies manifest in the election of another, non-parental male mentor in the *Vic and Blood* adaptations and Yorick's preoccupation with media images of masculinity in *Y: The Last Man*. These aspects form the focus of the chapter's investigation into the fraught nature of male maturation in post-apocalyptic teen road stories, and receive a very different treatment in each text.

The *Vic and Blood* stories, film and comic book adaptations detail several adventures that challenge and fortify the telepathic relationship between the brutally amoral, lascivious teenager Vic, aged 15 in the comics and short stories and 18 in the film (where he is played by Don Johnson), and his erudite canine companion and mentor, Blood (voiced in the film by Tim McIntyre). By examining Corben's comics, the following discussion builds upon the hitherto exclusive academic focus upon the film *A Boy and His Dog*. The analysis uses as its starting point feminist science fiction writer Joanna Russ's critique of *A Boy and His Dog*. Russ describes the film as a 'homosexist' buddy picture which not only casts the principal female

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[11] Mike Chopra-Gant, '"I'd Fight My Dad": Absent Fathers and Mediated Masculinities in *Fight Club*', in *Millennial Masculinity: Men in Contemporary American Cinema*, ed. by Timothy Shary (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), pp. 85-100 (p. 88).

[12] Harlan Ellison and Richard Corben, *Vic and Blood: The Continuing Adventures of A Boy and His Dog* (New York: iBooks, 2003), p. 2.

[13] Chopra-Gant, pp. 90-91.

character as 'a dim tagalong, brought in to placate the audience' by disclaiming any implied homosexual attraction between male companions (further supported by the fact that the film centres on an asexual cross-species friendship), but also reductively presents her as a 'designing and dangerous' interloper who must be destroyed to preserve the sanctity of the homosocial bond.[14] To this end, the film adopts a common strategy of detracting attention from the mechanics of patriarchal oppression, scapegoating ostensible love interest Quilla June (played by Susanne Benton), initially cast as the 'Nice Girl Next Door' and a mere 'piece of useful property' in sexist society, as 'the real menace'.[15] In Ellison's original story 'A Boy and His Dog' and Corben's comic, Quilla June is dispatched by the ruling committee of the sterile underground commune Topeka, a grotesque parody of a turn-of-the-century Midwestern small town, to lure in Vic so that he may be used to help replenish the population. Whilst Ellison and Corben's Quilla June is presented unfavourably as a submissive, whining burden, albeit a woman for whom Vic evidently has some feelings, the film's Quilla June is not simply the bait but the trap. She has brought Vic down to Topeka with the ulterior motive of using his combat skills to overpower the Committee, not in order to overthrow Topeka's oppressive regime but to seize its power for herself and make others 'bow and scrape for a change'. After Vic and Quilla June escape to the surface and find a starving and badly wounded Blood, both the film and the original story conclude with Vic's decision to restore Blood's strength by killing Quilla June and feeding the dog her remains.

Whilst Russ's critique of the film's glaring misogyny is certainly persuasive and requires little elaboration, this chapter probes the dichotomy between homosocial and heterosexual relationships that she observes, wherein the brutality of Vic and Blood's nomadic lifestyle is venerated as 'fun' whilst the corrupt acts of Quilla June and Topeka are 'horrifying'.[16] Analysing the *Vic and Blood* film and comic adaptations as 'troubled-adolescent' narratives, a label previously applied to the film by Jerome F. Shapiro but little interrogated,[17] the following discussion contends that Blood's tutelage and companionship ostensibly remedy the absence of

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[14] Joanna Russ, '*A Boy and His Dog*: The Final Solution', *Jump Cut*, 12-13 (1976) <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/jc12-13folder/BoyDogRuss.html> [accessed 10 November 2011] (para. 2 of 38).

[15] Russ, '*A Boy and His Dog*', para. 15 of 38.

[16] Russ, '*A Boy and His Dog*', para. 6 of 38.

[17] Jerome F. Shapiro, *Atomic Bomb Cinema: The Apocalyptic Imagination on Film* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 162.

paternal or institutional male guidance by providing goals and structure, yet repeatedly contravene any possibility of Vic developing socially, psychologically or emotionally by that same token. This aspect is more openly problematised in the comics than the film, which conclude abruptly with an open-ended display of the consequences of arrested emotional maturation.

The chapter's second half examines how *Y: The Last Man* critiques the constructions of heroic and phallic manhood apparent across last man on Earth narratives in film and literature and Western media more generally through its use of elements of the road story and the *Bildungsroman*, a European literary genre originating in the late 1700s that traditionally concerns 'the development or formation of a young man'.[18] Yorick's global journey begins as his congresswoman mother entrusts an African-American government spy, known only by her code-number, 355, and an Asian-American geneticist named Dr Allison Mann with the task of discovering the causes behind the 'gendercide' and Yorick's immunity, and thus a means of ensuring humanity's future, whilst protecting Yorick and keeping his existence a secret. The chapter argues that the comic's portrayal of a boy unsure of the nature and responsibilities of adulthood and manhood offers a forum for interrogating the arbitrary, unrealistic and psychologically damaging nature of myths of maturation and masculinity, especially as they pertain to love, sex and the male body. However, this analysis concludes by acknowledging that the comic's focus upon Yorick's story compromises its exploration of alternate, female-bodied masculinities.

In recognition of the fact that the entirety of this thematically complex maxi-series cannot be addressed in detail, the chapter's approach acknowledges the commercial strategies that have shaped the comic's structure. Julia Round has argued that *Y: The Last Man*'s publisher, Vertigo, founded in 1993, played a significant part in the rise of the graphic novel, a development that led high street bookshops to start selling comics. Here, the term 'graphic novel' refers to a high-quality trade paperback that collects multiple issues of a title originally sold in the form of monthly comic books in speciality comics stores. Round notes that Vertigo's role in this development has led authors to write 'for the trade paperback',

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[18] Michael Minden, *The German Bildungsroman: Incest and Inheritance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 1.

viewing the individual issue as part of a much larger whole.[19] This generates very different narrative opportunities and structures compared to, for instance, the obligation to fill each seven-page instalment of the *Judge Dredd* road serial 'The Cursed Earth' (1978) with swiftly established and resolved conflicts, noted in Chapter 1. Republished in ten trade paperbacks and clearly separated by location, local conflicts and theme, *Y: The Last Man*'s constituent story arcs accommodate isolated analysis. This chapter focuses on the opening arc 'Unmanned' (issues 1-5); 'Safeword' (issues 18-20), in which Yorick undergoes a suicide intervention that takes the form of a psychosexual interrogation; and 'Paper Dolls' (issues 37-39), in which a tabloid reporter learns of Yorick's existence and takes a nude photograph of him with the intention of publicising it globally.

Seeking the sense of an ending in *A Boy and His Dog* and the *Vic and Blood* comics

Reading *A Boy and His Dog* as a reflection of wider reactions to 'Nixon's presidency, the rekindling of the Cold War and the aloof attitude of the nation's leaders in regard to the wishes of the people', Craig W. Anderson suggests that the film articulates the belief that 'freedom is what counts – fight the system, whatever it may be, but be free'.[20] The affirmative message that Anderson discerns is not simply debatable, as this analysis will show, but also dangerous when considered alongside Russ's account of the 'system's' scapegoating of women. That the nature of the conflict and the threat, 'whatever it may be', are also amorphous speaks more to a contemporaneous sense of male frustration and confusion than a clear-cut resistant agenda. *A Boy and His Dog* was released in the USA in November 1975, shortly after American troops fully withdrew from the Vietnam War, a pivotal event within the historical narrative of male disillusionment in the USA examined by Susan Faludi. Faludi describes the betrayal of the promise of a 'mission to manhood' passed down from the generation that fought and won in World War II to baby boomers. This supposed male birthright comprised a share in the glory of the eternally resurrected frontier myth, military victory involving well-defined enemies and objectives, familial status, power and responsibility, and brotherhood, both in

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[19] Julia Round, '"Is this a Book?" DC Vertigo and the Redefinition of Comics in the 1990s', in *The Rise of the American Comics Artist: Creators and Contexts*, ed. by Paul Williams and James Lyons (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2010), pp. 14-30 (p. 22).
[20] Craig W. Anderson, *Science Fiction Films of the Seventies* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1985), p. 101.

war and business.[21] These prospects were confounded by the unclear conflicts and violence against civilians that characterised the Vietnam War and the challenges to traditional familial and social values posed by second-wave feminism that awaited returning soldiers.[22]

Though obviously not historical analogies, the *Vic and Blood* stories and adaptations reflect this male disenchantment. Most obviously, the film's characterisation and punishment of Quilla June presents a particularly aggressive response to the incursion of women's discontent with their social status upon male interests, although she is hardly a feminist character. Apparently speaking to the aforementioned frontier ideal, the film's opening credits are accompanied by an expositional voiceover in which Blood enthusiastically appeals to the myth of the self-reliant masculine pioneer: 'civilisation lies smothering and decaying under an ocean of mud belonging to anyone who's strong enough to dig, and fight, and take it for his own'. However, this national myth is steadily undermined, beginning with the impression of territorial shrinkage rather than expansion generated by allusions to the paedophilic slave driver Fellini's takeover of local towns and 'roverpaks' (groups of teenaged boys who work together to survive, in contrast to 'solos' like Vic). In their treatment of this threat, the comics and the film refuse the Manichean conflict observed in Broderick's model of the heroic post-apocalyptic films of the 1980s.[23] Diverging even from *Waterworld* (Kevin Reynolds, 1995) and *The Postman* (Kevin Costner, 1997), discussed in Chapter 2 as narratives which initially draw parallels between savage marauders and selfish heroes that are exorcised through the journey, the *Vic and Blood* adaptations thwart any expectation of a clear-cut conflict with an oppressive evil, let alone a masculinising victory. Fellini is a background figure known primarily by reputation, and appears only fleetingly in the film (portrayed by Ron Feinberg) and the comic 'Run, Spot, Run'.

The sole promise that the film in particular appears to gratify is the ideal of enduring brotherhood, celebrated in the contrast drawn between the manipulative Quilla June and the endlessly loyal dog who waits for his master at the entrance to Topeka. However, the following discussion uncovers a greater ambivalence regarding male friendship. This ambivalence ties into the problematic status of endings and destinations in the *Vic and Blood* comic and film adaptations.

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[21] Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the Modern Man* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), p. 26.
[22] Faludi, p. 29.
[23] Mick Broderick, 'Surviving Armageddon: Beyond the Imagination of Disaster', *Science-Fiction Studies*, 20 (1993), 362-82 (p. 376).

Significantly, Ellison's *Vic and Blood* saga is incomplete. 'Run, Spot, Run' finishes with a cliff-hanger that sees Blood fleeing a horde of gigantic spiders as they ensnare Vic, who has become depressed and resentful of Blood following the slaughter of Quilla June, in a substantial tonal departure from the film. Although Ellison states in the 2003 compilation of his short stories and their comic book adaptations, *Vic and Blood: The Continuing Adventures of A Boy and His Dog*, that he has completed the story in the form of a screenplay and intends to convert it into a novel, no further news has emerged regarding either work.[24] Whilst one may only speculate about Ellison's reasons for apparently abandoning the project, the following analysis reads the open structures of both adaptations and the journeys depicted therein in terms of their portrayal of a homosocial relationship that undermines the same mission to manhood it seemingly propels.

Just as Timothy Corrigan claims that the rise of the road film genre reflected male social disorientation following post-war transformations in the American family that upset traditional patriarchal authority,[25] the post-nuclear wasteland in the *Vic and Blood* adaptations is peppered with allusions to the absence of fathers and institutions concerned with the education and socialisation of young men. In Corben's adaptation of 'A Boy and His Dog', Vic and Blood's battle against a roverpak that pursues them and Quilla June unfolds in a dilapidated YMCA centre. His sexual relations hitherto limited to raping women who have ventured into the wasteland from the towns below, Vic's animalistic and macho aggression is first destabilised in the film when, after ambushing Quilla June and demanding that she undress, she asks for his full name ('Vic what?' 'Just Vic!') and subsequently presses him about his parents' surnames. Despite his initial dismissiveness, he looks nervously at the ground as he returns the gesture, thrown off guard by these pleasantries not only because they reveal the woman to have an identity beyond that of an anonymous victim and the passive object of the male gaze, but also because they introduce the alien subject of family.

Amid this absence of parental, especially paternal guidance, Vic and Blood's relationship displays several qualities of the 'holy marriage of males' that Leslie A. Fiedler observes within many male-authored American novels,[26] a

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[24] Ellison and Corben, p. 6.

[25] Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture after Vietnam* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. 144.

[26] Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), pp. 350-51.

relationship typically pursued in the wilderness and in isolation from civilisation and women, the 'feared and forbidden other'.[27] One partner is usually a child (here, Vic),[28] whilst their companion operates as a 'foster-father', among other roles.[29] Indeed, Shapiro has suggested that whilst the film's Vic is initially driven by the id, Blood represents the superego, the part of the psyche that internalises 'the father's law' by educating and preparing the individual for the wider world, providing goals and operating as a moral and social conscience.[30] This analogy is debatable; Blood gratifies Vic's immoral desires rather than simply repressing them, since he sniffs out women for Vic to assault. Nevertheless, Blood does incarnate several other aspects of the superego which, moreover, seemingly gratify the desire for 'coherent patterns', premised upon the identification of a definite endpoint, that Frank Kermode detects within apocalypticism.[31] Specifically, Blood's guidance introduces structure and goals to the undifferentiated geography and indefinite present of post-apocalyptic adolescence and the journey in the early 1970s road story.

This indeterminacy is visually manifest in *A Boy and His Dog*'s desert setting, which is loosely identified as Phoenix, Arizona, but sits above a town that borrows the name of Kansas's capital, Topeka. David Laderman has argued of American road films' frequent use of desert settings in the early 1970s that this open landscape evokes not freedom but 'entrapment' and disorientation, since it compromises the road narrative's prior visual and structural linearity.[32] Certainly, *A Boy and His Dog*'s shots of cars and telegraph poles swallowed up by the mud signal the burial of a pre-existing infrastructure, not to mention the loss of the promise of the technological induction into manhood discussed by Eyerman and Löfgren.[33] Laderman concludes that the desert thus epitomises the purposelessness and 'forlorn mood of wandering' that define the genre during this period.[34] This mood is actually more apparent in the *Vic and Blood* comics than the film. Here, despite the more varied landscapes roamed by the characters (including a harbour, a city and a wood), a despondent Vic complains that 'everyday's [*sic*] just like every

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[27] Fiedler, p. 348.
[28] Fiedler, p. 351.
[29] Fiedler, pp. 352.
[30] Shapiro, p. 163.
[31] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 17.
[32] David Laderman, *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), p. 107.
[33] Eyerman and Löfgren, p. 78.
[34] Laderman, p. 83.

other day, just hustling for food'.[35] Meanwhile, the film's Vic initially seems happy to remain in the undifferentiated desert wasteland, a space identified with adolescence in its liminality, the age of most of its occupants and its accommodation of the common cultural association of teenage experience with hedonism and freedom from societal responsibility. Nevertheless, since he proposes that they embark on a quest for a new Eden at the film's conclusion, Vic is evidently invested in the opportunity to progress beyond this aimlessness that Blood's tutelage ostensibly presents. Blood introduces a goal to their wanderings in his talk of 'Over the Hill', an agrarian 'promised land' where food is grown naturally rather than scavenged from cans. The name of this geographical destination also implies, however derogatively, the decline of youth. Blood's guidance, then, seemingly presents the teenager with a promise of progression and direction conspicuously lacking in other contemporaneous road films.

The quest for Over the Hill also represents an alternative means of reinvigorating the barren landscape to that favoured within the 'comic-romance' formula observed throughout earlier post-apocalyptic films by Peter C. Hall and Richard D. Erlich. The apocalyptic comic-romance envisages the rejuvenation of the wasteland through the formation of a fertile heterosexual couple,[36] as epitomised by *Five*'s (Arch Oboler, 1951) concluding image of a New Adam and Eve preparing to farm a newly virgin countryside. Hall and Erlich have claimed that *A Boy and His Dog* foils this formula through Vic's rejection of both Topeka, whose authoritarian politics 'cannot be reconciled with the anarchic, macho life of the surface', and a relationship with Quilla June.[37] More specifically, it can be argued that the film outwardly contrasts all sexual relationships with the equality, freedom and driving agrarian fantasy of its central asexual male friendship. *A Boy and His Dog* presents Fellini and Quilla June as unproductive, non-reproductive figures who depend parasitically on the labour of young men. Fellini subsists off cans of food dug up by his slaves, whilst Quilla June's coup apparently fails because Vic does not kill the Committee for her. Additionally, Fellini's caravan prefigures the 'gay S&M elements' and implicit 'non-productivity' of the Humungus's gang that Delia Falconer contrasts with the heterosexual '"breeeeeding"' static commune in *Mad*

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[35] Ellison and Corben, p. 12.

[36] Peter C. Hall and Richard D. Erlich, 'Beyond Topeka and Thunderdome: Variations on the Comic-Romance Pattern in Recent SF Film', *Science-Fiction Studies*, 14 (1987), 316-25 (p. 316).

[37] Hall and Erlich, p. 318.

Max 2: The Road Warrior (George Miller, 1981).[38] However, like Fellini, Quilla June longs to oppress, not reproduce. Her exchange with the Committee's sole female member, Miss Mez (Helene Winston), reveals that Topeka offers women two mutually exclusive paths: a position of relative power, albeit primarily secretarial, or 'getting married, making a home'. Conversely, the agrarian lifestyle of Over the Hill seems to promise the return of 'the productive effectivity which conferred social value on men'. As Jonathan Bignell notes, the apocalyptic rhetoric of Francis Fukuyama treats this as a work ethic under threat from 'feminine' consumer culture.[39] As a place where 'they grow food right out of the ground', Over the Hill compares favourably with an unsustainable reliance upon scavenged tins and the artificial rurality of Topeka, where the Committee's talk of sending disobedient civilians to 'the farm' represents a euphemism for execution. The role of fertilising the wasteland previously ascribed to the romantic couple and alluded to in Vic's original deal with Blood ('Find me a broad and we'll go to the promised land') is thus transferred to a male friendship that admits no romantic interlopers.

The recourse to an agrarian *fantasy* is, however, itself a refusal of productive and socially transformative action. Over the Hill is regarded as a ready-made utopia that is found rather than made: a distinction considered further in Chapter 4's examination of *The Road*. This recalls the 'urge to withdraw from civilisation's growing power and complexity' and return to a rural lifestyle's perceived 'simplicity' that Leo Marx detects within the sentimental pastoralism pervading American popular culture.[40] Marx notes that this mentality simultaneously treats the commodities of civilisation as if they originated in nature, overlooking the productive labour necessary to their creation.[41] This ignorance only increases in the *Vic and Blood* adaptations, which flout Philip Strick's claim that post-apocalyptic visions of moral, emotional and societal simplification realise the Transcendentalist belief that 'man lives best from his own resources of courage, energy and industry'.[42] *A Boy and His Dog*'s Vic associates Over the Hill with 'relax[ing] and hav[ing] fun' rather than labour. Moreover, Blood's hollow attempts to reassure Vic

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[38] Delia Falconer, '"We Don't Need to Know the Way Home": The Disappearance of the Road in the *Mad Max* Trilogy', in *The Road Movie Book*, ed. by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 249-70 (p. 262).

[39] Jonathan Bignell, *Postmodern Media Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 69.

[40] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Idea in America*, 2nd rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 9.

[41] Marx, pp. 7-8.

[42] Philip Strick, *Science Fiction Movies* (London: Octopus, 1976), p. 82.

of the temporariness of their nomadic lifestyle in the comic 'Eggsucker' look to a nebulous 'other' to accomplish change: 'one day soon, someone's going to settle down and start a farm and after a while, it'll be a real settlement'.[43] Thus, the prospect of Over the Hill transforming the teenager into a working man is undercut by a greater investment in the pastoral impulse as passive, 'infantile wish-fulfilment'.[44]

That Vic and Blood's friendship works against any possibility of community further undermines its potential as a path to maturity. Comparing *A Boy and His Dog* with *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* (Miller and George Ogilvie, 1985), Hall and Erlich suggest that both films' protagonists initially occupy a state of 'boyhood and macho' aggression in the wasteland. Only Max, however, progresses 'to manhood and adult heroism',[45] since he sacrifices a place with the utopic child colony by staying behind to defend their escape by plane, thus ensuring that their new civilisation will not be tainted by the 'macho ideals that helped bring about the apocalypse'.[46] In the *Vic and Blood* comics, Blood's guidance and companionship repeatedly thwart Vic's social integration. In 'Eggsucker', Vic strikes up a friendship with a group of boys on an off-shore armoury, a small manufacturer that actually realises the aforementioned fantasy of masculine productivity. However, the drive towards 'the ultimate recognition of one's self as unique' that Martin Flanagan notes within American teen narratives compromises Vic's ties with this community.[47] After passing on one of Blood's warnings regarding Fellini's gradual takeover of the area, Vic is viewed with suspicion; as the canine narrator explains in Ellison's original story, 'he'd made himself look different, set himself apart'.[48] The individuation granted by Blood's tutelage forecloses socialisation completely when one boy subsequently mocks the dog with the eponymous petty insult and is attacked by Blood. In the ensuing struggle, Vic kills the boy to protect Blood: a move that costs him the armourer's services and companionship. Especially in the comics, the exclusivity of Vic's telepathic bond with a mentor who seems to promise adult knowledge and purpose prevents him from finding a place even within like-minded social groups, let alone Topeka.

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[43] Ellison and Corben, p. 12.
[44] Marx, p. 11.
[45] Hall and Erlich, p. 323.
[46] Hall and Erlich, p. 322.
[47] Martin Flanagan, 'Teen Trajectories in *Spider-Man* and *Ghost World*', in *Film and Comic Books*, ed. by Ian Gordon, Mark Jancovich and Matthew P. McAllister (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), pp. 137-59 (p. 148).
[48] Ellison and Corben, p. 28.

Whilst the comics and the film remain cynical about Vic's capacity to mature through social integration or productive labour, they approach the question of Vic's psychological, moral and emotional development differently following his experiences with Quilla June. This distinction corresponds broadly to their varying characterisations of Topeka and Vic's underground journey. Whereas Chapter 2 discussed the vertical trajectories of the protagonists in *Waterworld* and *The Postman* as an expression of their relation to larger social transformations, in the *Vic and Blood* adaptations these movements correspond to psychological changes. Surface-dweller Vic's descent and escape in the comic book adaptation of 'A Boy and His Dog' expose the buried Electral desires of Quilla June's family. Vic uses the distraction presented by Quilla June's exposed genitals to assault her incestuous father, whilst Quilla June gleefully fires at her mother during their escape. Conversely, Hall and Erlich have claimed that Vic's reascent 'marks his transition from unconscious, instinctive motivation to full consciousness' in the film, as signalled by his 'ethical' decision not to kill Topeka's Committee when Quilla June demands it and his choice to help Blood rather than the manipulative woman.[49] In examining the texts' differing treatments and spatial representations of the aftermath of Quilla June's slaughter, however, it becomes clear that Hall and Erlich, like Anderson in his talk of 'fight[ing] the system', are overeager to read Vic's final actions as expressions of a definite political stance.[50]

By reimagining Ellison's sexually repressed Topeka as a town ruled by an authoritarian regime that executes inhabitants under the blanket charge of 'lack of respect, wrong attitude, failure to obey authority', *A Boy and His Dog* arguably taps into the cinematic fascination with the American anti-establishment youth culture that emerged in the 1960s. In Quilla June's lack of an agenda beyond seizing power and in Vic's behaviour, however, the film also shares the muddled sense of motivation and the counterculture's emphasis upon 'doing one's own thing' rather than 'goal-oriented action' that Mimi White observes throughout youth rebellion films of the early 1970s.[51] The fact that Vic does not kill the Committee stems less from an ethical choice than his indifference towards Topeka's political affairs. Uninterested even in avenging himself against the people who strapped him to a bed and rigged him up to a semen extraction machine, Vic desires to return to simpler

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[49] Hall and Erlich, p. 320.
[50] Anderson, p. 101.
[51] Mimi White, '1970: Movies and the Movement', in *American Cinema of the 1970s: Themes and Variations*, ed. by Lester D. Friedman (Oxford: Berg, 2007), pp. 24-47 (p. 32).

conflicts like 'a good straightforward fight with some son of a bitch over a can of beans', and only fires on Topeka's android guard to enable his escape.

In terms of this refusal of political engagement and the question of Vic's emotional and psychological development, it is significant that the film's closing static long shot, in which Vic and Blood head towards the horizon in search of their agrarian Eden, concludes with a freeze-frame. Along with slow-motion and crane shots, Laderman has discussed the freeze-frame as one of several formal features that visually immortalise travellers 'as mythical icons' of rebellion at the conclusion of road films ranging from *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969) to *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991).[52] Whereas *Thelma and Louise* portrays a final act of rebellion that is both victorious and tragic, however, the Committee dismissively regard Quilla June's attempted revolt and Vic's escape as a mere security hitch, and are last shown making arrangements to kidnap another boy for stud service. Accordingly, the aforementioned freeze-frame disrupts the impression of progression created by the pair's decisive talk of 'press[ing] on' towards Over the Hill and the final composition's departure from earlier, predominantly lateral and frontal tracking shots showing the travellers traipsing around the desert, in which they never appear to get any closer to the surrounding mountains (or, by implication, Over the Hill). Arresting Vic and Blood's motion the moment they elect to focus on a linear quest, this freeze-frame is comparable with a wider trend that Thomas Elsaesser observes within American cinema of the early 1970s: film-makers' struggle to articulate narratively a presumed 'post-rebellious lassitude' identified with contemporary youths.[53] Here, Elsaesser contrasts two co-existing constructions of white masculinity: the brutal, borderline hysterical cop and vigilante anti-heroes of films like *Dirty Harry* (Don Siegel, 1971), whose legacy is apparent in the *Judge Dredd* comics of the late 1970s discussed in Chapter 1, and the 'unmotivated hero' who 'keeps his cool' whilst expressing a mood of political resignation, apathy and self-pity.[54] Elsaesser states that films centring on the latter type of protagonist generally refuse the clear emotional, psychological and heterosexual goals commonplace in Classical Hollywood features, often employing the format of the road story to this end. Similarly, *A Boy and His Dog*'s closing

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[52] Laderman, p. 192.

[53] Thomas Elsaesser, 'The Pathos of Failure: American Films in the 1970s: Notes on the Unmotivated Hero', in *The Last Great American Picture Show: New Hollywood Cinema in the 1970s*, ed. by Thomas Elsaesser, Alexander Horwath and Noel King (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), pp. 279-92 (p. 282).

[54] Elsaesser, p. 283.

freeze-frame constitutes an aposiopesis, a trailing-off that reflects the characters' unchanged circumstances. The patriarchal forces of Topeka's Committee and Fellini remain unchallenged in their exploitation of surface-dwellers, whilst the possibility of Vic and Blood altering their lifestyle to accommodate the interests of anyone else is dismissed outright.

Here, it is important to note the film and comic adaptations' divergent treatments of Quilla June as the figure who introduces Vic to the concept of love (even if she is clearly not a loving figure in *A Boy and His Dog*). Ellison's original story 'A Boy and His Dog' suggests the development of greater emotional self-knowledge, albeit one apparently expressive of a rejection of heterosexual love. Vic progresses from scorn when Quilla June first asks him '"Do you know what love is?"',[55] to a confident closing statement: 'Sure I know. A boy loves his dog'.[56] As Vic walks into the sunrise in the film, the bemused tone of his dialogue momentarily hints at a nascent emotional consciousness, grappling with the alien concept of love: 'She said she loved me…'. However, the script swiftly reverts to viciously dark humour, as the travellers laugh at Blood's closing pun: 'she certainly had marvellous judgement, […] if not particularly good taste'. This compounds the aforementioned absence of change and demonstrates a continued attachment to 'instinctive motivation', contrary to Hall and Erlich's reading:[57] not only does Blood's pun reduce the learned cultural faculty of 'taste' to a matter of appetite, but the film omits the story's final expression of love. Conversely, the last of Corben's comic book adaptations, 'Run, Spot, Run', emphasises the emotional consequences of Quilla June's slaughter, as Vic is overcome by guilt and depression. As they wander aimlessly down the Ohio Turnpike, Blood consumes a mutated lizard that distorts the pair's telepathic connection and brings Blood into contact with the boy's subconscious, leading him to hallucinate an encounter with Quilla June's ghost. The comic articulates this emotional trauma through a distinct approach to motion.

'Run, Spot, Run' opens with two pages featuring strips of evenly sized panels that break down Vic's steps into individual frames, depicted from a fixed perspective. These sequences recall Eadweard Muybridge's proto-cinematic photographic studies of human locomotion; indeed, Scott Bukatman has argued that Muybridge's work, in 'posing the dimension of time on a visible linear

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[55] Ellison and Corben, p. 88.
[56] Ellison and Corben, p. 104.
[57] Hall and Erlich, p. 320.

continuum',[58] influenced the growth of a 'sense of continuous motion' in the comic strips of the late 1800s and early 1900s.[59] As Paul Atkinson observes, however, contemporary comic books typically 'accentuate[s] the key moments in the narrative, […] rather than the incremental divisions of any one movement'.[60] The representation of individual footsteps in 'Run, Spot, Run' is therefore unusual, especially given Corben's approach to pacing. Whilst Corben devotes only a few panels to capturing Topeka's claustrophobic atmosphere, telling rather than showing as he reproduces large expositional portions of Ellison's prose from 'A Boy and His Dog', he devotes several pages to violent action sequences and Quilla June's removal of her clothes before Vic ambushes her in the YMCA.

Compared to Corben's earlier cynical concessions to titillation, the effect of the protracted fixed perspective sequences in 'Run, Spot, Run' is more subtle. These segments exemplify the distinction Pascal Lefèvre draws between the generally 'greater impression of realism' generated by moving images in film,[61] and the total 'human-constructedness of images in comics', wherein artists' drawing styles and choices indicate an '*interpretation* of the reality' depicted.[62] In building the impression of motion from the blank page up, the comic artist selects particular perspectives, poses and compositions not only in order to convey the movement depicted and its velocity transparently, but also to generate certain narrative effects. Corben notably eschews the sense of place that Ellison's references to the Ohio Turnpike create in his original story. The minimal background detail included by Corben not only makes it easier to discern the movement the panels describe by focusing attention on Vic's body, but also removes an established linear route and suggests aimless movement in a void. Upsetting the road genre's usual celebration of 'travel for travel's sake',[63] these sequences demonstrate that Blood's companionship and mentorship have once again not enabled Vic to progress, but have instead arrested his emotional development by truncating the previously lust-driven teenager's bewildering first encounter with 'some human emotion like

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[58] Scott Bukatman, 'Comics and the Critique of Chronophotography, or "He Never Knew When It Was Coming!"', *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 1 (2006), 83-103 (p. 89).

[59] Bukatman, 'Comics and the Critique of Chronophotography', p. 90.

[60] Paul Atkinson, 'Movements within Movements: Following the Line in Animation and Comic Books', *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 4 (2009), 265-81 (p. 267).

[61] Pascal Lefèvre, 'Incompatible Visual Ontologies? The Problematic Adaptation of Drawn Images', in *Film and Comic Books*, ed. by Gordon, Jancovich and McAllister, pp. 1-12 (p. 6).

[62] Lefèvre, p. 9 (Lefèvre's emphasis).

[63] Laderman, p. 2.

love'.[64] This suggestion of stunted maturation is complemented by Vic's remarkably childlike proportions and features in the comics, in marked contrast to the casting of the then-twenty-six-year-old Don Johnson in the film. 'Run, Spot, Run', then, indicates the importance of recognising how comics can express characters' emotional subjectivities by rendering movement in different ways. This is a vital consideration for the study of road comics, and is revisited in Chapter 4's discussion of the similarly expressionistic, Corben-influenced artwork in Jeff Lemire's *Sweet Tooth* (2009-2013).[65]

Corben's stylistic attention to the traveller's subjectivity complements the greater concern with the psychological ramifications of violence that his comics share with Ellison's original stories, and differentiates them from a film adaptation which de-emphasises the characters' interior life in dispensing with the stories' first-person narration. This corresponds to the earlier account of the different psychological trajectories mapped out in the film and comic adaptations of 'A Boy and His Dog', where it was observed that Vic's descent and escape in the comic expose those compulsions and feelings that are submerged in Topeka and openly indulged on the surface. In its hallucinatory evocation of the return of the repressed, 'Run, Spot, Run' indicates, more strongly than the film, that Vic has been transformed by this experience. Returning from Topeka with Quilla June, he seems to have brought back both 'the repressed' (incarnated by woman) and an embryonic awareness of heterosexual love. On one level, 'Run, Spot, Run' appears simply to express those male insecurities about female bodies and desire that Barbara Creed associates with 'the monstrous-feminine',[66] as Vic's depression manifests itself as Quilla June's ghost, 'oozing' blood,[67] and gigantic spiders with 'unshaved legs'.[68] However, that the ghost serves narratively as an embodiment of Vic's hatred for the dog whose physical needs have deprived him of further knowledge of female desire indicates a resentment of the restrictions their asexual homosocial bond has placed upon his emotional development. That Blood abandons Vic out of fear when the boy is ensnared by the spiders exemplifies his psychological function throughout Ellison's stories and Corben's comics as an externalised superego that performs the

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[64] Ellison and Corben, p. 107.

[65] Jeff Lemire, 'Jeff Lemire's Favourite Post-Apocalyptic Comics', *Vertigo*, 31 August 2009 <http://www.vertigocomics.com/blog/2009/08/31/jeff-lemires-favorite-post-apocalyptic-comics> [accessed 18 August 2012] (para. 4 of 6).

[66] Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 2.

[67] Ellison and Corben, p. 108.

[68] Ellison and Corben, p. 127.

work of traumatic repression in ways likely to incur further trauma. This is most succinctly expressed in 'Eggsucker', where a dejected Vic recounts a disturbing encounter with a rival scavenger who 'kept saying please please please when [he] shot him', only for Blood to pose 'a decent firefight' as a solution for his dejection.[69] Whereas Vic previously speaks openly about the causes of his misery, it is as if his experiences in Topeka have completed the work of repression usually synonymous with the superego, to psychologically and socially devastating effect. That his subconscious blames and assaults Blood, moreover, indicates a refusal to recognise his own complicity in Quilla June's slaughter. Refusing to acknowledge the moral accountability that comes with adulthood, it is no wonder that, more than thirty years after Ellison wrote 'Run, Spot, Run', Vic remains trapped in 'that hellish place where the ghosts of dinners in blue dresses hobbled across the landscape'.[70]

The following discussion of *Y: The Last Man*'s adolescent road story continues this consideration of repressed sexual insecurities. Whilst the *Vic and Blood* adaptations demonise women and, in the case of the film, sexuality altogether, however, Brian K. Vaughan and Pia Guerra's comic endorses the erosion of certain heroic, hegemonic and phallic myths and illusions about manhood, sex and love that occurs throughout its protagonist's journey.

Love, sex and masculine disillusionment in *Y: The Last Man*

With the exception of Laurel Maury's *Los Angeles Times* review, which observes points of comparison and contrast with the literary genre of the *Bildungsroman*, few critics have read *Y: The Last Man* as a narrative about adolescent masculinity.[71] This is not altogether surprising. Aged twenty-two at the beginning of the story, Yorick is not a teenager insofar as this identity is conventionally understood. Studies of the teen film genre including David Considine's *The Cinema of Adolescence* (1985) and Timothy Shary's *Generation Multiplex* (2002) concentrate on texts concerning characters aged between twelve and twenty. As Shary writes, however, in the mid-1990s American sociologists began to discuss the 'elongation

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[69] Ellison and Corben, p. 12.
[70] Ellison and Corben, p. 116.
[71] Laurel Maury, 'If He Were the Last Man', *Los Angeles Times*, 7 February 2008 <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/feb/07/entertainment/et-book7> [accessed 10 December 2012] (para. 3 of 9).

of youth, or more specifically the delay of adulthood' among 'Generation X' youths, using factors like unemployment, being unmarried and a lack of financial independence as yardsticks for measuring the apparently stunted growth of an increasing proportion of young people.[72] Shary therefore concedes that adolescence is 'an ambiguous term that can be applied to youth [...] after 20'.[73] Media coverage of this phenomenon regularly emphasises a gender divide. As Lynne Segal notes, throughout the 1990s the Western media obscured contrasts between boys from different economic and ethnic backgrounds by broadly asserting that boys were '"losing out" to girls' from an early age, implying that female educational, social and economic progress was to blame for the crisis of masculinity among young men.[74] That such anxieties centred on economic issues corresponds with Barbara Ehrenreich's observation that the belief that maturity can be gauged through factors like employment and financial stability has historically been most insistently imposed upon men.[75]

Accordingly, *Y: The Last Man* begins by depicting Yorick's state of extended adolescence through contrasts formed with women. This anticipates the series' minimal attention to Yorick's pre-apocalyptic relationships with other men: an omission which reinforces the mystique that manhood possesses for him. Set immediately before the 'gendercide' that wipes out every other man on Earth, the first issue introduces Yorick as an unemployed graduate who lacks the practical skills or drive to survive in the world of work. He has recently volunteered to train a helper monkey, Ampersand, in the hopes of making a productive social contribution, but has yet to accomplish even the apparently simple task of toilet-training him. Prefiguring his unusual road journey, Yorick's immaturity is underlined by a gendered contrast between domestic confinement and free movement. An aspiring magician, he is first seen practicing an escape from a straitjacket in his apartment whilst talking on the phone with his girlfriend Beth, who is shown running through the Australian Outback, where she is participating in a humanitarian project. Contrasting himself with 'the rest of my globetrotting friends [who] are all off saving the world', Yorick's confession that he is becoming

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[72] Timothy Shary, *Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), p. 287.
[73] Shary, p. 19.
[74] Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, 3rd edn (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. xx-xxi.
[75] Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (London: Anchor, 1983), p. 18.

a recluse in Beth's absence reinforces a lack of social and financial independence.[76] In the form of a telephone call from his congresswoman mother and televised news footage featuring another major character, the Israeli colonel Alter, politically influential women subsequently intrude on the juvenile clutter of the toy- and poster-filled apartment. Yorick's immaturity is thus implicitly aligned with insecurities concerning young men's social place as women gain increasing levels of power and independence.

As the series progresses, however, any expectation of an adversarial dynamic between men and women is largely displaced in favour of a greater emphasis upon Yorick's more abstract struggle with a set of cultural ideals concerning masculinity. That Yorick later refers to the condition of being the last man on Earth as a 'job' connects his pre-apocalyptic lack of professional experience with his belief that he has failed to perform the social and sexual responsibilities of this popular post-apocalyptic figure.[77] An overview of the representation of 'the last man' in earlier and contemporaneous literary and cinematic examples will help bring these generically derived expectations into focus.

Conceptualising 'last masculinity'

As the term suggests, last man on Earth narratives usually concentrate on male survivors. Last woman on Earth narratives are comparatively rare, and tend to position the lone female survivor primarily as a 'New Eve' to two, often competing 'New Adams', as demonstrated in *Five*, *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* (Ranald MacDougall, 1959) and *The Quiet Earth* (Geoff Murphy, 1985). In texts centring on what originally appears to be an apocalyptic disaster's only human survivor, that subject is almost invariably male: a trend borne out by novels ranging from Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826) and M.P. Shiel's *The Purple Cloud* (1901) to Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954) and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003).

Three narrative formulas dominate last man stories. The first of these is the aforementioned 'New Adam and Eve'/love triangle story popular in film. The second formula concerns a retrospective reflection upon humanity's downfall. This

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[76] Brian K. Vaughan, Pia Guerra and José Marzán, Jr., *Y: The Last Man, The Deluxe Edition, Book 1* (New York: Vertigo, 2008), p. 20.
[77] Brian K. Vaughan, Pia Guerra and José Marzán, Jr., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 5: Ring of Truth* (New York: Vertigo, 2005), p. 163.

premise pervades the original European wave of last man poems, plays and novels throughout the early 1800s. These Romantic texts regularly cast the last man as a non-descript chronicler of human history. The third narrative formula at once explores psychological experiences of isolation more extensively and tempers this theme by placing one man or a small group of surviving men within a world in which a new regime is beginning to emerge, often under a non-human or post-human species, as seen in *Oryx and Crake* and *I Am Legend*, or women, as in *Y: The Last Man*. Elements of all of these premises raise important considerations for the discussion of masculinity in *Y: The Last Man*, which can be brought into sharper focus by considering the gendering of the last man.

A.J. Sambrook has argued that Romantic last man literature arose from competing French and British utopian and catastrophic attitudes regarding the future of civilisation throughout the late 1700s. This debate revealed writers and philosophers' interest in the idea of humanity's 'progress towards perfection on earth'.[78] Whilst many Romantic last man texts describe tragic decline rather than evolutionary triumph, both variations on this teleological view appear increasingly integral to later last man narratives. Whilst the last man's survival is usually the result of a biological fluke, either the survivor or the text itself often characterise him as either an 'ultimate' or 'terminal' figure.

In the latter case, the last man is perceived as the final representative of the values and prejudices of a defunct order. In *Y: The Last Man*, Yorick is treated as a scapegoat for the prejudice and abuse women have endured under patriarchy by Victoria, an intensely problematic incarnation of vicious stereotypes of the feminist as a monstrous lesbian whose sexuality is understood as a symptom of misandry rather than a matter of love. Victoria exploits women's fear and diminished access to vital supplies after the disaster by promising them security as one of her brain-washed 'Daughters of the Amazon'. This group seeks to eliminate all traces of patriarchal ideology, primarily through the defacement of buildings associated with male-led institutions (themselves significant features considered throughout this analysis), rather than through progressive socio-political reconstruction. Victoria's pursuit of Yorick emblematises last-man-as-terminal-man narratives' use of the ideological tension between old and new orders as a central narrative conflict. Most examples end with the last man's self-destruction or exile rather than adaptation: an

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[78] A.J. Sambrook, 'A Romantic Theme: The Last Man', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 2 (1966), 25-33 (p. 25).

aspect that *Y: The Last Man* engages with in striking ways by treating the old patriarchal order as the principal source of Yorick's anxieties.

Other literary and cinematic last man narratives conform to W. Warren Wagar's claim that the last man often represents an exceptional individual 'of immeasurable power and importance' who, regardless of who 'he was before the end', 'is now someone to reckon with'.[79] Although he ultimately rues his violent, selfish and misogynistic behaviour, Adam Jeffson in Shiel's novel *The Purple Cloud* embodies this tendency, hyperbolically declaring, 'there were many men to the eye, but there was One only, really: and I was he […] and the rest of men not much'.[80] In such narcissistic incarnations, the last man regards his survival as evidence of his own universal worth and, moreover, as a mark of masculine superiority. As various film adaptations of *I Am Legend* demonstrate, even Hollywood films lacking such explicit comparisons have increasingly favoured images of the last man as a prime physical and intellectual specimen. Matheson's factory worker Robert Neville is reinvented as a physically disciplined military scientist in *The Omega Man* (Boris Sagal, 1971), starring Charlton Heston, and *I Am Legend* (Francis Lawrence, 2007), starring Will Smith. Whereas Matheson's Neville is a 'legend' because his genocidal vampire-slaying campaigns have struck fear into their immune mutant descendants, Janani Subramanian observes that 'Smith's Neville – like Heston's – owes his legendary status […] to his role as a typical, self-sacrificial and physically battered Hollywood protagonist'.[81] Hollywood last man narratives, then, frequently glorify their protagonists as masculine martyrs who enable humanity to reclaim the Earth.

Hollywood's heroic last men depart substantially from Romantic literature's anonymous narrators. However, critical accounts of last men's gendered and racial characterisation have only recently begun to emerge, the most prominent trend being a cluster of insightful articles regarding the cinematic representation of African-American protagonists in *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* and *I Am Legend*.[82] The following discussion of *Y: The Last Man* positions itself between this

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[79] W. Warren Wagar, *Terminal Visions: The Literature of Last Things* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 74.

[80] M.P. Shiel, *The Purple Cloud* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), pp. 133-34.

[81] Janani Subramanian, 'Alienating Identification: Black identity in *The Brother from Another Planet* and *I Am Legend*', *Science Fiction Film and Television*, 3 (2010), 37-56 (p. 49).

[82] See Stéphanie Larrieux, 'The World, the Flesh, and the Devil: The Politics of Race, Gender, and Power in Post-Apocalyptic Hollywood Cinema', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 27 (2010), 133-43; Claire Sisco King, 'Legendary Troubles: Trauma, Masculinity, and Race in *I Am Legend*', in *Millennial Masculinity*, ed. by Shary, pp. 243-64.

character-based focus and earlier work that concentrates on the vast, impersonal forces and themes suggested by such films' urban imagery. Last man films including *Five*, *The Omega Man*, *The Quiet Earth* and *I Am Legend* open with a spectacular reveal: a long shot of the eerily desolate city that diverts attention from the lone survivor's movements therein. This tendency has led Susan Sontag to concentrate upon science fiction cinema's 'dispassionate, aesthetic view of destruction and violence'.[83] Similarly, Vivian Sobchack addresses the last man film purely in terms of the abandoned cityscape's evocation of the limitations and historical temporariness of human technological conquest and control.[84] These studies invite comparison with Morton D. Paley's claim that the last man narrative 'emphasises the type rather than the individual'.[85] The last man who wanders through an empty world seems to figure in such analyses as a compositional feature that draws more attention to the post-apocalyptic *absence* of human activity.

In literary and cinematic incarnations, the characterisation and study of the last man on Earth are poised between his anonymity and assertions of his exceptionality. *Y: The Last Man* challenges both characterisations. Telling the story of a 'last boy on Earth' struggling to learn what it is to be a man,[86] the comic interrogates the sexual and power fantasies synonymous with (if not always endorsed unreservedly in) last man narratives. Instead, this adolescent voyage emphasises the limitations of individual political, social and sexual agency.

Reclaiming the personal in *Y: The Last Man*

As part of its critique of generic conceptualisations of heroic 'last masculinity' and patriarchal constructions of powerful phallic masculinity more generally, *Y: The Last Man* moves beyond the anonymous nature of the last man in earlier treatments by developing an intensified focus upon personal interactions and emotions, visually, structurally and through its combination of the road story and post-apocalyptic science fiction. Largely dispensing with the remote views of the cityscape familiar from many last man on Earth films, principal artist Pia Guerra favours panel compositions that foreground human subjects. In contrast to the

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[83] Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Anchor, 1966), p. 216.
[84] Vivian Sobchack, *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*, 2nd edn (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), pp. 118-19.
[85] Morton D. Paley, 'Introduction', in Mary Shelley, *The Last Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. vii-xxiii (p. xviii).
[86] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Book 1*, p. 244.

continuous action and explosive splash panels of 'The Cursed Earth', examined in Chapter 1, *Y: The Last Man* is dominated by lengthy sequences of dialogue delivered in close-ups and 'medium shots'. The main exception to this aesthetic is posed by the splash page that concludes the first story arc, 'Unmanned', which presents an aerial view of Yorick, Agent 355 and Allison standing at a Y-shaped intersection in Boston, contemplating whether they should head towards Washington D.C. or Allison's laboratory in San Francisco, or look for Yorick's girlfriend in Australia.[87] The road dwarfs the three figures, not only foreshadowing the scale of their journey, but also introducing the comic's concern with the pressures and dictates of wider cultural and social constructions of masculinity that bear down on Yorick.

Y: The Last Man is clearly intended to be read as a question as well as a title: why is Yorick the last man? The final panel of 'Unmanned' gestures towards two possible answers, initially framing the journey as a search for objective spiritual and scientific explanations regarding the origins of the pandemic and the reasons for Yorick's immunity. The forked road resembles the comic's logo: a jagged silhouetted figure crucified on a large 'Y'. It also reproduces the common misconception that the Y chromosome is Y-shaped, recalling Jackie Stacey's description of the double helix and the mise-en-scène of contemporary films about genetic engineering as attempts to give 'architectural shape to the mysterious processes of invisible cellular activity' believed to contain a incontrovertible 'knowledge about human life'.[88] Both aspects suggest that Yorick's manhood and status as the last man can be validated by elements that transcend the realms of human opinion and debate: divine destiny or the presumed certainties of genetics. By *Y: The Last Man*'s conclusion, however, faith and interest in both fate and the biosciences' capacity to illuminate the reasons for the plague and Yorick's continued existence have diminished. The scientific revelations towards which the series seemingly builds prove emotionally or logically 'unsatisfying'.[89] Halfway through the series, Allison discovers that Yorick only survived because the poorly toilet-trained Ampersand, revealed to be an escaped laboratory animal, transmitted a genetically engineered antibody via his faeces. The explanation dismays Yorick, who had been hoping that his survival was the result of fate, indicating a

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[87] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Book 1*, p. 131.

[88] Jackie Stacey, *The Cinematic Life of the Gene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 5.

[89] Brian K. Vaughan, Pia Guerra and José Marzán, Jr., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 10: Whys and Wherefores* (New York: Vertigo, 2008), p. 58.

characteristically apocalyptic desire for a higher authority that can impart a sense of purpose and direction. Though dramatically anticlimactic, not to mention typical of the teen genre's scatological preoccupations,[90] the revelation begins to liberate Yorick from his prior dependence upon remote cultural and social dictates and examples.

For Yorick, the prime authority that determines his understanding of masculinity is the mass media. His continual allusions to popular film, literature, music and comics both demonstrate this recluse's lack of direct life experience and frequently reveal a tendency to view masculinity less as a pluralistic range of diverse legitimate identities than as a ranked scale. Here, the titular question of why Yorick is the last man shifts from a search for the reasons for his survival to a concern with what 'qualifies' him for this perceived responsibility. For instance, he compares himself unfavourably with Clint Eastwood and Chuck Palahniuk, men he considers to be 'substantially better suited to' a role as 'the protagonist of [what he initially understands as] some predestined epic quest'.[91] Although Yorick does not recognise it, this choice of masculine idols is ironic. Shari Roberts has observed a 'desire, perhaps Quixotic, for heroism' in Eastwood's road films.[92] Chuck Palahniuk's novels often feature turbulent portrayals of gender, as exemplified by *Fight Club*'s (1996) rudderless and disillusioned men. Chopra-Gant has discussed this novel's film adaptation (David Fincher, 1999) as a critique of attempts to realise the absent father's socialising function through 'representations of aspirational male figures' within late capitalist consumer culture.[93] Similarly, as Yorick struggles to transition from boyhood to manhood, the story arc 'Safeword' reveals his references to media images of masculinity to be self-destructive defence mechanisms, through which he simultaneously denies and compounds insecurities regarding his identity as the last man on Earth.

In 'Safeword', 355's colleague Agent 711 stages an intervention after deducing from 355's journals that Yorick has become suicidal. As the arc begins, 355, Allison and Yorick are being chased by a group of Coloradan farmers who mistake them for raiders. In a successful but reckless attempt to resolve the minor altercation that follows, Yorick (who, as per all of his appearances in public, wears

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[90] Benjamin, p. 35.
[91] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 5,* p. 163.
[92] Shari Roberts, 'Western Meets Eastwood: Genre and Gender on the Road', in *The Road Movie Book*, ed. by Cohan and Hark, pp. 45-69 (p. 66).
[93] Chopra-Gant, p. 91.

a disguise that conceals his maleness) threatens one pursuer's horse with a knife and a slew of pop culture references: 'Reach for the sky, pardners! Or I turn Black Beauty here into a prop from *The Godfather*'.[94] Undertaken whilst 355 and Allison head into a nearby city to find antibiotics for the ailing Ampersand, 711's intervention reveals that these moments of apparent heroic action were actually suicidal. As she observes on his behalf, 'you [knew] that if you threw yourself into enough dangerous situations, sooner or later… someone would put a hole in your head for you'.[95] 711 reaches this conclusion through an interrogation in which she uncovers Yorick's gendered and sexual anxieties by playing on the generic expectations attached to the last man on Earth as the 'ultimate man' ('whether you like it or not, you're the greatest man alive now'),[96] and as a New Adam ('This is your duty. Your sperm is mankind's last hope').[97] Yorick tries to evade her aggressive questioning through continued pop culture allusions, but ultimately discloses his 'Catholic guilt' regarding sex, his uncertainty over whether he is 'tough' enough to cope with the disaster, and his survivor's guilt. Reflecting on his first suicide attempt, Yorick expresses his desire to die in terms that suggest a wish to skip over the uncertain state of transition represented by adolescence and the road story: 'I felt this … this intense jealousy for all the other guys around me. It was like, they had crossed the finish line already, you know? But I still had a million laps to run'.[98] Whilst Wagar suggests that the last man is rendered a ready-made master of the world by the mere fact of his survival,[99] Yorick's statement indicates a distressed consciousness of the fact that his social and adult identity is a work-in-progress, and a wish for the fixity (and simultaneous erasure) of self that comes with death. The media images through which Yorick unfavourably rates his masculine worth and denies trauma signal and introduce pressures that threaten to destroy the individual altogether. Far more resonant than later scientific discoveries, the personal revelations in 'Safeword' pave the way for an approach to the last man narrative that recognises the unattainability of heroic ideals of white masculinity.

In particular, *Y: The Last Man* pragmatically recognises its adolescent last man's necessarily limited social, political and sexual agency. The series'

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[94] Brian K. Vaughan, Pia Guerra, Goran Parlov and José Marzán, Jr., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 4: Safeword* (New York: Vertigo, 2004), pp. 14-15.
[95] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 4*, p. 61.
[96] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 4*, p. 44.
[97] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 4*, p. 48.
[98] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 4*, p. 60.
[99] Wagar, p. 74.

overarching narrative structure is telling here. Culminating in 'Safeword', the series' first half focuses more intensively on the psychological damage wrought by Yorick's insecurities. The latter half expands in scope, taking the travellers outside the USA to Australia, Japan, China and France, delving further into the relationships and histories of Yorick's sister Hero, Agent 355, Allison and Alter, and portraying the erosion of Yorick's self-destructive illusions about masculinity and love. In the process, the comic touches on myriad national and international consequences of the gendercide, including unrest over the US presidency, lasting damage to transport and communications infrastructures, and a booming global heroin trade. Significantly, though, *Y: The Last Man* rejects the popular post-apocalyptic premise of the nomadic outsider who saves the local community discussed by Broderick.[100]

Discussing the American comic genre most obviously 'concerned with how the (usually male) adolescent ego develops into a flexible, mature, and socially viable adult identity',[101] Flanagan states that the superhero narrative's preoccupation with 'the ultimate recognition of one's self as unique and powerful' has been insistently articulated through 'the hero's sense of connection' with the wider community in several post-9/11 examples.[102] As considered below, *Y: The Last Man* makes various allusions to the superhero genre. However, in its combination of complementary elements of the serialised road narrative and the *Bildungsroman*, the series refuses to pretend that wider social and political problems can be easily resolved by the contributions of one, not especially politically aware man. Indeed, Yorick's appearances in communities like Marrisville, the self-sufficient town he visits in the comic's second story arc, put locals in danger. Like Chapter 1's case study 'The Cursed Earth', *Y: The Last Man* exhibits the same episodic 'semi-anthology' structure that Mark Alvey observes in the road-based television series *Route 66* (1960-1964), where the journey serves as a framing device, bringing the travellers into contact with a new community and a new local problem in each instalment.[103] It was observed in Chapter 1 that the transitory nature of Judge Dredd's presence in each community he visits during 'The Cursed Earth' fosters a 'hands-off' approach in which the authoritarian

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[100] Broderick, 'Surviving Armageddon', p. 362.
[101] Flanagan, p. 138.
[102] Flanagan, p. 148.
[103] Mark Alvey, 'Wanderlust and Wire Wheels: The Existentialist Search of *Route 66*', in *The Road Movie Book,* ed. by Cohan and Hark, pp. 143-64 (p. 147).

character advocates self-governance. Although the journey challenges some of his prejudices, however, the serial never questions Dredd's authority to make the correct decision regarding each conflict. Conversely, *Y: The Last Man* emphasises Yorick's lack of social and political influence, as the result of both the brevity of his encounters with fixed local communities and characters and his unusual situation within an unusual division between the public sphere of physical action and the private, usually domestic sphere.

Reading this public/private dichotomy in relation to Tudor Oltean's medium-neutral model of the 'fundamental dialectics of the serial paradigm' proves revealing with regard to gender. Oltean writes that serials are conventionally structured around the 'relationship between movement (direct presentation of events, or enactment) and stasis (what happens in-between the episodes, intervals of narrative non-belligerence)'.[104] The road narrative renders Oltean's movement-based analogy explicit, as Mills demonstrates in her analysis of gender in *Route 66*. Mills argues that *Route 66* distinguished itself from the traditionally 'feminine', because domestic, associations of television by its adherence to the common analogy between masculinity and motion,[105] demanding that its male protagonists resist sexual commitments and stick to the road 'in order to stay manly through the wasteland of prime-time television'.[106] Whilst comics are not bound to the same gendered site of consumption, it is remarkable that many arcs in *Y: The Last Man* place Agent 355 and occasionally Allison within the public, 'masculine' sphere of physical action, where they deal with external obstacles affecting the journey's progress, yet relegate Yorick to the static, domestic sphere, where his identity can be shielded from the public. Although story arcs in the series' latter half usually alternate between these spheres every few pages, earlier stories like 'Safeword' concentrate exclusively on Yorick's conversations with a female character living locally. In addition to recognising that global issues cannot be resolved by this lone survivor, then, *Y: The Last Man* is structured in a way that denies Yorick public agency.

In substituting male action for the exploration of personal anxieties, desires and beliefs through conversation, arcs like 'Safeword' bear out the *Bildungsroman*'s refusal of the focus on the 'acts and achievements' and 'manliness

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[104] Tudor Oltean, 'Series and Seriality in Media Culture', *European Journal of Communication*, 8 (1993), 5-31 (p. 13).
[105] Mills, p. 69.
[106] Mills, p. 81.

expected of a proper hero', remarked by Michael Minden.[107] Rather, Minden writes that the *Bildungsroman* concentrates on the young man's mistakes and uncertainty regarding his path and identity,[108] eschewing external conflicts such as romantic rivalries (the defining element of last man 'love triangle' films) in favour of exploring internalised 'problems of subjectivity'.[109] In *Y: The Last Man*, these problems stem largely from Yorick's insecurities regarding love, sex and his body.

'They can say "fuck" in comic books?': Talking sex on and off the road

In its candid approach to the subject of sex, *Y: The Last Man* is representative of the attention to mature themes that, from the late 1980s onwards, has led the media to proclaim the rise of the graphic novel as a sign that comics have finally 'grown up'.[110] Many academics have refuted such reductive and uninformed claims, Richard Corben's work as part of the countercultural underground comix movement that emerged in the late 1960s being one example of the medium's established adult address. Bradford W. Wright argues that two texts that originally generated such headlines, Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986) and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen* (1986-1987), perpetuated the medium's reputation in the USA as, 'essentially[,] the domain of superheroes and male adolescent fantasies'.[111] *Y: The Last Man* self-consciously acknowledges this reputation in a scene where Yorick sparks a conversation about comics by giving Agent 355 a piece of comic book merchandise: a lighter fashioned after the one carried by the protagonist of another Vertigo-published apocalyptic road story, *Preacher* (1995-2000), engraved with the phrase 'Fuck Communism'. Answering her question in the very act of asking it within the pages of a comic, 355 replies 'They can say "fuck" in comic books?', before noting that such things never happened in *Superman*,[112] the key property of adult imprint Vertigo's parent company DC Comics and the *ur*-text of the 'juvenile' superhero genre. In addition to acknowledging the vacillating popular perception of comics as both adult art form and puerile entertainment (*Preacher*'s combination of religious critique and 'gross-out' humour being a case in point), this

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[107] Minden, p. 3.
[108] Minden, p. 5.
[109] Minden, p. 2.
[110] Roger Sabin, *Adult Comics: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 87.
[111] Bradford W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 262.
[112] Brian K. Vaughan, Pia Guerra, Paul Chadwick, and José Marzán, Jr., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 3: One Small Step* (New York: Vertigo, 2004), p. 9.

exchange also highlights *Y: The Last Man'* emphasis upon talking about 'fuck[ing]' (and frequently avoiding it in the process), rather than the actual sexual activity that preoccupies millennial teen 'sex-quest' films about losing one's virginity or discovering exotic sexual experiences.[113]

The comic's displacement of procreative sex is noteworthy in view of the post-apocalyptic preoccupation with fertilising the wasteland discussed by Hall and Erlich.[114] As a road narrative, *Y: The Last Man* does not pause long enough in any one location to imagine the on-going 'economic and political reorganisation of society' under women in anything approaching the detail Peter Fitting has observed within feminist utopian novels of the 1970s.[115] One fact the reader does learn about this new female world in the series' epilogue issue is that Allison's research into cloning has ensured the continuation of the human race and the gradual reintroduction of a few men, cloned from Yorick. In rejecting a heteronormative model of biological reproduction, the comic departs from the visions of female-dominated societies delivered in the male-authored 'sex war' dystopian and apocalyptic science fiction literature examined by Joanna Russ. Russ observes that these misogynistic texts treat the female assumption of power as disastrous and unnatural, and demand a male sexual victory revolving around a 'phallic display' that identifies the male genitalia as a 'Sacred Object' incarnating masculinity's indisputable authority and superiority.[116] In these stories, every interaction between women and men is reduced to the abstract scenario of 'a vagina acknowledging a godlike phallus, which is attached to nobody': an encounter devoid of psychological, emotional or human aspects.[117] *Y: The Last Man* rejects this phallocentricism and its impersonal qualities. Most women, including those who meet Yorick or who entertain rumours about the existence of a last man, do not regard the reinstatement of a system of biological reproduction as an urgent priority, whilst the general public is increasingly indifferent to 'farcical tales about last men'.[118] Yorick's lack of social and political influence and agency, then, extends to

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[113] Shary, p. 227.
[114] Hall and Erlich, p. 316
[115] Peter Fitting, '"So We All Became Mothers": New Roles for Men in Recent Utopian Fiction', *Science-Fiction Studies*, 12 (1985), 156-83 (p. 157).
[116] Joanna Russ, '*Amor Vincit Foeminam*: The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction', *Science-Fiction Studies*, 7 (1980), 2-15 (p. 3).
[117] Russ, '*Amor Vincit Foeminam*', p. 3.
[118] Brian K. Vaughan, Pia Guerra, Goran Sudžuka and José Marzán, Jr., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 7: Paper Dolls* (New York: Vertigo, 2006), p. 9.

the series' rejection of the 'harem fantasies' discussed by Russ.[119] This factor alone, of course, is not a guarantee of a progressive attitude towards sex. The rejection of the post-apocalyptic stud fantasy in *A Boy and His Dog* (where Vic, expecting an orgy in Topeka, instead finds his genitals rigged up to a 'milking' machine) prefigures Vic's aggressive rejection of women altogether. Rather, as Shary notes of many contemporaneous teen films, *Y: The Last Man* is more preoccupied with cultivating a '*healthy* cynicism about romance' and a consciousness of its 'disheartening and deflating' aspects.[120]

To this end, Yorick's conversations and thoughts about sex build towards the dissolution of his initial illusions about love and a confrontation of his bodily insecurities, rather than a state of sexual mastery. For much of the journey, Yorick responds to various women's questions regarding his abstinence following the gendercide by explaining that he is keeping himself for his girlfriend Beth. This end-directed perception of the journey as a romantic quest is continually enacted and dissected in dream sequences that draw upon heroic iconography familiar from comic strips and pulp fiction of the 1930s, the 'axial decade' in the formation of the monomyth of the American superhero discussed by John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett.[121] Reimagining Yorick as, for instance, a Conan-esque barbarian warrior and a Flash Gordon-inspired space adventurer, the dreams stage his repeated inability to save Beth from peril. As the journey progresses, their tone and imagery seemingly become more affirmative, as exemplified by a dream that casts Yorick as a hard-boiled *noir* detective fighting his way to Beth with the declaration, 'I'm coming for you, Beth! And I'm coming hard!'.[122] However, it is not Yorick's success or more frequent failure as a hero and his sexual potency that are at issue in these sequences, but rather the unconscious acknowledgement of the naivety of his concept of romantic destiny and the sexual anxieties it disguises. In each dream, Beth begs Yorick not to come looking for her, foreshadowing their anticlimactic reunion in Paris, where she reveals that she had planned to break up with him before the plague. The dreams, then, warn against the emotional privileging of distant endings, destinations and reunions and an overreliance on media fantasies of heroic destiny over the life experiences offered by the road journey itself, where Yorick

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[119] Russ, '*Amor Vincit Foeminam*', p. 5.
[120] Shary, p. 254 (my emphasis).
[121] John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), p. 36.
[122] Brian K. Vaughan, Pia Guerra, Goran Sudžuka and José Marzán, Jr., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 9: Motherland* (New York: Vertigo, 2007), p. 7.

falls in love with Agent 355 yet denies his attraction in favour of the naïve belief that he is destined to be with the woman to whom he lost his virginity.

Additionally, the suspension and displacement of sex repeatedly enacted in these dreams, not to mention the monomythic fictions that inspire them,[123] reflect Yorick's use of media-inspired notions of romantic destiny to disavow his aversion to sex and, especially, his body. The sexual innuendoes that litter the dreams' dialogue at once emblematise graphic novels' openness about adult themes and invite comparison with Sobchack's observations regarding the recourse to displaced signifiers that pervades science fiction cinema's treatment of sex.[124] Sobchack links this repressive tendency to the genre's preoccupation with the rational 'technological man [who] want[s] to make his own babies', but 'without the hormones and flesh' equated strictly with women in such stories.[125] As 'Safeword's' drug-induced voyage into Yorick's unconscious reveals, however, the flesh Yorick fears is his own. Recounting the loss of his virginity, Yorick describes the sight of flies feeding on traces of his semen on a tissue ('my lust, my depravity… …my weakness') the following morning as 'the most horrifying thing [he has] ever seen'.[126] This treatment of the male genitalia as abject objects of adolescent insecurity, as opposed to their function as a symbol of power in the 'sex war' stories discussed by Russ, is explored further in 'Paper Dolls', which openly interrogates the illusions about adult manhood (as opposed to boyhood) and anatomical manhood that Yorick has inherited from the media. In addition to feeding into the series' treatment of adolescence, this story arc is remarkable for its use of the last man narrative to expose the arbitrary basis of conceptualisations of masculinity that treat it as a quantifiable element.

'You're a real man … but just barely': Interrogating the phallic mystique

The earlier analysis of the *Vic and Blood* adaptations noted how the prospect and failure of male maturation correspond to the travelled environment's representation. Similarly, Yorick's voyage is punctuated by several splash panels prominently featuring obelisks. As Miranda J. Banks has argued, the re-contextualisation of

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[123] Lawrence and Jewett, p. 36.
[124] Vivian Sobchack, 'The Virginity of Astronauts: Sex and the Science Fiction Film', in *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. by Annette Kuhn (London: Verso, 1990), pp. 103-15 (p. 109).
[125] Sobchack, 'The Virginity of Astronauts', pp. 108-9.
[126] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 4*, p. 41.

familiar monuments in science fiction cinema regularly alters and comments upon the national values they signify.[127] This aspect is introduced in *Y: The Last Man* with the revelation that the Washington Monument, a structure built to commemorate the nation's 'father', has become a memorial for the lost men. Characteristically, Yorick's response to the monument's re-appropriation is puerile amusement: 'Always about that with you ladies, isn't it?'.[128] Yet the reappearance of these phallic structures throughout the series invokes the patriarchal discourses that render Yorick so uncertain in his masculinity and sexuality. In particular, their scale offers a reminder of a male fear of not measuring up, literally.

Both adolescence and masculinity are often culturally regarded as quantifiable traits. Teen genre scholars' delimitation of adolescence as the period between the ages of twelve and twenty both represents a methodological necessity and reflects a broader compulsion to impose a precise measure upon maturation. *Y: The Last Man*'s final issue alludes to this attitude during the eighty-six-year-old Yorick's conversation with his twenty-two-year-old clone. The clone's frustration at having reached this 'adult' age without deciding what he wants to do with his life amuses Yorick, who has since learned that such numerical milestones oversimplify the social, physical, emotional and psychological transition from adolescence to adulthood. A similar drive to expose the arbitrariness of attempts to quantify masculinity physically is simultaneously articulated and compromised in the narrative surrounding the 'last penis's' exposure in 'Paper Dolls'.

Y: The Last Man offers a particularly striking critique of patriarchal and biologically essentialist gender ideologies because it insistently foregrounds the theme of performance. When this theme was discussed in Chapter 2, it was concluded that *The Postman* ultimately seeks to reclaim as natural the same messianic white male persona whose artifice it previously mocks. Meanwhile, *Y: The Last Man* bears closer comparison with Judith Butler's deconstructive theory of gender as performative. In her 1990 study *Gender Trouble*, Butler observes that queer practices like drag reveal '*the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency*'.[129] In denaturalising through parody those behaviours believed to be essentially masculine or feminine, queer performances show that gender itself is

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[127] Miranda J. Banks, 'Monumental Fictions: National Monument as a Science Fiction Space', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 30 (2002), 136-45 (p. 139).

[128] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Book 1*, p. 93.

[129] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 187 (Butler's emphasis).

performative, a fiction 'instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*', which through their recurrence produce the illusion that certain gestures and qualities are naturally masculine or feminine and conceal the fact of gender's construction.[130]

In *Y: The Last Man*, performing femininity becomes an essential survival strategy. Yorick's attempts to 'pass' as female are intended to keep his existence and Allison's scientific mission a secret, especially from groups like the Daughters of the Amazon and Alter's Israeli troop, which sets out with the ostensible aim of claiming international political advantage through Yorick's capture. Yorick performs femininity by covering his face and body and raising his voice to a higher pitch. The disguise works flawlessly with many survivors, leaves others in doubt, and is dismissed immediately by some. Dispensing with the spectacular long shots unveiling the city's desolation common in many last man films, *Y: The Last Man*'s big apocalyptic 'reveal' is instead the repeated accidental or deliberate exposure of Yorick's face when he encounters new secondary characters in each location the travellers visit. Whilst it may seem that these moments remove any ambiguity created by his 'feminine' disguise, the total exposure of his body in 'Paper Dolls' and the questions it raises about 'passing' as a 'real' man constitute the comic's most striking interrogation of the contingent and arbitrary qualities of gender.

Y: The Last Man's narrative treatment of full frontal male nudity outwardly challenges one of the most entrenched instances of the practice of '*stylized repetition*' outlined by Butler.[131] As Peter Lehman argues, patriarchal constructions of masculinity rely on culture and society 'perpetuating the mystique of the penis-phallus' by keeping the penis continually hidden from view or discussion in media texts and thus disguising the actual organ's inadequate pretensions to an impossible phallic ideal.[132] The absence of other men in *Y: The Last Man* emphasises the mystique of phallic manhood by obscuring the diversity of male bodies, putting Yorick in even more direct competition with the abstract ideals posed by the media and signified by the aforementioned obelisks.

It is crucial to note that the mere fact of the body's exposure does not by itself upset phallic ideals. Whilst Lehman states that to 'show, write, or talk about the penis creates the potential to demystify it' and thus challenge masculinity's

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[130] Butler, p. 191 (Butler's emphasis).
[131] Butler, p. 191 (Butler's emphasis).
[132] Peter Lehman, *Running Scared: Masculinity and the Representation of the Male Body* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), p. 5.

discursive centrality and invisibility, he notes that several contexts in which the penis is displayed function to regulate its representation and perpetuate 'the awe surrounding the penis in a patriarchal culture'.[133] In particular, Yorick's attitude towards his body after tabloid reporter Paloma West forces him to strip for a photograph recalls pornography's 'desperate attempt to collapse the distinction between the penis and the phallus' by restricting the former's representation to 'the large, ever-present, long-lasting erection'.[134] That this attitude surfaces in a comic invites comparison with the popular assumptions relayed by Bukatman regarding the medium's resonance for the teenager 'worried about [his] dick',[135] epitomised by the recent penchant for pin-up-style renderings of the superhero as a stiff phallic 'body in a permanent state of readiness'.[136] Adhering to these discourses, Yorick's immediate reaction upon discovering that Paloma plans to publish the image internationally is not to worry about their mission's security once his existence becomes public knowledge, but to panic over what the photograph will suggest about his manly credentials: 'I didn't even have time to chump up. I was like, preternaturally flaccid'.[137] Yorick regards his penis as the inverse of the impossible ever-ready erection of pornographic discourse and, metaphorically, the superhero genre, not superhuman but sub-natural, impossible because it is somehow too flaccid. Echoing an earlier incident where the first woman to discover his existence reaches off-panel for his groin to verify his sex and concludes, 'You're a real man … but just barely',[138] Yorick's words demonstrate that he is similarly prone to assess masculinity physically in terms of degree.

However ludicrous Yorick's talk of being 'preternaturally flaccid' may be, it is possible to read the moment of his exposure as a perpetuation of the phallic mystique. Discussing another regulatory discourse, Lehman notes that many 1990s British and American melodrama films bear out 'the cultural assumption that the sight of the penis has to be provoked by an extraordinary event that guarantees the sight will have a major impact' by juxtaposing its revelation with a frequently

[133] Lehman, *Running Scared*, p. 28.

[134] Peter Lehman, 'Crying over the Melodramatic Penis: Melodrama and Male Nudity in Films of the 90s', in *Masculinity: Bodies, Movies, Culture*, ed. by Peter Lehman (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 25-41 (p. 27).

[135] Scott Bukatman, *Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Supermen in the 20th Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 48.

[136] Bukatman, *Matters of Gravity*, p. 53.

[137] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 7*, p. 36.

[138] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Book 1*, p. 50.

unrelated dramatic narrative development.[139] To be sure, few fictional events are more extraordinary than a story of the last man on Earth. That the photograph occupies a splash panel that dominates issue 37's final page also figures the revelation of Yorick's penis as a cliff-hanger, thus placing it at the centre of readers' narrative speculations during the monthly wait between issues during the series' original run.

However, in a manner typical of the road story's frequent disinterest in endings and destinations and the misdirection and misapprehensions that drive the *Bildungsroman* narrative, the resolution of this arc proves pointedly anticlimactic. When he and 355 finally track down Paloma to retrieve the photograph, Yorick decides to permit its distribution, remarking that the tabloid's reputation for publishing 'hacky Photoshop jobs of supposed David Beckham sightings' will 'only help convince the world that [he is] nothing but a myth'.[140] Certainly, the unedited photograph's publication proves narratively inconsequential, thwarting any expectations regarding the theme of pursuit regularly featured in 'outlaw' or fugitive road stories.[141] This indicates that the artifice of the newspaper's other images does not bring into relief the apparent biological 'truth' of Yorick's manhood. 'Paper Dolls' suggests that passing as a 'real' man depends more on context and the discourses through which certain images are judged to be credible and true and others are dismissed as false or absurd, than upon the supposedly incontrovertible proof offered by the body itself. The same extraordinary post-apocalyptic premise and narrative tension derived from whether or not Yorick's existence will become public knowledge that initially afford the penis's revelation particular impact, then, ultimately invite reflection upon the mutable and arbitrary basis upon which masculinity is quantitatively judged. In this regard, it is significant that when the published photo appears in the White House office occupied by Yorick's mother, it is accompanied by the headline 'Last Man Standing!' and the sight of the Washington Monument through the window: imagery suggestive of the erect penis.[142] Rather than offering an unfavourable contrast, these juxtapositions expose the groundlessness of the phallic ideal.

A similar juxtaposition concludes the series' penultimate issue and seemingly signals Yorick's emotional maturation beyond the cultural and social

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[139] Lehman, 'Crying over the Melodramatic Penis', p. 33.
[140] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 7*, p. 64.
[141] Laderman, p. 20.
[142] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 7*, p. 72.

ideals that previously shaped his understanding of manhood and love. Moments after Yorick and 355 finally confess their love for one another, the Israeli soldier Alter shoots 355 in the head with a sniper rifle in an attempt to goad Yorick into killing her. As Alter asserts that the only honourable way for her to die is by a man's hand, Yorick realises that she too suffers from a suicidal form of survivor's guilt. Resisting Alter's demands that he 'act like what [he is]' and kill her,[143] alluding to hegemonic constructions of masculinity as aggressive, Yorick resignedly turns her over to the custody of her troops. On issue 59's final page, Yorick is discovered in the Place de la Concorde, next to the Luxor Obelisk. Here, the phallic monument fades into the similarly coloured background, in keeping with Yorick's ultimate refusal of such masculine ideals as the frontier myth of redemptive violence, the concept of 'heroic destiny' endlessly dramatised in superhero comics,[144] and the end-directed romantic quest as pathways to adulthood. Instead, the splash page foregrounds Yorick's visibly older face, lined with exhaustion, and his sister Hero's sigh of 'Oh, man', indicating that manhood has been attained through tragic loss.

The comic's epilogue issue, however, remains ambiguous regarding the question of Yorick's maturation, diverging from the *Bildungsroman*'s standard use of a 'mature and accomplished' narrator to reflect upon 'the vicissitudes of the less complete person' upon whose adolescent exploits the narrative focuses.[145] The possibility of informed retrospection is a particular preoccupation of apocalyptic texts, which, as Kermode asserts, represent a cultural desire to skip to the End and thus 'see the structure [of history] whole, a thing we cannot do from our spot of time in the middle'.[146] As a road story that concludes with the birth of a new, female-led world, it is unsurprising that *Y: The Last Man* resists such a closed view of history and personal development. The information that this issue provides about the next sixty years of Yorick's life combines elements that Flanagan suggests are typically associated with adulthood in Western culture, including 'compromise, [and] sacrifice of individuality', with the indication that Yorick has failed to assimilate into the new society.[147] In addition to the dramatic sacrifice of individuality represented by the fact that Yorick's progeny largely consists of

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[143] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 10*, p. 112.
[144] Flanagan, p. 138.
[145] Minden, p. 4
[146] Kermode, p. 8.
[147] Flanagan, p. 140.

clones of himself, it is revealed that Yorick never fell in love again, and entered into family life with a woman, also named Beth, who slept with him during his journey and became pregnant, primarily out of a sense of parental responsibility rather than romantic feelings for their daughter's mother. Furthermore, whilst the *Bildungsroman* usually describes an eventual ascension to a state of self-knowledge and authority, the elderly Yorick regards the epic journey chronicled in the series as one big example of the 'false starts' that tend to prefigure the hero's advance into adulthood in this genre. Recalling broader characterisations of the teen road story that tend to treat it as a tangential prelude to self-discovery rather than a completed passage, Yorick places his exotic exploits within a puerile frame of reference: 'first comes boyhood. You get to play with soldiers and spacemen, cowboys and ninjas, pirates and robots [all figures that have appeared throughout the series]. But before you know it, all that comes to an end. And then, […] is when the adventure begins'.[148] However, there is little sense that this subsequent adventure has enabled Yorick to find a secure place in the world. His flashbacks reveal that he continued to wander the Earth in the intervening sixty years, moving from one bittersweet reunion with old friends and family to the next, and give no indication that he pursued any kind of noteworthy career, in contrast to his daughter, who is now the President of France. Probing beyond the heteronormative construction of marriage, reproduction and familial stability as proofs of male maturity, then, *Y: The Last Man* concludes with an open-ended acknowledgement of the emotional complexities that belie such a simplistic notion of the separation between boyhood and manhood.

These final images of Yorick as a melancholy, irrelevant figure locked away from the world following a suicide attempt, the epitome of conceptualisations of the last man as terminal man, can be criticised for rendering the white male traveller such a peripheral figure that the possibility of men finding new roles within this matriarchal society is largely discounted. Whilst *Waterworld* and *The Postman*, examined in Chapter 2, combine the pressure to adapt to a new world with assurances that white men can (and should) retain authority, *Y: The Last Man* follows the equally cynical strategy, common among last man narratives, of privileging imagery of exile, suicide and escape over the challenges of social integration (a sly bit of role reversal in which Yorick's clone speaks of female-dominated universities beginning to admit male students aside). The comic's

[148] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 10*, p. 154.

reticence when it comes to imagining the place of masculinities not bound to male bodies in this new world is equally glaring. *Y: The Last Man* is the only apocalyptic road narrative examined in this thesis to feature characters who incarnate aspects of what Judith Halberstam defines as female masculinity, a 'masculinity without men' exemplified by butch lesbians, female-to-male transgendered individuals and drag kings.[149] The most prominent of these characters is the African-American spy Agent 355, known solely by her gender-neutral codename. However, the series refuses to treat female masculinities as gender identities through which 355, or indeed other relevant characters, might find sexual and self-expression, and precludes 355 from even the questionable degree of self-discovery accorded to Yorick.

Pathologised female masculinity

Throughout *Y: The Last Man*, Agent 355 displays various traits often culturally identified as traditionally masculine, including physical strength, fighting prowess and emotional repression. Though ultimately identified as heterosexual, she bears out the correlation between female masculinity and homosexuality addressed by Halberstam in issue 33, where she experiments sexually with the lesbian Allison. Massimo Carnevale's cover artwork for this issue presents 355 as heavily androgynous. Drawn with an unusually masculine bone structure and slicked-back hair, she raises her gun suggestively as Allison wraps herself around the agent's body. These aspects may indicate conformation to the stereotyping of the black lesbian as the aggressive 'butch bulldagger',[150] a perception that Halberstam associates with the connection drawn between blackness and 'violent masculinity in the social imaginary'.[151] However, the series' later story arcs also emphasise the moral and psychological toll of killing and a survival strategy built around being 'hard',[152] ultimately tracing 355's passage from the denial of emotion and vulnerability required by her violent protective duty to the beginnings of self-discovery.

As part of this transition, however, the series pathologises butch identity. In issue 41's account of 355's background, a causal trajectory is drawn between a

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[149] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 13.
[150] Halberstam, p. 114.
[151] Halberstam, p. 29.
[152] Brian K. Vaughan, Pia Guerra, Goran Sudžuka and José Marzán, Jr., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 8: Kimono Dragons* (New York: Vertigo, 2006), p. 71.

childhood trauma, her troubled adolescence and her recruitment by the Culper Ring, where her superiors continually urged her to 'butch up'.[153] Visually and narratively, the comic treats the death of 355's parents and sister in a car accident as an event which led her to deny her sexual desires and femininity. 355 explains that because she was 'touching [her]self in the girls' bathroom at school' at the time her family died, she 'spent the next ten years convinced that masturbation was to blame for their deaths'.[154] Initially a little girl wearing pigtails and a dress in one flashback, 355 is subsequently presented as an angry adolescent with close-cropped hair and a baggy jumper that conceals her body's contours. Whilst Yorick's unclear sense of his own masculinity is associated with arrested adolescence, 355's fraught gender identity is presented as the result of being compelled to grow up too quickly and face a hostile world alone.

The series does present 355's masculinity in a positive light insofar as it serves as the basis for a friendship where 355 is able to let down her guard and Yorick speaks candidly about his insecurities. This recalls the characterisation of homosocial relations as 'the dugout where the boys catch their breath during the game of heterosexual conquest' and look out for each other's interests that Greven observes in contemporaneous teen comedies.[155] However, whilst the homosocial does not aggressively preclude sexual relations as it does in the *Vic and Blood* adaptations, the lovelorn 355's visible but unspoken dismay at Yorick's apparent refusal to see her as anything more than his masculine buddy (itself a disavowal of his own romantic feelings) cements the series' presentation of her female masculinity as a façade defined by the denial of emotion. Anxiously neutralising the perceived challenge that 355's female masculinity (deemed 'butch and scary' by Yorick) poses to male-bodied masculinity, the comic's final arc deems that 355 can only become Yorick's lover once her appearance is remoulded to fit heteronormative constructions of femininity, as indicated by her longer hair and softer, more 'womanly' body.[156] Whilst *Y: The Last Man* distinguishes itself from the male-authored visions of female-dominated societies discussed by Russ by foregrounding loving same-sex relationships between characters like Allison and

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[153] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 7*, p. 32.
[154] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 5*, p. 112.
[155] Greven, p. 16.
[156] Vaughan et al., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 10*, p. 20.

her Australian lover Rose,[157] it stops short of imagining a heterosexual relationship that incorporates homosocial or queer aspects.

Ultimately, the series also arrests 355's process of feminine self-discovery. In trading masculinity (represented by her gun) for femininity (signified by a dress) in a Parisian boutique, where she recalls her father's job as a tailor, 355 begins to unearth a past emotional identity. However, any further exploration of 355's desires or reconciliation of her adult and younger selves is abruptly curtailed when, after whispering her true name to Yorick, she is killed. This development perpetuates the evasiveness concerning post-apocalyptic interracial romance that Stéphanie Larrieux observes in 1959 film *The World, the Flesh and the Devil*,[158] rejecting an opportunity to imagine how a multiracial heterosexual relationship in which the female partner is the more dominant personality might unfold in a female-run society, in favour of focusing on the white male traveller's tragedy. *Y: The Last Man* offers a remarkable, pragmatic interrogation of heroic, phallic and media ideals relating to masculinity and their damaging impact. By the same token, however, it is susceptible to the charges that several feminist scholars have previously directed at studies into the crisis of masculinity like Segal's 1990 book *Slow Motion*, where the positioning of 'men rather than women as the latest victims of normative masculinity' risks displacing academic, cultural and social attention to women's concerns and voices.[159] As a ship captain who sacrifices herself to save Yorick succinctly observes, 'It figures. An entire planet of women, and the one guy gets to be the lead'.[160]

Conclusion

Both the ideological and personal reassurances usually granted by the temporariness of the teenage road trip in popular culture and its enactment of the process of 'coming of age' are disrupted by the dissolution of society and absence of paternal guidance imagined in the post-apocalyptic *Vic and Blood* film and comic book adaptations and *Y: The Last Man*. In each text, the white male adolescent traveller looks to alternate male influences and authorities. In Corben's comic book

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[157] Russ, '*Amor Vincit Foeminam*', p. 7.
[158] Larrieux, p. 142.
[159] Segal, p. xxi.
[160] Brian K. Vaughan, Pia Guerra, Goran Sudžuka and José Marzán, Jr., *Y: The Last Man, Vol. 6: Girl on Girl* (New York: Vertigo, 2005), p. 93.

adaptations of Ellison's *Vic and Blood* stories and the film adaptation *A Boy and His Dog,* this capacity is occupied by Vic's dog Blood, who functions as an externalised superego, offering knowledge and goals that ostensibly offset the aimlessness of adolescent experience within the road cinema of the early 1970s and compare favourably with the non-productive sexual relationships envisaged in the film. However, the exclusionary homosocial bond continually precludes Vic's social integration, his discovery of a productive role in the recovery of industry, his development of a political stance and, especially in the comics, his emotional maturation. *Y: The Last Man* adopts a more openly critical approach to the cultural constructions of masculinity that preoccupy Yorick and introduce intangible and/or reductive heroic, hegemonic and phallic ideals that confuse and even threaten to destroy his sense of self. Combining a road story in which the traveller has little social influence or agency with the 'false starts and wrong moves' that typify the *Bildungsroman*,[161] Vaughan and Guerra's series describes a process of healthy disillusionment with regards to those notions of romantic destiny, quantifiable masculinity, violent heroism and, indeed, the exceptional power and social and sexual responsibilities of the last man on Earth entertained by Yorick and Western culture and society more generally. In simultaneously concentrating upon the white male traveller as a result of the restrictive, heavily personal focus of the road story and pushing him to the edge of society, however, *Y: The Last Man* refuses to imagine a stable, mature role for its protagonist and masculine women within the new female-dominated world it nebulously portrays.

The following chapters observe a continued reticence regarding the possibility of the adult white male traveller's social integration following the journey. This proves particularly striking in Chapter 4's case studies, where the narrative focus upon the physical, psychological and moral vulnerability of travelling children spawns an unusually strong investment in the prospect of secure destinations.

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[161] Minden, p. 5.

4
**Juvenile (In)sight and Spatial Renegotiations
in the Father-and-Child Journey**

> In the first dull light he rose and walked down the beach. The storm had
> littered the shore and he walked the tideline looking for anything of use. In
> the shallows beyond the breakwater an ancient corpse rising and falling
> among the driftwood. He wished he could hide it from the boy but the boy
> was right. What was there to hide?[1]

The preceding passage from Cormac McCarthy's 2006 novel *The Road* illustrates a
number of anxieties prominent across various apocalyptic road films and comics
that have emerged since the turn of the millennium, including the novel's screen
adaptation. These narratives centre on fathers, many of whom are faced with
various emotional, psychological and ethical dilemmas as they escort children
through hostile landscapes. These texts present the white male traveller with a more
intimate social responsibility than those considered in previous chapters. In the
above passage from *The Road*, the father is forced to consider whether he should or
even can shield his son from horrors that are both potentially traumatic and
inescapably ubiquitous, even quotidian. Corresponding to the parent's concern over
applying firm boundaries or blinkers upon the child's vision, the threat emerges in a
geographically marginal space, a coastal zone located outside the linear structure
provided by the road. Yet the passage also indicates the need to recognise the
child's own optical and psychological perspective. These issues and themes are
integral to this chapter.

Apocalyptic science fiction and horror texts have negotiated these conflicts
through narratives or prominent sequences set on the road. Notable examples
include *War of the Worlds* (Steven Spielberg, 2005), *The Road* (John Hillcoat,
2009) and Canadian writer and artist Jeff Lemire's comic book series *Sweet Tooth*
(2009-2013). Fathers faced with moral dilemmas concerning children also feature in
Robert Kirkman, Charlie Adlard and Tony Moore's comic *The Walking Dead*
(2003-) and films including *The Mist* (Frank Darabont, 2007) and *Monsters* (Gareth
Edwards, 2010). This chapter examines the former three, US-set science fiction
road stories. *Sweet Tooth*, *The Road* and *War of the Worlds* depict the relationships

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[1] Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (London: Picador, 2006), pp. 252-53.

between lone fathers and children who, whether biologically related to the father or not, fall under his protection and travel alongside him. Each text's engagement with the aforementioned dilemmas is shaped by differences in setting and the father's characterisation.

In *Sweet Tooth*, a virus has decimated the human population and is gradually killing off the few survivors. A brutal militia's efforts to discover the pandemic's source and an antidote centre on a mysterious post-apocalyptic generation of immune human/animal hybrid children. The narrative follows a nine-year-old half-deer boy named Gus, raised in innocence and ignorance within a Nebraskan nature reserve by Richard Fox, a dying man posing as his biological father. Gus is persuaded to venture beyond the forest by the aggressive and embittered drifter Jepperd. Gus elects Jepperd as a surrogate paternal protector in the belief that the man will take him to a refuge for hybrid children. This story is revealed to be a ruse when Jepperd gives Gus to the militia in exchange for the corpse of his kidnapped wife Louise, who died following their experiments on her pregnant body. As a disillusioned Gus tries unsuccessfully to lead other captive hybrids back to the Nebraska reserve, Jepperd returns to rescue the boy as atonement for his past sins. The remainder of the series depicts the gradual reparation of their relationship as they and several allies travel to Gus's place of origin, an Alaskan laboratory. They eventually discover that the hybrids and the virus apparently represent a divine punishment incurred by the laboratory's Promethean attempts to create hybrid children *in vitro*. In a final battle against the militia leader Abbot, Jepperd dies to protect Gus, finding redemption through the redirection of his physical capabilities.

The father's violence is framed as both a necessity and an ultimately self-destructive force in the second post-apocalyptic text under discussion, *The Road*. Unlike the other case studies, *The Road* immediately establishes a loving and respectful bond between the unnamed Man (Viggo Mortensen) and his pre-pubescent son (Kodi Smit-McPhee). The film details their journey across an America in a state of on-going environmental decay, towards the southern coast's imagined warmth. As he strives to defend the Boy from starvation and death during their early encounters with cannibals, the Man's paranoia and possessiveness are understandable. However, his later reluctance to extend compassion or the bountiful food recovered from an underground shelter to other benign nomads disturbs the Boy, who longs for wider social contact. At the cost of his life, the Man recognises

that his distrustful behaviour and fatalistic worldview are socially untenable. He finally releases his son to find other 'good guys', represented by a caring family who discover the Boy on the beach.

Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* translates the premise and several major incidents of H.G. Wells' 1898 novel about a Martian invasion onto the story of an initially irresponsible divorced New Jersey father, Ray (Tom Cruise), who strives to return his ten-year-old daughter Rachel (Dakota Fanning) and teenaged son Robbie (Justin Chatwin) safely to their mother, Mary Ann (Miranda Otto), in Boston. Throughout the journey, Ray struggles to protect and bond with his estranged children. His redemption is seemingly secured through his destruction of a Martian tripod and a malign double who threatens his daughter: the unstable survivalist Ogilvy (Tim Robbins). However, it will be argued that *War of the Worlds* demonstrates a greater ambivalence towards violence as a proof of paternal prowess than the two post-apocalyptic texts allow, primarily because total devastation is ultimately averted.

The chapter begins with an overview of the theoretical and cultural foundations underpinning the road journey's association with fathering rather than mothering. This introductory segment establishes the generic, gendered and aesthetic frameworks and context within which *Sweet Tooth, The Road* and *War of the Worlds* are examined. The chapter goes on to examine these texts in three separate sub-sections, in recognition of the differences in each father's physical and emotional characterisation and conflicts. Each analysis focuses on the correspondence between the child's perspective upon their environment and its resident hazards and the father's development throughout the journey. It is instructive here to refer to David Laderman's assertion that the road genre commonly presents its cardinal 'theme of self-exploration as a projection of self through space'.[2] In this chapter, *Sweet Tooth*, *The Road* and *War of the Worlds* are discussed as apocalyptic road stories that establish and resolve familial conflicts through specific arrangements and re-negotiations of the geographical and compositional boundaries and margins prominent within each text. These transformations are prompted by recent characterisations of the child's look as drifting and vulnerable, yet also necessary.

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[2] David Laderman, *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), p. 16.

Despite the texts' attention to the child's viewpoint, the chapter recognises that their characterisations ultimately serve adult interests. As Jerome F. Shapiro has claimed with reference to Jungian theory, the child has historically functioned as a 'motif' that stimulates a recuperative 'imminent personality change' and resolves a crisis within apocalyptic cinema's adult protagonists.[3] Indeed, it is not assumed that the case studies' characterisations reflect 'authentic' child subjectivities. Rather, the chapter follows the lead of recent studies examining children's representation in films made for adult audiences. Karen Lury observes that the child's role in cinema is 'frequently over-determined by the [emotional, narrative, generic, social and ethical] priorities of interested adults', including film-makers, other actors and audiences.[4] The two post-apocalyptic texts are not intended for young audiences: *Sweet Tooth* was published by Vertigo, DC Comics' imprint for mature readers, and *The Road* received an R-rated release in the USA. Even the PG-13-rated *War of the Worlds* treats spectacle as a source of horror rather than the childish wonder that Vivian Sobchack identifies as the defining aesthetic of Spielberg's earlier science fiction blockbusters.[5] Certainly, the film does not enter as fully into children's private spaces as *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (Spielberg, 1982), instead positioning them strictly in relation to the father's actions. However, it is also important to recognise that the tendency observed by Shapiro becomes particularly problematic when the adult protagonist's personal crisis is not simply resolved by the child but primarily concerns the youngster's welfare.

That the child's representation is informed by adult interests also necessitates a different analytical approach that focuses more firmly upon destinations than previous chapters dealing with adult and adolescent journeys. *Sweet Tooth*, *The Road* and *War of the Worlds* generally draw upon the formula that Kay Dickinson has observed throughout road films centring on children. Dickinson argues that most examples defer to parental anxieties about the lost child, as they tell stories about 'coming back (or "back" to a different though similar familial setting [promising secure parental protection]) rather than venturing forth' as per

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[3] Jerome F. Shapiro, *Atomic Bomb Cinema: The Apocalyptic Imagination on Film* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 110.
[4] Karen Lury, *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairy Tales* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p. 10.
[5] Vivian Sobchack, *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*, 2nd edn (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), p. 284.

most adult road stories.[6] By discussing points of comparison and friction with Dickinson's model, this chapter illuminates the ways in which the three case studies complicate various apocalyptic science fiction and horror road films' penchant for improbable narrative resolutions built around the travellers' discovery of ready-made utopian destinations.

A final methodological note is required regarding the chapter's approach to *Sweet Tooth*. The thesis's previous discussions of comics have either examined short texts in their entirety, as per Chapter 3's study of Harlan Ellison and Richard Corben's *Vic and Blood* comics (1987), or isolated the most pertinent story arcs within *Judge Dredd* (1977-) and Brian K. Vaughan and Pia Guerra's *Y: The Last Man* (2002-2008). *Sweet Tooth* is divided into story arcs that are less discrete and thematically self-contained than *Y: The Last Man*'s arcs. Whilst retaining a holistic view of the narrative, this chapter instead concentrates upon individual issues, in recognition of Lemire's meticulous development of certain formal strategies and patterns appropriate to the chapter's focus across individual instalments. This approach also attends to the frequent variations in narrative perspective and compositional style between issues.

(Re)locating fathering

Sweet Tooth, *The Road* and *War of the Worlds* exemplify the cultural perception that narratives about fathers lend themselves to the structural framework of the road journey more readily than stories about mothers. From *Paper Moon* (Peter Bogdanovich, 1973), *Paris, Texas* (Wim Wenders, 1984) and *A Perfect World* (Clint Eastwood, 1993) to Max Allan Collins' and Richard Piers Rayner's graphic novel *Road to Perdition* (1998) and its film adaptation (Sam Mendes, 2002), the road genre has spawned a wealth of father-and-child films and comics. Just as Timothy Corrigan has asserted that the genre reacts to post-war transformations in the American family that have upset traditional patriarchal authority,[7] even Gus's search for Alaska and his origins centres not on the intriguing question, raised in the

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[6] Kay Dickinson, '"Such Time When Young'uns Run the Roads": The Depiction of Travelling Children', in *Lost Highways: An Illustrated History of Road Movies*, ed. by Jack Sargeant and Stephanie Watson (London: Creation Books, 1999), pp. 194-206 (p. 195).

[7] Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture after Vietnam* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. 144.

early issues, of whether he was born of a human woman or an artificial womb but on a quest to discover where his 'daddy came from'.[8]

An overview of American and European apocalyptic road stories reveals that mothering figures in a relatively minor capacity. Many texts that feature mothers on the road focus on pregnancy rather than actual parenting, as demonstrated by Alan Grant and Andy Pritchett's comic *Tank Girl: Apocalypse* (1995-1996) and *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006), a film in which the child's birth equally serves to grant a bereaved father closure. Even examples in which mothers travel alongside children typically assign women minor or questionable roles. Susan Jeffords argues that the travelling mother in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (James Cameron, 1991) is supplanted by a male counterpart characterised as both a father and a superior mother.[9] Chapter 2 observed a similar scenario in *Waterworld* (Kevin Reynolds, 1995). *Sweet Tooth* initially appears to buck the trend in juxtaposing Jepperd and Gus's relationship with the maternal role that fellow traveller Lucy assumes in her interactions with the human teenager Becky and pig/human girl Wendy. However, after an issue in which Lucy, Becky and Wendy follow their own path and share the stories of their pasts, they become the captives of a paedophile masquerading as a benign family man. Juxtaposed with Jepperd and Gus's continued engagement with their own familial tensions on the road, this development restores a focus upon fathering. Apocalyptic texts that place mothers on the road, then, regularly disregard or elide their experiences and struggles.

This discrepancy is at least partially explained by psychoanalytic conceptualisations of fathering as a more conscious, less instinctive process. As Barbara Ehrenreich observes in her study of the shifting cultural rhetoric surrounding American men and family commitment, Freudian psychoanalysis regards 'biology [as] more clearly destiny' for women and fathering as a purely social construct.[10] The biologically essentialist perception of motherhood as bodily encoded through pregnancy and nursing evidently endures within cultural constructions of fatherhood. On the one hand, Stuart C. Aitken has analysed

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[8] Jeff Lemire, *Sweet Tooth*, 23 (New York: Vertigo, September 2011), p. 8. Individual issues of *Sweet Tooth* are unpaginated. For ease of reference, page numbers have been assigned, beginning from each issue's first right-hand interior page.

[9] Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), pp. 162-63.

[10] Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (London: Anchor, 1983), p. 15.

numerous 1990s media images that reinvent sport and film stars as paradigms of a 'hugely embodied' father-and-child bond as evidence of a compulsion to identify a similarly publicly identifiable paternal body.[11] Simultaneously, as Stella Bruzzi has observed, major 1990s research into masculinity continued to treat fatherhood as 'a process of personal development' contrastable with an innate maternal drive.[12] Within such understandings the woman always already *is* a mother, whilst the man must *become* a father through certain actions.

War of the Worlds and *The Road* conform to this distinction. Although the unborn child represents his usurpation by new husband Tim (David Alan Basche), Ray praises his ex-wife Mary Ann's pregnancy as 'a good look for [her]'. *War of the Worlds* presents her simplistically as both a literally glowing feminine ideal, haloed by golden back-lighting, and a point of geographical anchorage. Whilst her vacated suburban villa and her parents' neighbourhood in Boston appear safe, that the former is destroyed shortly after Ray and the children arrive whilst the latter remains improbably untouched by the invasion implies that Mary Ann's mere presence affords domestic security. In *The Road*, the Woman's (Charlize Theron) guilt at having brought a child into a horrific post-apocalyptic world and her post-partum depression and suicidal departure from the family home can be seen as devastatingly credible developments. Yet they also speak to a fear that circumstances should ever become so extreme that a woman could refuse her apparently biologically encoded role and leave her child. As Kenneth S. Lynn indicates in a study of early American literature, scenarios in which men 'throw over their responsibilities and walk out, slamming the door behind them' represent an altogether more familiar narrative.[13]

Certainly, studies of fathering have typically focused on men's positioning within, and relative to, the home, as a site conventionally identified as the hub of the family. *Bringing Up Daddy*, Bruzzi's 2005 study of representations of fatherhood in post-war Hollywood, describes a shift from the extremes of the distant 'strong, autocratic, even despotic father' and 'awkwardly weak' house-bound failures in the 1950s,[14] to melodramas and comedies championing the father's increasing involvement in childcare and home-making in the 1960s and 1970s.[15] Even as she

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[11] Stuart C. Aitken, *The Awkward Spaces of Fathering* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), p. 76.
[12] Stella Bruzzi, *Bringing Up Daddy: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Post-War Cinema* (London: BFI, 2005), p. 157.
[13] Kenneth S. Lynn, 'Adulthood in American Literature', *Daedalus*, 3 (1988), 283-98 (p. 293).
[14] Bruzzi, pp. 38-39.
[15] Bruzzi, pp. x-xi.

observes the growing plurality of representations of fatherhood in the 1990s and early twenty-first century Hollywood, Bruzzi continues to focus predominantly on domestic dramas and romantic comedies about the establishment of a stable home life. In *War of the Worlds*, *The Road* and *Sweet Tooth*, however, family homes are places of failed, alienating or restrictive spatial and interpersonal boundaries. In *War of the Worlds*, Ray's lack of authority, understanding and responsibility is evidenced by his failure to provide Rachel and Robbie with separate bedrooms and by the car engine that occupies his kitchen in place of adequate food supplies. In *The Road*, the Man's apparent attempt to find some common ground with his son, as he revisits his parents' home and recounts his own childhood experiences, only bewilders the Boy, who, as a youth born into the post-apocalyptic world, has come to associate enclosed spaces with the risk of entrapment. Gus's departure from the smothering father who forbids him to leave home in *Sweet Tooth* recalls a major literary archetype, the 'American Adam'. As expounded by R.W.B. Lewis, this 'new Adam' is 'a figure of heroic innocence and vast potentialities' who begins life outside the world in a pastoral Eden and undergoes a Fall upon entering a harsh society.[16] Focusing on nineteenth-century literature, Lewis observes that whilst many earlier permutations of this narrative treated it as a tragedy, later examples often value the Fall as the means by which the naif may 'rise to the nobler condition of genuine manhood'.[17] As in the texts discussed by Lewis, *Sweet Tooth*'s New Adam is lured beyond the boundaries of his Eden into the world of sin not by a New Eve, but by a new father, Jepperd, who aids his transition into an adult knowledge of the world.

Previously, Sobchack has argued that American science fiction cinema of the late 1970s and 1980s introduced the compound figure of the 'child/alien/father' to offset anxieties surrounding the home as a site both of paternal 'weakness and confusion', often manifest in men's domestic ineptitude in contemporaneous melodramas, and 'patriarchal impotence and rage' in horror cinema.[18] By casting their eponymous characters simultaneously as benign yet 'awesomely powerful' aliens, attentive fathers and 'little, innocent, vulnerable' child-like beings,[19]

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[16] R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1955), p. 1.
[17] Lewis, p. 59.
[18] Vivian Sobchack, 'Child/Alien/Father: Patriarchal Crisis and Generic Exchange', in *Close Encounters: Film, Feminism, and Science Fiction*, ed. by Constance Penley, Elisabeth Lyon, Lynn Spiegel and Janet Bergstrom (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 3-30 (p. 12).
[19] Sobchack, 'Child/Alien/Father', p. 15.

Sobchack argues that films like *E.T.* and *Starman* (John Carpenter, 1984) envisage the caring and sensitive father as an incarnation of transcendent phallic power. This synthesis requires a temporary abandonment of the domestic sphere.[20] However, whilst *Starman* and *E.T.*'s alien surrogate fathers offer Jenny (Karen Allen) and Elliott (Henry Thomas) a means of dealing, respectively, with the trauma of a husband's death or parental divorce, the Starman's (Jeff Bridges) fathering is limited to conceiving a child on the road, and both foster-fathers depart by the narrative's conclusion. Thus, the father-on-the-move is still characterised as a figure absent from children's upbringing.

By placing travelling fathers in the near-continuous company of children, *Sweet Tooth, The Road* and *War of the Worlds* coincide with a broader academic shift from the focus upon domesticity to a burgeoning attention to the role of other social and physical spaces within the practice, experiences and representation of fathering. Augmenting sociological research with the discussion of films including the road features *A Perfect World* and *Paris, Texas*, Aitken has recently illustrated the need for an approach to studying fathering that concentrates on the emotional trajectories and crises developed through diverse spaces: an endeavour complemented by the road genre.[21] Indeed, *Sweet Tooth* and *War of the Worlds* initially replicate common conceptions of the mobile father as an absent or evasive figure. Jepperd is a 'shepherd' who regards Gus as little more than an object of exchange, and dockworker Ray is by name and profession a 'Ferrier' who simply seeks to transport ship and human cargo between points without much concern for what lies inside. However, as their journeys unfold Jepperd, Ray and the Man are obliged to take alternate paths, spatially and behaviourally, in taking responsibility for children and recognising their emotional needs.

Divergent gazes and retraced routes

As illustrated in Chapter 2, an earlier apocalyptic road film concerning the adult male traveller's reinvention as a parental figure, *Waterworld*, envisions this transformation through changes in and of the vehicle, several of which provide a source of action spectacle. However, the recent wave of apocalyptic road texts that concerns this chapter deals more extensively with spectatorship itself: specifically,

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[20] Sobchack, 'Child/Alien/Father', p. 13.
[21] Aitken, p. 2.

the challenges posed by the child witness. *Sweet Tooth*, *The Road* and *War of the Worlds'* treatments of the child's look reconfigure existing conceptualisations of vision in studies of the American highway and science fiction cinema.

Although Chapter 5 engages further with the perceived compression of space and acceleration of time as transport systems and communications networks become increasingly advanced, Jean Baudrillard's account of high-speed automobile travel in *America* (1986) offers a useful foundation for examining vision in this chapter's case studies. Reflecting upon the perceptual experience of traversing that favoured setting of apocalyptic science fiction and the road story, the desert, Baudrillard writes that high-speed travel 'cancels out the ground and territorial reference-points' and privileges 'the surface', 'instantaneity over time as depth' and 'forgetting over memory'.[22] In Baudrillard's account of experiencing America from behind the wheel, objects are lost the moment they are glimpsed, never becoming points of visual or mental focus.

Where an intent focus on the road ahead and a neglect of events and persons in one's wake appear in *Sweet Tooth, The Road* and *War of the Worlds*, they tend to reveal the father's weaknesses and failings as a receptive and considerate parent. This forms a marked contrast with the scenes of fathers striking out purposefully into post-apocalyptic landscapes full of potential that conclude *Damnation Alley* (Jack Smight, 1977) and *Waterworld*. In an early sequence on the freeway discussed further in the sub-section on *War of the Worlds*, Ray is unable to comfort Rachel as she screams for her mother because his attention is focused on navigating the road ahead at high speed. He instead resorts to shouting at the rear-view mirror, increasing his daughter's distress rather than allaying it. After he exchanges a child who represents Earth's genetic future for his wife's remains, Jepperd's introspective return to a lost past in *Sweet Tooth* is rendered in a double-page splash composition from issue 7, where he guides his horse along a road flanked by smoking buildings. Here, the father rides away from the vanishing point rather than into the 'new potentialities' and 'escape [from] the constraints of the past' synonymous with the road genre's seductive visions of open horizons.[23] Accompanied by the retrospective, anti-social thrust of Jepperd's narration ('It was better not to make friends, not to connect with anyone else'),[24] the focus upon the route behind Jepperd

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[22] Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 6-7.
[23] Jack Sargeant and Stephanie Watson, 'Looking for Maps: Notes on the Road Movie as Genre', in *Lost Highways*, ed. by Sargeant and Watson, pp. 5-20 (p. 15).
[24] Jeff Lemire, *Sweet Tooth*, 7 (New York: Vertigo, May 2010), p. 15.

rather than the road ahead presents his path as one he has already taken, a redundant loop, whilst also subtly recalling the boy he abandoned at the militia camp.

In *The Road*, the Man's attitude towards the journey even works to destroy the road behind him, as demonstrated by his attachment to the pre-apocalyptic geography represented by an old oil roadmap. Tom Conley has observed that American roadmaps combine two contrasting impulses, offering both a call to adventure that reincarnates the civilian driver as a pioneering explorer and the reassurance that they will 'safely reach their destination'.[25] However, the infrastructure and automotive fantasies represented by the map are rendered increasingly obsolete by the lack of fuel and the abrupt transformation of the navigable landscape through roadblocks formed by subsidence and fallen trees. Nevertheless, the Man continues to chart an unbroken onward course that reveals a minimal regard for other non-violent survivors' long-term social and emotional interests. After leaving an unnamed Thief (Michael Kenneth Williams) to freeze to death on the roadside, the Man dismisses the Boy's protests by asserting that the stranger is 'gone', simply because he is no longer in view. This attitude is mirrored in the Man's tendency to reassemble only two sheets of his torn roadmap at a time whilst leaving the rest in a disordered pile: a gesture that dismisses every previous encounter beyond the immediate road ahead as irrelevant. In his drive to keep moving forwards and his disregard for the Boy's frustration at his callous abandonment of other suffering nomads, the Man becomes psychologically complicit in the world's progressive decay and devaluation.

The Road and *Sweet Tooth* in particular thus translate the displacement of interest or engagement in one's surroundings described by Baudrillard into what can be described as a 'just passing through' mentality. This detached attitude should be distinguished from the use of the traveller's brief encounters with struggling communities as a means of developing a more even-handed approach to 'the people' in 'The Cursed Earth' (1978) or a demonstration of the individual's limited social agency in *Y: The Last Man*. Rather, the 'just passing through' mentality manifests itself in social irresponsibility, apathy and selfishness. Here, other people and their suffering are forgotten once they move outside the father's field of perception. Whereas *America* concerns the play of surfaces and abstract concepts of speed, however, the apocalyptic journeys in *Sweet Tooth*, *The Road* and *War of the Worlds* also recover something of the engaged, 'embodied' involvement with the

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[25] Tom Conley, *Cartographic Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 157.

travelled landscape described by Rebecca Solnit that is lost in the transition from foot to car travel.[26] The three journeys are necessarily undertaken partly or completely on foot or horseback: slower modes of travel that bring the father and child into closer, sustained contact with the terrain, the horrors lurking therein and, just as valuably, the fates of characters on the roadside. This aspect sows the seeds of each father's transformation.

The heightened potential for extended engagement with the landscape and especially developments on the periphery of the road itself is compounded by the fundamental differences between the child's perspective, the driver's forward-facing point-of-view emphasised by Baudrillard, and previous characterisations of the childish spectator in science fiction cinema. Robin Wood claims that the narrative, aesthetic, apolitical and thematic aspects of fantastical 1970s and 1980s Hollywood blockbusters express and encourage a 'regression to infantilism'.[27] Accordingly, Barry Keith Grant has argued that science fiction blockbusters and independent films from this period through to the 1990s appeal to diegetic and theatrical spectators' inner 'wide-eyed child' by foregrounding special effects sequences.[28] Sobchack describes this wondering spectator, totally submitted to the affective power of spectacular cosmic phenomena, as 'the human face of transcendence', its 'eyes gazing upward with childish openness and unfearful expectancy'.[29]

Conversely, the children in *Sweet Tooth, The Road* and *War of the Worlds* regularly look to the side or back down the road with unease, terror or concern. Whether they travel by automobile, horse or foot, they are consistently positioned behind their fathers, as 'passengers'. Their situation complicates the 'easy classical framing' and smooth relay of dialogue that Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark observe within road films that place travellers alongside one another in a car's front seat.[30] Instead, the child's attention wanders from the path ahead within separate point-of-view, reaction or over-the-shoulder compositions in which they see, and are shown to experience differently, details that the father often fails to notice. Whilst this

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[26] Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, rev. edn (London: Verso, 2001), p. 257.

[27] Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 175.

[28] Barry Keith Grant, '"Sensuous elaboration": Reason and the Visible in the Science-Fiction Film', in *Alien Zone II: The Spaces of Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. by Annette Kuhn (London: Verso, 1999), pp. 16-30 (p. 25).

[29] Sobchack, *Screening Space*, p. 284.

[30] Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, 'Introduction', in *The Road Movie Book*, ed. by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1-14 (p. 8).

divergent look initially unsettles the father and his sense of authority and capacity to protect the child, it also indicates the path to paternal redemption. In their attention and connection to peripheral sites, be they places, occurrences and persons on the roadside or the edges of the shot or panel frame, these children are characterised as figures of both vulnerability and transformative insight. This attention to marginal spaces demands that adult protagonists review their own perspectives and routes so that they may develop into more responsible, sensitive and emotionally gratified fathers. *Sweet Tooth*'s conflicted treatment of violence as part of this transformation offers a useful point of entry into considering the recent increase in attention to the traumatised child witness and the remoulding of the father's trajectory, as well as indicating the distinctive ways in which the format of the comic book maxi-series has effectively accommodated this trend.

'Don't gimme that doe-eyed shit': Traumatic vision and violence in *Sweet Tooth*

Sweet Tooth powerfully demonstrates the recent heightened concern with disaster's psychological effects upon the travelling child. Unlike the more consistent focus upon the father's perspective within *War of the Worlds* and *The Road*, Jeff Lemire's comic focuses equally on the voices and experiences of the child, Gus, and Jepperd, the drifter who gradually recognises his paternal responsibilities. This attention to different subjectivities is realised through the allowances the maxi-series format creates for changing narratorial perspective between issues and by the expressionistic quality of Lemire's line work and approach to panel and page composition. Addressing the latter in particular detail, the following analysis considers the relationship between the child's vision and fathering by examining not only the narrative and visual content of *Sweet Tooth*'s panels but also the exceptionally prominent role played by extradiegetic marginal spaces within individual pages and sequences and even across issues. This feeds into a comic book technique that Thierry Groensteen terms 'braiding', whereby meaning is created through the correspondence between recurrent compositions, motifs and similar formal features that appear throughout the text as a whole, rather than simply the immediate relationships between neighbouring panels.[31] In particular, *Sweet Tooth*'s shifting use of frames and framing is integral to both its engagement

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[31] Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, trans. by Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), p. 146.

with the consequences of violent behaviour for the father-son relationship and its problematic disregard for the resultant contradictions in its treatment of post-apocalyptic adult and child masculinities.

In order to analyse these formal transformations, it is necessary to address how the series initially constructs its adult protagonist as a figure mourning the loss of his paternity. Unlike *War of the Worlds* and *The Road*, *Sweet Tooth* centres on a man defined by his muscular body. Nicknamed 'the big man' by Gus, Jepperd emblematises Lemire's fascination with physically hulking, emotionally lost and bereaved rural husbands and fathers: figures also prominently featured in his short graphic novel *Lost Dogs* (2005) and intergenerational saga *The Essex County Trilogy* (2008-2009). These ambivalent characterisations recall the wave of 1990s Hollywood narratives concerning the rehabilitation of white action heroes discussed by Jeffords. Jeffords notes how films like *Terminator 2* cast the body not as a force under the individual's control but as 'a separate entity […] betraying the true internal feelings of the man'.[32] In these features, familial responsibility 'provides[s] both the motivation for and the resolution of changing masculine heroisms', a transition into a more sensitive man which can entail the destruction or shedding of the powerful body.[33]

Lemire is rather more enamoured of his protagonists' size, treating it as an assurance of familial security within splash panels that depict the father's massive body enfolding sleeping women or children. From an early point in each narrative, however, *Lost Dogs* and *Sweet Tooth*'s fathers are haunted by moments where their bodies apparently failed them as other men overpowered them and kidnapped, sexually abused and killed their wives and children. Rather than simply signifying great physical power, their bodies are re-envisioned as objects susceptible to exploitation and, indeed, as carapaces not fully controlled by each man; Jepperd's strength is bought up by militia leader Abbot as a tool for hunting down and retrieving a living hybrid child, Gus, in exchange for Louise's corpse. Despite casting his various strong men as ice hockey players and boxers, Lemire does not present them as individuals who have actively cultivated their physiques. Rather, the hulking body is treated as something into which men like Jepperd are virtually born. Accordingly, without the nurturing role they assume in relation to a lover and

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[32] Susan Jeffords, 'The Big Switch: Hollywood Masculinity in the Nineties', in *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*, ed. by Jim Collins, Hilary Radner and Ava Preacher Collins (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 196-208 (p. 201).
[33] Jeffords, 'The Big Switch', p. 200.

children, Jepperd and *Lost Dogs*' unnamed protagonist are seen, and see themselves, only as animals reduced to their brute natures. A violent hockey player who destroyed his career on the eve of the apocalypse, Jepperd previously derived purpose and direction by using his aggressive capabilities to protect Louise during their early years on the road looking for food and shelter. Yet after burying Louise at their old home and attempting, unsuccessfully, to commit suicide, he compares his body to that of 'a goddamn cockroach',[34] a verminous creature subsisting off the wreckage and representing the most base form of survival for survival's sake. For *Sweet Tooth* and *Lost Dogs*' adult protagonists, to be 'some kind of animal' is to be mindless, lacking in dignity or aims, and, most devastating of all, less than a man.[35] These characters find minimal relief in the homosocial ritual of rediscovering one's inner 'Wild Man' celebrated by Robert Bly and the mythopoetic men's movement.[36] Instead, they fully discover their manhood only by becoming fathers who draw the meaning of their existence completely from their children.

Arguably, *Sweet Tooth* is an expansion of *Lost Dogs*. The earlier graphic novel's father dies after discovering that his badly beaten wife is dead and declaring that he has nothing more for which to fight. Conversely, *Sweet Tooth*'s serialised format and generic shift to the post-apocalyptic road story and its promise of self-discovery on a new frontier accommodate an extended narrative about a man recovering a paternal role following the apparent death of his unborn child, a hybrid boy named Buddy who is later revealed to have actually survived in Abbot's custody. As a man driven to wander as a result of survivalist animal instinct rather than personal desires and aims, Jepperd forms an interesting point of comparison and contrast with Gus, who is himself part-animal. In one respect, *Sweet Tooth* depicts two male travellers taking control of the bodies and fates they have apparently been given through no conscious action of their own, a development enabled through the cultivation of filial trust and love. Extending a trend observed in Chapter 3's discussion of *Y: The Last Man*, *Sweet Tooth* uses the road narrative's more personal, character-centred focus to interrogate secular and spiritual apocalyptic discourses' preoccupation with master narratives of human history and purpose. As Jepperd grapples with what the series treats as a drive towards violence that has 'always' possessed him, [37] and Gus and the militia scientist Singh, who

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[34] Lemire, *Sweet Tooth*, 7, p. 5.
[35] Jeff Lemire, *Lost Dogs* (Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions, 2012), p. 93.
[36] Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book about Men* (Shaftesbury: Element, 1991), p. 224.
[37] Jeff Lemire, *Sweet Tooth*, 6 (New York: Vertigo, April 2010), p. 1.

later travels alongside them, try to decipher the origins of the genetic hybrids and the meaning behind false father Richard Fox's apocalyptic scripture, their experiences on the road progressively displace notions of a pre-determined natural or divine design. When Jepperd and the boy are baffled to discover that the pandemic was apparently an act of divine retribution, Jepperd tells Gus, 'I know you came here looking for […] some big answer to everything, […] There is no big secret. […] But it doesn't matter'.[38] Rather, the series narratively and stylistically privileges the lessons Jepperd and Gus learn about themselves and each other through their direct experiences of post-apocalyptic hardship on the road above those truths Singh seeks in the more abstract 'map' he constructs from Fox's writings and documents.[39]

Marking a corresponding departure from earlier visual apocalyptic science fiction texts' exploitation of the amoral pleasures of 'wreaking havoc, making a mess',[40] *Sweet Tooth* encapsulates recent apocalyptic father-and-child stories' altered focus by immediately foregrounding the child witness's subjective reactions, rather than a spectacle of devastation. The series opens with two close-up panels contrasting Gus's literally doe-eyed expression of distress with what his narration describes as Jepperd's 'cold eyes'.[41] Repeated and modified throughout the series, these compositions oblige the reader to look not through characters' eyes but into them. However, it is not merely the content of the panels themselves that articulates and encourages an intensified focus upon the subjective experience of disaster, but also Lemire's distinctive use of the most prominent marginal space within comic book form: the 'gutter', or the blank space between panels. As Scott McCloud explains, the gutter plays an integral role in 'closure', the process of suture by which illustrators express and readers comprehend the causal, chronological and spatial relationships between the moments, actions, or stages in an exchange presented within each panel in a sequence.[42] Whilst transitions between individual frames, shots and scenes in film editing are experienced in time, the comic strip gutter is especially distinctive because it presents a transition consistently visible in space. With the exception of Chapter 1's discussion of the gendered implications of images of the armoured body bursting through panel frames in 'The Cursed Earth',

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[38] Jeff Lemire, *Sweet Tooth*, 37 (New York: Vertigo, November 2012), p. 11.

[39] Jeff Lemire, *Sweet Tooth*, 16 (New York: Vertigo, February 2011), p. 7.

[40] Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Anchor, 1966), p. 213.

[41] Jeff Lemire, *Sweet Tooth, Vol. 1: Out of the Deep Woods* (New York: Vertigo, 2010), p. 7.

[42] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), pp. 70-72.

the comics examined in previous chapters treat the gutter as a fairly neutral, strictly functional space. Lemire, meanwhile, modifies the gutter throughout *Sweet Tooth* in order to convey certain emotional and narrative effects.

In issues 3 and 4, varying approaches to framing and the gutter present moments of crisis that arise from pivotal early encounters with horror and violence. These disruptions mark the early stages of Jepperd's recognition of his emotional responsibilities as a paternal protector. Before entering a seemingly abandoned town, Jepperd presents a show of mocking masculinity. Following Gus's efforts to heal his wounds following a fight, the man refers to the boy in effeminate terms as 'a regular Florence Nightingale' and by the titular nickname referring to Gus's fondness for chocolate, 'Sweet Tooth', before casually urinating in the corner of their shelter.[43] Gus's frustration with Jepperd's patronising behaviour prompts another condescending gendered challenge: 'Look who went and grew a set of balls'.[44] In view of the pronounced shifts in composition and even page orientation throughout the series, that this scene is depicted within a regular grid of equally sized panels, the least obtrusive structure for a comic book page, is less a neutral decision than a reflection of Jepperd's cool control. *Sweet Tooth* grounds this quality in Jepperd's physicality, as the scene's vertically elongated panels prominently display his bared sinewy torso. In earlier instances, then, Lemire's tight, controlled framing expresses Jepperd's outwardly unshakeable authority and detached calm.

However, the sight of a mass grave in issue 3 triggers a collapse in Jepperd's aura of emotional detachment and Gus's assertion that he has been able to cope with the 'bad stuff' he has previously seen outside his woodland refuge.[45] Obliged to enter into a tactful dialogue with the disturbed child, Jepperd appears uncharacteristically indecisive. Presaging a conflict directly intertwined with Jepperd's development as a father figure, Gus's narration vanishes almost entirely from the series following this pivotal splash page. Prior to this point, the child's narration provides naïve exposition, much of it simply relaying Fox's teachings and prohibitions. However, it becomes increasingly apparent that his false father's rules, far from performing the symbolic task of inducting the child into the Law and the wider world's harshness, have sheltered Gus from them. Accordingly, Gus struggles throughout the first half of the series to process and articulate the traumatic things

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[43] Lemire, *Sweet Tooth, Vol. 1*, p. 68.
[44] Lemire, *Sweet Tooth, Vol. 1*, p. 69.
[45] Lemire, *Sweet Tooth, Vol. 1*, p. 72.

he witnesses and does, and requires Jepperd's paternal guidance to adapt to these new circumstances. Indeed, that the sight of the rotting bodies breaks out of the parameters of the narration and the usually secure confines of the gutter, instead 'bleeding' to the edges of the page, formally suggests the need for a new framework.

Subsequently, the gutters around panels increasingly figure as sites of anxiety. In issue 4, Gus disobeys Jepperd's order to wait for him outside as he wreaks violent revenge upon two abusive brothel owners. The boy consequently sees one of the prostituted women, their future travelling companion Lucy, killing her female captor. In the first of two consecutive panels describing this event, Lucy takes aim as Jepperd looks on. However, the moment of impact is replaced by an image of Gus peering around the doorframe, his startled eye at the centre of the panel alongside a graphically rendered gunshot noise. This presents an example of what McCloud terms 'subject-to-subject' closure, where the gutter functions as a space in which the reader is prompted to imagine what a dramatic unseen act might be or look like.[46] Whilst the reader can easily infer what happens from the information presented within the panels, one is left to imagine how much Gus sees. Indeed, one is led to suspect that he may have witnessed much more of Jepperd's attack in issue 4 than is acknowledged within the panels themselves when a page from issue 14 showing Gus crushing another hybrid child's skull with a brick, in self-defence, replicates the distinctive composition that shows Jepperd bludgeoning the male brothel owner to death: a splash panel overlaid with a diagonal chain of inset panels describing the weapon's trajectory and repeated impact. It is important to note that the series rarely shies away from images of extreme brutality; rather, Lemire's artwork oscillates between scenes of vividly stylised 'splatter' and shockingly blunt and naturalistic depictions of violence in order to generate different emotional effects. Instead of censoring the bullet's impact, then, the emphasis placed upon Gus's startled look of horror and the importance of the gutter as a space of speculation in issue 4 invites the reader to reflect upon the act of processing violence mentally and its emotional and psychological shock for the child.

This highly strategic and self-conscious use of comics form subsequently brings together the traumatic aspects of the child's exposure to scenes of brutality and Jepperd's development as a father through his renegotiation of travelled space.

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[46] McCloud, p. 71.

Sweet Tooth presents, and encourages the reader to participate in, a continual retracing of the route taken by its male protagonists. Presented in a medium that enables the audience to flip back and forth between pages and issues more smoothly than theatrical film, the series challenges cinematic definitions of the road genre that emphasise the use of 'linear narrative[s]'.[47] In so doing, *Sweet Tooth* rejects the amnesiac episodic structure of road narratives about 'just passing through'. In addition to episodes in which Jepperd goes back to help seemingly incidental characters encountered on the roadside, such as the abused women in the brothel who are then incorporated into the central cast of travellers, *Sweet Tooth* visually expresses and invites a return to earlier incidents. It is instructive to discuss this aspect through reference to the theoretical distinction Philippe Marion draws between two aspects of the comic panel, the 'narrative function' and the 'picture function'.[48] As Kai Mikkonen paraphrases, the former prompts the reader to 'glide over the image, viewing it as merely part of the narrative continuum', whilst the latter fixes attention upon a particular panel by introducing certain compositional anomalies.[49] *Sweet Tooth* can similarly be loosely divided into pages which adopt unobtrusive page and panel compositions appropriate to static scenes of dialogue and dialogue-light sequences where dramatic variations in composition, line work and colouring are foregrounded. The latter frequently represent the dominant means of describing pivotal transformations in character, often referring back explicitly or implicitly to earlier visually distinctive episodes through graphical matches, like Gus's replication of Jepperd's violence in issue 14. Such repetitions compel the reader, like Jepperd, to retrace their progress through the series and observe connections with earlier incidents.

Marion's concept of picture function plays a particularly prominent role in *Sweet Tooth*'s treatment of the violence committed by both Jepperd and Gus. The graphic match observed above invites one to conclude that Gus's murder of another hybrid child who attacks his friend Wendy out of fear is the direct result of his earlier exposure to Jepperd's tendency to respond to threats by killing. This attention to the long-term consequences and influence of violence, an awareness denied by road texts that simply follow a 'just passing through' mentality, continues

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[47] Laderman, p. 107.
[48] Philippe Marion, cited in Kai Mikkonen, 'Remediation and the Sense of Time in Graphic Narratives', in *The Rise and Reason of Comics and Graphic Literature: Critical Essays on the Form*, ed. by Joyce Goggin and Dan Hassler-Forest (Jefferson: McFarland, 2010), pp. 74-86 (p. 82).
[49] Mikkonen, p. 82.

within Gus's gradual attempts to process his own traumatic brutality in issue 14. Cathy Caruth defines trauma as 'a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event' not 'assimilated or experienced fully at the time', manifest in 'repeated, intrusive hallucinations, [and] dreams'.[50] Indeed, the chiaroscuro artwork understates Gus's reaction when he first attacks the child, either cropping his face from the panels showing the child's body or obscuring his expression beneath the same deep cast shadows that often consume Jepperd's face during earlier violent scenes. However, the image of the dead child reappears twice in issues 23 and 36, in panels that now show Gus's distraught reaction to the deed. Whilst Caruth indicates that trauma manifests itself in repetitions, *Sweet Tooth* also treats the return to this earlier experience through the previously mentioned comic book technique of 'braiding' as a form of working through that distress,[51] recalling the conflict that art historian John Roberts associates with the psychological process of looking at photographs of wounded or dead bodies. Roberts theorises that although most spectators initially look away out of repulsion, respect or pity, a conscious decision is often made to look again. Roberts argues that this second look is motivated by a moral imperative to 're-narrativise' the disturbing image.[52] Indeed, Gus's murderous act finally reappears within a dream sequence that shows him retracing several pivotal stages of his road journey, situating the traumatic image securely and coherently within an overarching narrative of personal development. In contrast to earlier representations of the event that foreground the image through large splash panels or the shift to a completely different colour scheme, the narrative function of the panel depicting the act in issue 36 overshadows its picture function. This suggests that whilst the attack is a defining moment in Gus's journey, he is also capable of assimilating it mentally.

Issue 23 indicates that this capability emerges from his restored bond with Jepperd. As Gus tearfully admits his guilt through reference to a spiritual Law ('God says you ain't supposed to kill'), the association he previously drew between false father Fox and God-the-Father is transferred to Jepperd, who reassures Gus by stating, 'God ain't gonna be mad at you for that'.[53] Gus's confession consolidates his new-found trust in the man, yet Jepperd's identification with a transcendent

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[50] Cathy Caruth, 'Introduction: Trauma and Experience', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 3-12 (p. 4).
[51] Groensteen, p. 146.
[52] John Roberts, 'Violence, Photography and the Inhuman', *Violence and Representation Symposium* (unpublished paper, Tate Modern, 18 September 2010).
[53] Lemire, *Sweet Tooth*, 23, p. 21.

patriarchal authority marks one of the greatest contradictions in *Sweet Tooth*'s portrayal of the violent post-apocalyptic father. This contradiction is foregrounded within issue 21, where Jepperd regains Gus's faith, having alienated the child after abandoning him at the militia camp. This transformation is reflected in Lemire's reconfiguration of the gutter from a disturbing space to a firmly connective device. In a wordless sequence that spans the entire issue, Jepperd slays a bear that has dragged Gus into its cave. In the previously analysed double-page spread from issue 7 depicting Jepperd on a road to nowhere, the bereaved man's memories of his wife resurface unbidden in a diagonal line of inset panels that cut across his path. In issue 21, however, inset panels showing Louise and the face of Jepperd's biological son Buddy as it morphs into that of Gus are connected by a gutter that, like the more common comic book device of thought balloons, forms a white line linking them together across a double-page splash panel. That the white line is a major feature of road genre iconography that imposes a clear sense of order, direction and continuity upon the highway completes the meaning of the composition: through returning to the road to save Gus, Jepperd has found a way of dealing with his past, productively reigniting the paternal feelings and purpose he was previously denied. Accordingly, after Jepperd slays the bear, Gus runs to embrace him about the neck, his body lifted off the ground in a composition that frames the father's size as supportive and protective.

However, the fact that Jepperd is redeemed through the slaughter of an animal forms a massive tension between the paths of the father and child. The series concludes with a development analogically suggestive of the restoration and expansion of an indigenous, specifically Inuit culture across the North American continent following the incursion of white settlers. The final epilogue issue reveals that the hybrid population similarly follows animist principles, living at 'one with the land' and its wildlife.[54] Not only does the series refuse to interrogate its contradictory presentation of the father's violence as both something with devastating consequences for the child's behaviour and the means of resolving their distance from one another, but the post-human society's principles also clash with the fact that this resolution is brought about by the slaughter of an animal that actually appears benignly curious about Gus's hybridity rather than aggressive.

It may be argued that *Sweet Tooth*'s dismissal of these paradoxes is a direct result of the intense solipsism that ultimately informs Jepperd's fathering. After

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[54] Jeff Lemire, *Sweet Tooth*, 40 (New York: Vertigo, February 2013), p. 13.

Gus's narration fades from the series, it is replaced by repetitive monologues in which Jepperd reflects upon his sense of himself as 'a man', often as he kills animals for food or charges into battle. The series connects manhood with the idea of having a family to fight for, an equation that serves to legitimise his aggressive behaviour rather than questioning or curtailing it. It is telling that Abbot responds to Jepperd's challenge to 'fight [him] like a man' with the provocative retort, 'You're not a man […] Men don't let their little babies die'.[55] This exchange reveals an underlying obsession with what Michael S. Kimmel describes as 'the great secret of American manhood': the 'fear that other men will unmask us, […] reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men'.[56] Within this scenario, family is cynically portrayed as a crutch for masculinity. The image of Buddy's face morphing into Gus's in issue 21 implies that Jepperd reclaims the manly badge of fatherhood by rescuing a new 'son' in place of the old one. Consequently, Jepperd's battle with the bear is arguably less emblematic of his protective feelings for Gus as an individual than it is of his desire to defeat the animal within and reclaim his status as a man. Yet despite the perceived need to fight against one's own nature, this narcissistic portrait of fathering is completed by the suggestion that Jepperd's wife was lost not due to some physical failing, but because he failed to abide by his initial suspicions about Abbot when the militia offered them shelter. Certainly, women and children continue to fall foul of enemies they initially trust throughout the journey because Jepperd hesitates to act on his reservations. For a text in which the father finds redemption through the company of others and the child establishes a pacifistic society, *Sweet Tooth* continually insists that anti-social paranoia about other men and impulsive violence are indisputably valuable paternal qualities. Meanwhile, *The Road*'s engagement with familial and social imperatives contests this conclusion.

Looking for the good guys: Social responsibility and paternal paranoia in *The Road*

In one of few articles addressing *The Road*, Mark Fisher criticises the film for prizing individualism over 'the possibility of collectivity'.[57] As he remarks the

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[55] Lemire, *Sweet Tooth*, 16, p. 22.
[56] Michael S. Kimmel, 'Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity', in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. by Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), pp. 266-87 (p. 277).
[57] Mark Fisher, 'The Lonely Road', *Film Quarterly*, 63.3 (2010), 14-17 (p. 16).

Man's callousness towards strangers and self-imposed isolation throughout the film, Fisher's argument certainly resonates with the single-minded attitude that drives the father's relentless onward movement towards the coast. However, by neglecting the Boy's particular role within the text, Fisher overlooks the transformative tension between father and child that develops throughout the journey. This aspect of the film hinges on the child's look.

More explicitly than *Sweet Tooth*, *The Road* and *War of the Worlds* are concerned with the possibility and correctness of censoring or controlling the child's vision. On the most basic level, these two films treat the child's worrying exposure to horrors as a necessity where survival is concerned. Discussing *War of the Worlds*, Kirsten Moana Thompson argues that Ray's 'attempt to control his daughter's vision is both naïve and fruitless, if not dangerous,' using as evidence the paramedic Ogilvy's recollection that 'the ones that keep their eyes open' are the casualties of disaster that survive.[58] The act of seeing is not simply a passive, reactive activity but an assertion of a will to remain conscious. Moreover, the Boy and Rachel's attention to objects and phenomena within geographically marginal spaces proves an essential survival strategy. Had the Man ceased his single-minded search for an axe to break into an empty house's larder and acknowledged the Boy's distressed reactions to items adjacent to their path, including a meat hook, a chopping block and the Auschwitz-inspired image of a heap of discarded shoes, he might have deduced that the house belonged to cannibals before it was too late. By spotting the disturbed birds and treetops that augur the Martians' approach, Rachel is able to alert her father and the rest of a crowd trudging obliviously towards the futile promise of escape represented by a ferry. *War of the Worlds* thus distinguishes between what the opening narration describes as the 'infinite complacency' of the human masses who do not think to look to the skies as the Martians watch from space and the insight of the small child who is used to looking up. The child's attention to developments on the periphery represents an early warning of mortal danger in both instances.

The Road in particular, however, complicates an exclusive focus upon issues of life and death. As Philip Strick observes, post-apocalyptic science fiction has long envisaged scenarios in which 'questions of morality and responsibility may

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[58] Kirsten Moana Thompson, *Apocalyptic Dread: American Film at the Turn of the Millennium* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), pp. 149-50.

legitimately be set aside in favour of basic matters like survival'.[59] *The Road*, conversely, is haunted by the message imparted within a pivotal flashback, where the Man's insistence that the family will endure the horror is met with his wife's response, 'I don't want to *just* survive'. Outwardly a defeatist statement, the Woman's reply expresses a fundamental need to find something *for* which to live. Accordingly, the Boy's attention to phenomena or figures on the roadside indicates emotional needs and a social conscience that extend beyond the imperatives of staying alive. Whilst *Sweet Tooth* and *War of the Worlds* treat the journey as a process in which the adult male traveller learns to take responsibility for his young charges, *The Road* establishes the Man as a protective and caring father from the outset, instead channelling attention towards the process of learning to respect social imperatives that extend beyond their family.

In the first scene to foreground this aspect, the child's vision is again figured as a source of anxiety. Waiting for his father on the porch of the Man's childhood home, the son glimpses another young boy standing at a window on the other side of the street. As the Boy runs after the fleeing child, the Man rushes out to restrain and reassure him despite his protests that he 'need[s] to see [the other boy]'. The scene is unsettlingly ethereal, especially since it is haunted by the memory of another little boy in the form of the childhood memories reignited within the Man's former home. Prior to the film's later revelation that the other boy genuinely exists, the Man's reaction indicates a fear not only of his son running into danger on the roadside but also of the possibility that he may be hallucinating as a result of starvation. Yet the Boy's attachment to the child is also expressive of his desire to connect socially with others; indeed, it is subsequently explained that the Boy looks ahead to reaching the coast because he hopes there will be other children there. In revealing this wish within the Man's voiceover, however, the film indicates that the Man fetishises the Boy's desire as childish naivety and draws private psychological sustenance from it ('When I have nothing else, I try to dream the dreams of a child's imaginings'). He does not recognise it as a plea for the social contact that is denied by his tendency to leave characters like the gentle elderly nomad Ely (Robert Duvall) behind in his determination to keep moving forward and to protect his family above all else. Unlike *Sweet Tooth*, however, *The Road* partially interrogates this paranoid and self-centred behaviour, especially at their coastal destination.

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[59] Philip Strick, *Science Fiction Movies* (London: Octopus, 1976), p. 82.

    In both the child-centred road film and numerous post-apocalyptic science fiction and horror road narratives, the security of the destination, often identified as 'home' where travelling children are concerned, is rarely questioned. As Dickinson asserts, domestic destinations are valued in child-centred road films primarily as 'property' and thus as a symbol of the financial security believed to protect the child within capitalist ideology.[60] Various post-apocalyptic films, ranging from *Damnation Alley* and *Waterworld* to *Stake Land* (Jim Mickle, 2010), are similarly prone to treat their ultimate destinations as utopian refuges where the mere fact of arrival automatically ensures salvation. The audience is left to presume that the fortuitously preserved New Eden is safe, a conclusion that seems counterintuitive since these films' travellers have often previously fallen foul of betrayals of trust upon encountering other seemingly benign settlements. *The Road* upsets such strategies by treating the road journey as an arena in which the father is obliged to review his behaviour by revising his path.

    In *The Road*, the coastal 'destination' is a vital site where the child's look prompts a substantial yet qualified renegotiation of the attitude expressed by the father's approach to space and the journey. The Man is initially dismayed to discover that the shore is a mere continuation of the grey wasteland, entirely divorced from the blue seascape of his map and memories. The film refuses to treat the coast as a ready-made utopia, instead illustrating that it is the actions and trajectories undertaken within this space that bring about narrative resolution and familial reconciliation. Subsequent scenes show the travellers tracing an aimless trail between the shore, a quay and a coastal path that continually brings them back to the beach, as if they were trapped within limbo within this distinctly liminal space. This impression of enclosure is heightened by the bubble of light and shelter the Man establishes upon the backshore by building a fire and swaddling the Boy under a tent. Framed through medium shots and close-ups pointing landward rather than out to sea, the safe zone formed by the Man offsets the landscape's oppressive vastness. These intimate compositions adhere to Dickinson's observation that even transitional spaces within child-centred road films are often visually 'bounded', removing the uncertainty, yet also the sense of freedom and possibility synonymous with adult-focused road films' 'distant vanishing points'.[61] In *The Road*, the tightly bounded space created by the dying Man guards against a future that threatens the

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[60] Dickinson, p. 198.
[61] Dickinson, p. 202.

Boy with untold dangers, which the father fears so much that he continually contemplates killing the child to save him from them. However, *The Road*'s conclusion indicates that movement beyond the bounds imposed by the father is essential to beginning a project of social recovery, albeit a very small one compared to the rise of an entire post-human civilisation imagined in *Sweet Tooth*.

This is realised through two instrumental episodes in which interpersonal and spatial boundaries are breached. Firstly, like Jepperd the Man is obliged to recognise the consequences of his actions by retracing his route. After the Thief robs their camp on the beach in the Man's absence yet leaves the Boy unscathed, the father forces the stranger to pass over his own clothing in addition to returning their belongings and leaves him to freeze to death on the roadside. As the Boy protests the Man's malice and stubborn focus on pulling their cart down the path ahead, the Thief remains visually prominent against the blank light grey background. The camera's focus deepens across a frontal view of the Man and a subsequent point-of-view shot corresponding to the son's repeated looks over his shoulder. After visually re-centring a character whom the Man has aggressively thrust to the margins, this sequence shows the Boy finally attacking his father's conduct outright. Contesting the Man's assertion that the child is 'not the one who has to worry about everything' with a cry of 'Yes, I am!', the Boy's direct yet ambiguous retort refers not simply to the child's concern for their own survival but also to the prospect of a future adult life in an environmentally and socially decaying world that the fatalistic and paranoid Man considers irredeemable. The Man's consequent decision to retrace their steps for the first time in the film and to permit his son to restore the Thief's clothing and leave him a can of food can therefore be seen as an eventual acknowledgement of the social responsibilities that the Man has thrust to the periphery, as highlighted by the Boy's look.

The Road continues to indicate that marginal and unstable spaces and routes should be embraced and paternal boundaries must be breached if the crucial post-apocalyptic project of social recovery is to begin. In the film's final scenes, the Man apparently recognises that a self-centred lifestyle is unsustainable and destructive when his death from a fever is hastened by a search for inessential supplies in the freezing cold sea and he gets into a fight with two other survivors precipitated by their shared fear that the other party is following them. He consequently releases the Boy from his protection and his earlier resolve that they should die together, telling him to find the other 'good guys' upon whose existence the child has long insisted.

The film does not conclude with the parent's act of letting go, but rather illustrates the risk involved in the child's move to find a new protector. As the Boy leaves the reassuring 'bubble' formed by the Man and walks to the sea's edge, a zone that limits his means of escape, the camera shifts to long shots emphasising the vulnerability of the tiny figure carving his own path across the open, forbidding beach. Finally, the Boy must decide whether or not to trust another family who only approach him once he exposes himself by leaving his father and traversing the beach. As the Boy eventually agrees to accept the protection of a family that, as the earlier appearance of the child in the window attests, has apparently been following him and his father throughout the journey, his attention to spaces and persons lying beyond the Man's restricted forward focus and his faith in the goodness of others prove mutually validating.

Despite the emotional conflict involved in letting his son go, however, the Man is never required to reach out to others himself. That he enters into the aforementioned fight with another paranoid couple, immediately after allowing the Boy to restore the Thief's belongings, gives his return down the road the appearance of an attempt to placate his son rather than a genuinely compassionate action that recognises others' right to life. Moreover, the suggestion that he has learned to renounce his destructive possessive behaviour and, thus, progressed beyond the analogy between property and familial security observed by Dickinson, when frailty forces him to leave their cart of belongings behind, is subsequently voided. In a departure from the novel's focus upon memories of a thriving natural world, the film ultimately returns to an idyllic portrait of pre-apocalyptic America couched in several images and sounds of affluent middle-class lifestyles. The Man's flashbacks culminate in a shot showing a peaceful day with his wife lounging inside their spacious car at the beach, whilst the closing credits are accompanied by the buzz of an unseen yet clearly suburban neighbourhood.

This nostalgic withdrawal into the consumer comforts of the Man's past and the viewer's present can be seen as complacent, overly indulgent and even nonsensical. The golden-hued pre-apocalyptic flashbacks are so divorced from the savage grey post-apocalyptic environment that the film obscures the transition between them and any recognition of the older generation's complicity in that collapse, whether a matter of political, environmental or scientific irresponsibility. Perhaps unexpectedly, *The Road* thus aligns itself with a tradition of post-apocalyptic films that Constance Penley criticises for its tendency to ignore 'the

origins of future catastrophe' and instead 'revel in the sheer awfulness' of a nightmarish world.[62] Since countless science fiction texts that journey back in time tend to root the problems of younger persons, however reductively, in the actions of their parents, by this generic logic an aura of unacknowledged paternal guilt surrounds *The Road*. That fathers like the Man and Ely regard themselves simply as survivors or, at most, passive prophets who foresaw the devastation from 'signs' expresses a heavily suspect denial of any active role in decline or recovery. *The Road* and *Sweet Tooth* form part of a contemporary body of apocalyptic narratives where the focus has shifted from presenting the child as a mere helpmeet for adult characters, as per Shapiro's aforementioned Jungian thesis, to engaging with the question of children's own physical and psychological crises and survival. The two texts' reluctance to interrogate the father's withdrawal into himself, the denial of adult culpability and the transfer of social responsibility to the child alone is therefore strikingly irresponsible and cynical. Extending this inquiry into the contradictions that surround the figure of the violent travelling father to *War of the Worlds*, the chapter's final sub-section moves beyond post-apocalyptic examples to consider a scenario in which total destruction is ultimately averted and to examine the ramifications of this for the treatment of fathering on the road.

Managing multiple gazes and the return to peace in *War of the Worlds*

In its return to the ostensibly reassuring sights and sounds of the commodities and machines of the past, *The Road* risks recourse to the use of the vehicle as a ready-made masculine and paternal crutch previously observed in *Waterworld*. That *War of the Worlds* firmly showcases material transformations like the descent from car travel and an ill-fated ferry trip to a journey undertaken on foot may also incline one to compare it with this earlier action road film's use of changes in the vehicle as a signifier of the antisocial man's reformation as a father. In an analysis that reads one such shift in terms of the class politics expressed throughout Spielberg's directorial corpus, Leighton Grist notes that Ray's initially neglectful fathering is reductively associated with his working-class background.[63] Grist subsequently

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[62] Constance Penley, 'Time Travel, Primal Scene and the Critical Dystopia', in *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. by Annette Kuhn (London: Verso, 1990), pp. 116-27 (pp. 116-17).

[63] Leighton Grist, 'Spielberg and Ideology: Nation, Class, Family, and *War of the Worlds*', *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 7 (2009), 67-78 (p. 72).

emphasises the exchange of the Mustang that Ray drives recklessly around the neighbourhood for a Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV), which he helped to fix after the Martians' powerful electromagnetic pulse disrupted local machines. As a vehicle steeped in 'distinct middle-class connotations' and reminiscent of new husband Tim's 'safe-looking vehicle', Grist argues that Ray's acquisition of the SUV is used to prefigure his recuperation as a capable paternal protector.[64]

Grist's over-emphasis upon the vehicle's pre-existing cultural associations, however, neglects its actual representation within the narrative. Even before a mob of desperate evacuees fight over the SUV, the car is framed as a site of discord. Ray initially relegates his daughter to the stolen car's backseat in a futile attempt to prevent her discovering the true intensity of the surrounding danger that he discusses with son Robbie and, earlier, a neighbourhood friend at the front of the car. The father thus constructs a tenuous spatial and psychological division between adult and child zones, the frailty of which is announced by the replacement of relatively static shots framing the two spaces separately with the camera's frenzied rotations around the vehicle, as Ray escapes the devastation in New Jersey and drives down a crowded freeway. Far from presaging the father's growth, this sequence instead establishes both the emotional schisms that exist between him and his offspring and a need for new approaches to space that accommodate both of his children's emotional and social needs.

Unlike *The Road*, *Sweet Tooth* and most apocalyptic science fiction and horror road narratives demonstrating the recently intensified focus upon father-and-child relationships, *War of the Worlds* concerns a father's attempt to protect and regain the trust and love of both a pre-pubescent daughter and an adolescent son. As in the previous case studies, *War of the Worlds* articulates the differences between Robbie and Rachel by exploring both their fear and need to see. Teenager Robbie's insistence that he 'need[s] to see' and participate in the military's battle against the Martians corresponds to a drive to realise 'his manly destiny',[65] not unlike that which compelled 'the thousands of adolescents who went to the enrolment offices to defend their country in 2001' following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as Antonio Sánchez-Escalonilla observes.[66] In recurrent scenes that show Ray running back and

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[64] Grist, pp. 73-74.

[65] Nigel Morris, *The Cinema of Steven Spielberg: Empire of Light* (London: Wallflower, 2007), p. 354.

[66] Antonio Sánchez-Escalonilla, 'Hollywood and the Rhetoric of Panic: The Popular Genres of Action and Fantasy in the Wake of the 9/11 Attacks', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 38 (2010), 10-20 (p. 16).

forth across open countryside in a desperate effort to control two children who pull in opposite directions spatially and psychologically, the father is demonstrably stuck between Robbie's adolescent imperative and the need to mitigate Rachel's potentially traumatic scopic exposure to violence and horror. The following analysis argues that this conflict and the father's process of 'becoming' evolve through an episodic road story in which Ray is repeatedly faced with a specific set of locations and corresponding spatial and parental dilemmas that he must learn to negotiate appropriately. The discussion begins by considering the more immediate dilemmas posed by Rachel as a child whose gaze is, once again, drawn to dangerous yet also revelatory marginal sites and phenomena. The chapter then considers the more abstract and implicit means by which the father's attention to the child's vision reconciles Ray and Robbie.

During the drive that occupies the first third of the family's journey, Rachel clearly displays the divergent gaze of the child passenger discussed above. For instance, the camera pivots around her as she moves independently of the car's forward trajectory to see an approaching heat ray ploughing towards the car's rear. Where Rachel's attachment to sights on the periphery is concerned, however, the film is preoccupied as much with the threat posed by an ill-judged attempt to censor the child's vision as the traumatic spectacle of horror itself. In one scene, Rachel sees bodies drifting down from the devastation upstream when she relieves herself beside a river. Images of the carnage and her growing panic are intercut with threatening point-of-view shots suggesting an anonymous danger approaching Rachel from behind. The episode climaxes with a visual and aural startle effect as Ray's hand suddenly shoots into frame to cover his daughter's eyes. Until he leans fully into the frame, the father is identified as an alien presence who invades spatial boundaries to frightening effect, even when attempting to guard the child from traumatic scenes.

Contrary to Thompson's aforementioned assertion that Ray's censorship of Rachel's vision is futile and even dangerous, however,[67] *War of the Worlds* appears more concerned with the father's ability to cultivate a way of managing the child's look that displays sensitive authority. After Robbie joins the military struggle and is seemingly engulfed by an explosion, Ray and Rachel take shelter in a farmhouse basement with unstable survivalist Ogilvy. Upon discovering that the tripods are converting human bodily fluids into a terraforming fertiliser, Ogilvy begins to rant

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[67] Thompson, p. 149.

hysterically. As the man risks revealing their presence to the aliens, Ray realises that the only way to protect his daughter is to kill Ogilvy. The reinvention of the sometimes comically indecisive and powerless father as a silhouetted figure who looms silently over Ogilvy before closing the door on their struggle inspires unease, rather than offering a celebratory image of male violence akin to *Sweet Tooth*'s self-contradictory presentation of its aggressive father. Yet the scene also presents a crucial moment of compassionate authority and trust between father and daughter that resolves the anxiety surrounding the extra-diegetic margins created by the edges of the shot, not by stressing their connective qualities, as is the case in *Sweet Tooth*, but by emphasising the creation of appropriate censorial boundaries. As in the scene on the riverbank, Ray moves around the edges of the frame, unseen by the girl centred in the shot and with only his arms and parts of his face visible at any one time. However, his slow, deliberate movements as he fits her with a blindfold and presses her hands over her ears suggest steady control rather than panic, and he now faces and talks calmly with Rachel rather than creeping up behind her. Instead of bursting into frame, Ray now leaves it gently as he retreats first into the background and then into the peripheral space of the closed-off lower cellar, carefully building a boundary between extreme protective adult actions and the vulnerable child.

Crucially, the scene also involves the child's reciprocal show of confidence. Curiously, Rachel calmly removes her blindfold immediately after she hears the cellar door open, even though she and the camera have yet to identify who has emerged alive. If the element of 'scopic dread' Thompson observes throughout the film involves the potentially traumatic 'act of seeing what one already knows (but has repressed [out of fear])',[68] Rachel's decision to let herself see reveals an implicit confidence that her father has prevailed. Indeed, whilst she is spared the spectacle of violence, one can confidently assume that Rachel knows that a fatal fight has occurred, as she drops her earlier tendency to ask Ray incessant questions. Whilst Thompson asserts, somewhat nebulously, that *War of the Worlds* treats 'looking and knowing [as] the only possible responses to trauma',[69] this sequence more strongly emphasises the security the young child can draw from the father's performance of composure and control. Both travellers' calm here contrasts markedly with an earlier scene in which Rachel attacks Ray for not being able to assure her that they

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[68] Thompson, p. 25.
[69] Thompson, p. 149.

are 'going to be okay', regardless of whether or not this is true. Thus Ray's later sensitive management of the boundaries of the child's vision evidences his newfound ability to perform the role of the Lacanian father, defined by Slavoj Žižek as an obligation to provide 'the symbolic fiction that renders this [traumatic] reality bearable'.[70] *War of the Worlds*, then, strategically and transparently utilises the road film's episodic format to chart the developing relationship between father and daughter across a series of encounters with the same spatially articulated moral dilemmas.

Ray's realisation of this paternal role, however, appears disturbingly contingent upon his teenaged son's absence. Whilst Robbie's visually and aurally grandiose departure may suggest the culmination of his own Oedipal voyage of adolescent individuation, the film's refusal to follow him into war also frames his exit as the gratification of a Laius complex. In the aforementioned sequence on the freeway, Ray's attempt to suppress Rachel's distress by shouting at her in the rear-view mirror is contrasted with Robbie's movement from the front to the back seats as he helps her perform a therapeutic ritual that allays her claustrophobia. This requires that Rachel cross her arms in front of her to demarcate an impenetrable 'safe' private space, implicitly erecting a hostile emotional boundary between her and Ray. As the adolescent mediator between adult and child, Robbie initially provides the symbolic fiction discussed by Žižek. Just as Nigel Morris has argued that Ray's later penetrative defeat of a tripod reminiscent of 'the voracious archaic mother' represents 'the wished-for stillbirth of [Tim and] Mary Ann's baby' and the competing paternal legacy it signifies,[71] Robbie's relationship with Rachel represents a similar threat. His apparent death therefore realises an unsettling filicidal fantasy harboured by a father for whom, like King Laius in the myth of Oedipus, the son represents a threat to his relationship with a female love object. Ogilvy's presentation as another paternal double who 'creepily promises Rachel that he will "look after her" if something happens to her father' completes the analogy and its incestuous implications here.[72] Indeed, it is only after both Ogilvy and, seemingly, Robbie are killed that Rachel performs her ritual of building safe boundaries one last time, taking her father's arms and closing them around herself in a newly inclusive gesture.

[70] Slavoj Žižek, *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway* (Seattle: Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities, 2000), p. 29.
[71] Morris, pp. 357-58.
[72] Thompson, p. 149.

Ray's later management of space, vision and patriarchal authority, however, also conveys a moment of reconciliation with both children. This distinguishes *War of the Worlds* from *Sweet Tooth*'s tendency to present sons Gus and Buddy as simultaneously interchangeable and mutually exclusive within Jepperd's voyage of paternal becoming. Whilst soldiers order the refugees arriving in Boston to 'keep moving forward', Ray resists the myopic forward trajectory initially favoured by the fathers in all three case studies, and moves to one side. Directly recalling the earlier scene where Rachel spots a distressed flock that warns of an approaching tripod, Ray looks up at the birds settling on a tripod: a sign that the machines' defensive shields have failed. The father's attention to phenomena unfolding on the margins of adult vision and his movement to the side-lines enable him to alert the military to the aliens' weakness and protect civilians, whom Ray advises to stop running ahead in blind panic and instead shelter within an underpass. Ray's behaviour demonstrates a heightened respect for the special insight provided by his daughter's perspective and aligns him with a patriarchal institution, represented exclusively by male soldiers, that his son already respects.

The latter implication is confirmed when Ray delivers Rachel to the Boston neighbourhood where Mary Ann is waiting and discovers that Robbie has survived. Scholars often regard this as a scene expressive of exclusion, remarking its similarities to *The Searchers'* final shot (John Ford, 1956). At *The Searchers'* conclusion, Civil War veteran Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) retreats into the wilderness, realising on the homestead's threshold that his transgressions during the mission to rescue his abducted niece have barred him from civilised society. Lester D. Friedman describes Ray as a man similarly left 'standing alone' outside, as Mary Ann's pregnancy and new step-father Tim ideologically foreclose any possibility of his restoration as the family's patriarch.[73] However, such readings overlook the fact that the scene actually focuses on the street rather than the home, as Mary Ann and Robbie run out to meet Ray and Rachel. Indeed, Robbie's movement inverts an earlier scene where he completely ignores his father as he strolls from Tim's SUV to Ray's house. So, rather than representing a place of exclusion, the street can be read as part of the public sphere in which Ray and Robbie are implicitly bound together by their separate interactions with the army.

The son's choice to join and acknowledge his father is an integral feature of all the case studies examined in this chapter, and is characterised as a uniquely

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[73] Lester D. Friedman, *Citizen Spielberg* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), p. 155.

masculine ritual. Whilst Rachel resists another couple's attempt to take her into their protection and insists on staying put as Ray tries to persuade Robbie not to join the battle, Robbie repeatedly seeks to abandon the path of flight their father has selected and head towards the destruction. Literary scholar David Lee Miller has argued that the male concern surrounding the nonexistence of a paternal body equivalent to the publicly visible maternal body crystallises around sons rather than daughters. Throughout Ancient and Modern Western culture, sons have formed this anxiety's focus because they simultaneously offer 'indispensable "proof" of fatherhood, for only the male heir can extend the patriline', and provoke insecurity because, as Miller claims, 'there is no way to *see* that any particular boy springs from this man rather than that one'.[74] Forks in the road where sons must choose between father figures therefore serve as affirmations of paternity and a renewed show of faith in the patriarch's ability to steer the son away from the risk of 'wandering into dangerous unmarked space'.[75] Whilst *Sweet Tooth* features multiple scenes where Gus leaves other past and potential fathers in favour of joining Jepperd, the son may also verify his father's paternity by leaving him behind, as occurs at the end of *The Road*, where the Boy honours his dead father's benediction by moving on to seek a new male protector. Often, validation hinges upon each son's verbal identification of the father *as* his father. The fact that Robbie overcomes his habit of calling his biological father 'Ray' by finally hailing him as 'dad' is as significant as his decision to leave rival father Tim's side and embrace Ray in the street.

Unlike *Sweet Tooth*, however, *War of the Worlds* refuses to restore full paternal privilege to a man who has proven his responsibility by murdering another human being. Due to the structural differences between the post-apocalyptic road narrative and a text in which total devastation is ultimately prevented and normality is restored, the film openly recognises that the violent father's journey ends in an ideological cul-de-sac. Since he essentially martyrs himself long before the birth of the hybrids' new civilisation, the role of Jepperd's violent behaviour in his sense of his own masculinity is never tested within this new pacifistic environment. Conversely, the return to peacetime in *War of the Worlds* presents an impasse for a father who has proven his parental mettle through the violence seemingly justified by the departure from social norms created by apocalyptic circumstances and the

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[74] David Lee Miller, *Dreams of the Burning Child: Sacrificial Sons and the Father's Witness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 4 (Miller's emphasis).
[75] Corrigan, p. 144.

road narrative. Whilst Ray gains increased command over space during his journey, that process is predicated upon his removal from the domestic routines that originally confounded him. It is therefore unsurprising that he is not shown entering the home in the film's closing scenes. The father who proves himself only during apocalyptic upheaval is an unstable figure who displays an extremely limited and incomplete grasp of the emotional, social and domestic duties that contemporary scholars like Aitken stress as integral to fathering. *War of the Worlds* is at once undercut by this highly pessimistic characterisation of fatherhood and apparently and vitally reluctant to gloss over these contradictions in the manner of *Sweet Tooth* and *The Road*.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how recent apocalyptic science fiction texts have used road journeys to explore several emotional and moral dilemmas faced by fathers who seek to escort children safely through devastated landscapes. Diverging from earlier characterisations of vision in the road story and science fiction cinema, *Sweet Tooth, The Road* and *War of the Worlds* identify the child's vision as a source of both anxiety and redemption for fathers who previously follow negligent, misanthropic or aimless paths. The correlations drawn between the child's look and boundaries and marginal zones generate narratives in which fathers outwardly learn to recognise the consequences of their actions for children, respect the child's desires for social contact beyond the family unit, and draw productively upon the child's different perspective upon the world through the renegotiation of travelled and even extradiegetic spaces. However, these stories about violent fathers are also rife with contradictions. *Sweet Tooth* and *The Road* ultimately tend towards portrayals of fatherhood that retain a self-centred and unrepentant quality at odds with the increased attention to children's traumas and fears. Whilst *War of the Worlds* does not cancel out its contradictions, like the other two texts it presents an undeniably grim and limited image of the work of fathering, arguably as a result of apocalyptic science fiction and the road genre's shared fascination with behaviour beyond the bounds of organised society. Whilst these texts interrogate several naïve tendencies that typify apocalyptic science fiction road narratives' treatments of the child and utopian destinations, their representations of fatherhood often prove remarkably unself-conscious.

Shifting to the son's perspective, the study's final chapter continues to address familial relationships. Departing from the reflective and relatively slow-paced examples addressed in this chapter, Chapter 5's case studies reveal another current direction in apocalyptic road narratives' evolution regularly configured as a source of male anxiety: the threatened elision of the road journey itself.

5
The End of the Road?
Elided Journeys, Virtual Highways and Dislocated Men

As the preceding chapters have demonstrated, a variety of approaches to, and uses of, the apocalyptic science fiction road narrative exist within contemporary films and comics. Earlier chapters have individually examined the characterisations, anxieties and representational issues pertaining to certain 'types' of American male subject prominent throughout apocalyptic science fiction road films and comics, primarily distinguished according to their physical and subjective relationship to their vehicles (Chapters 1 and 2), age (Chapter 3) and familial role (Chapter 4). In one of few articles that acknowledge apocalyptic road cinema's diversity and longevity, Karl Phillips discusses the rise of a rather different tendency at the turn of the millennium, the effects of which allegedly extend beyond any one social group. Against the background of widening public access to communications resources like the Internet that enable the efficient transfer of data and continue to compress space and time, Phillips states of recent apocalyptic texts that it is no longer 'the road travelled that is important, nor the traveller, but the information that has been transmitted'.[1] Phillips proceeds to offer a reading of several films that reflects more upon the images for which travelling protagonists apparently largely serve as anonymous 'carriers'.[2] This final chapter's examination of the representation of gender in two of Phillips' examples, *Until the End of the World* (Wim Wenders, 1991) and *Twelve Monkeys* (Terry Gilliam, 1995), takes his assertion as its principal point of departure. Contrary to Phillips' emphasis upon the traveller's increasing anonymity and his inattention to matters of sexual and racial difference, the following discussion shows that apocalyptic science fiction and popular culture more generally frame altered experiences of the road journey as a source of distinctly masculine anxieties.

Various films and comics examined in previous chapters depict the apocalyptic road as a volatile site in terms of the impact of individual spatial negotiations and larger transformations of the physical terrain upon masculine characterisations. The texts addressed in this chapter, meanwhile, envisage elisions,

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[1] Karl Phillips, 'We're Virtually There: SF Film on the Road to Ruin', in *Lost Highways: An Illustrated History of Road Movies*, ed. by Jack Sargeant and Stephanie Watson (London: Creation Books, 1999), pp. 266-74 (p. 269).
[2] Phillips, p. 270.

constrictions and distortions in the representation and diegetic experience of the road journey that threaten to displace the physical terrain altogether. These changes are associated with different technological paradigms of movement both particular to science fiction, such as time travel, and extrapolated from actual contemporaneous developments. Though an increasing concern of road cinema, the elided journey does not really preoccupy apocalyptic road comics. Various science fiction comics have featured journeys through time and voyages from physical terrain into cyberspace, the latter being a particular concern of Claudia Springer's work on gender and sexuality in cultural treatments of the digital revolution.[3] However, very few comics have framed these different modes of mobility in direct relation to road travel. Those that do, such as several of the serialised stories within Dark Horse Comics' *Terminator* spin-off series (1990-1999), avoid the focused and extended engagement with such themes apparent within this chapter's cinematic examples.

The following analysis, then, concentrates upon films that juxtapose physical road journeys with new forms and experiences of travel. The chapter focuses on *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys*' representation of anxieties concerning compromised autonomy, fractured subjectivities and Oedipal desires and hostilities which arise from the journey's transformation. Whilst *Until the End of the World* is an international production and should therefore be situated within director Wenders' corpus of German and American road films, the following analysis concentrates principally on the characterisation of its central male character, the American traveller Sam (William Hurt). Sam is dispatched on a voyage around the world by his father, the fugitive scientist Henry Farber (Max von Sydow), tasked with recording technologically and mnemonically a series of meetings with his parents' distant friends and family that are intended for mental transmission to his blind mother Edith (Jeanne Moreau). Sam's global journey is tracked by an international collection of characters including the film's protagonist, the restless and infatuated Frenchwoman Claire (Solveig Dommartin), her devoted ex-boyfriend Eugene (Sam Neill), detective Philip Winter (Rüdiger Vogler), and Burt (Ernie Dingo), a bounty hunter sent by the CIA to steal Henry's memory-visualisation technology. The journey takes place prior to a malfunctioning nuclear satellite's predicted collision with the Earth. *Twelve Monkeys*, meanwhile, alternates

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[3] Claudia Springer, *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age* (London: Athlone, 1996), pp. 50-79.

between the periods preceding and following a devastating pandemic that has forced the few human survivors underground. Contrary to Phillips' claim that 'the physical road has drifted away into oblivion' in this film, one of the major structural differences between *Twelve Monkeys* and the short film it loosely adapts, *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962), is the addition of a road journey from Baltimore to Philadelphia.[4] This chapter examines the quest undertaken by post-apocalyptic time traveller James Cole (Bruce Willis) and his hostage and later lover, psychiatrist Kathryn Railly (Madeleine Stowe), focusing on the identity crisis that James suffers during his fantastical mission across history to discover the virus's source and obtain a sample for a group of post-apocalyptic researchers.

It shall be argued that the restrictive and disorientating itineraries imposed upon these male travellers lead not to their de-centralisation or depersonalisation but to an increasingly narcissistic focus, enabled through another form of travel adopted partway through the narrative. Both films juxtapose this introspective shift with a more socially engaged woman's experience of the journey. Devoting particular attention to the manner in which these renderings of female experience on the road both bring the distinctly male anxieties over elided journeys into sharper focus and indicate the potential for further research into representations of gender in apocalyptic road narratives, the chapter acknowledges several marked differences and points of intersection in the female and male experiences of these journeys. Its conclusions contest several reductive readings of *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys* that regard their heroines' stories as subordinate to narratives of male crisis.

The chapter concludes with a brief segment reflecting upon contemporary cinema's intensified focus upon the technological upheaval of the free-wheeling road journey. Bringing the discussion of the transformations discussed by Phillips up to date, the final section observes the continuing male focus of popular texts that articulate anxieties surrounding this perceived transition. This segment considers a recent cluster of science fiction action films that use different images of road travel (often contrasting the virtual road with the 'real' road) to describe a male search for control and authentic experience in more reactionary terms than those identified within *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys*. In extending its focus beyond apocalyptic road narratives, this section indicates the fertile ground for continued research into other permutations of the fantastical road story.

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[4] Phillips, p. 270.

Changing paradigms of transit and travel

Several studies that emerged amid the millennial boom in scholarship on the road genre position themselves in relation to the formal and thematic transformations and generic challenges that industrial and infrastructural changes and the rise of digital media have posed. Discussions of this phenomenon tend to follow two paths. Firstly, several scholars have considered the impact of new technologies upon drivers and media producers and consumers alike. Katie Mills concludes *The Road Story and the Rebel* by assessing how video games, reality television and widening access to inexpensive film-making equipment and online channels of distribution and exhibition have simultaneously extended and compromised the democratic and rebellious spirit that she examines within the road story.[5] Secondly, others have suggested that developments in the transport infrastructure have generated new subjectivities and paradigms of mobility. In an essay that does not deal explicitly with the road genre yet illustrates significant ramifications for it, Sherman Young argues that online traffic camera video feeds, in-car devices utilising the Global Positioning System (GPS) and video games that convert familiar city streets into racetracks have spawned a contemporary reinvention of the 19th century Parisian *flâneur*: the '*driveur*'.[6] A literary type explored in Walter Benjamin's essays on Charles Baudelaire, the *flâneur* wanders through the city at a purposefully slow pace that resists the accelerated pace of industrial production, observing the incidents of the street at his own leisure.[7] Young writes that 'speed and destination have transplanted the importance of the journey' for the modern-day *driveur*,[8] recasting the city as 'the backdrop for movement' rather than a space to be explored in its own right.[9] In keeping with the thesis's methodology, this chapter sets aside matters of digital production, distribution and exhibition and instead situates itself in relation to the burgeoning academic attention to visual, conceptual and diegetic challenges to the fictional road journey.

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[5] Katie Mills, *The Road Story and the Rebel: Moving Through Film, Fiction, and Television* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), pp. 204-23.

[6] Sherman Young, 'Morphings and *Ur*-Forms: From *Flâneur* to *Driveur*', *Scan: Journal of Media Arts and Culture*, 2.1 (2005) <http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal_id=48> [accessed 23 July 2010] (para. 1 of 29).

[7] Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 84.

[8] Young, para. 20 of 29.

[9] Young, para. 24 of 29.

Within this body of work, David Laderman has remarked the appropriation, transformation and rejection of road imagery in advertising rhetoric surrounding the Internet, and claims that the '1990s road movie fever can be partially understood as a response to the encroaching phenomenon of the virtual highway'.[10] Unfortunately, this connection is never fully clarified, largely because the films he subsequently analyses are not overtly concerned with contemporary technological transformations' impact upon the road journey. Nevertheless, Laderman's suggestion that the rapid online transfer of data and assets has recast long-distance journeys as 'less desirable, less necessary' and 'more obsolete' is an important consideration.[11] The images of mobility that road stories favour sit awkwardly with the '"nanosecond culture"' discussed within Ursula K. Heise's study of time in postmodern literature. The continual advancement of computer microprocessors and Internet technology has spawned an electronic axis of time that 'take[s] place far below the threshold of human temporal perception'.[12] Most studies agree that the road genre values the highway as a space of cultural opposition, escape, autonomy, spontaneity, self-transformation and experimentation with identity, and thus a site to be valued in itself rather than merely as the route to a defined destination. Conversely, in the contemporary paradigm of hyper-efficient communication and travel described by Young and Heise, detours and diversions represent inconveniences rather than sources of enjoyment.

What little scholarship addresses this recent 'crisis' in the road genre does not consider its racial and gendered aspects. There is, however, a clear precedent for integrating an analysis of race and gender with discussions of shifts in the experience and media representation of movement in modern life. Lynne Kirby's *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (1997) and Karen Beckman's *Crash: Cinema and the Politics of Speed and Stasis* (2010) consider the masculine traumas associated with catastrophic cinematic imagery surrounding the railway and the automobile, especially during their rise to widespread public use. Kirby's work presents a particularly informative point of orientation for the following discussion, as demonstrated by her analysis of the 1901 Thomas Edison and Edwin S. Porter short *The Photographer's Mishap*, in which a man is thrown into 'a

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[10] David Laderman, *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), p. 176.
[11] Laderman, p. 176.
[12] Ursula K. Heise, *Chronoschisms: Time, Narrative, and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 44-45.

hysterical fit of madness' after being hit by the locomotives he attempts to photograph. The film, Kirby suggests, may be read 'as the boomerang of white, male, technological culture against itself',[13] expressed self-reflexively through the speeding vehicle and the moving image's combined assault on a form of 'vision accustomed to static images and objects, a vision in the process of becoming outmoded'.[14] As a hysteria-inducing transformation that threatens 'the uncoding of men as men',[15] the technologically motivated crisis of vision becomes a crisis of control in several of the films addressed in this chapter. This is especially true of recent science fiction action films that contrast images of liberated road travel with male protagonists' enclosure in environments explicitly, aesthetically or analogically identified as video game worlds.

Timothy Corrigan regards Kirby's examples as 'a preclassical version of the postmodern crisis played out by the contemporary man on the road'.[16] In turn, the films discussed below sustain an anxiety that Corrigan observes in post-war road features, concerning the dissolution of the secure family unit and the steady hand of patriarchal authority that prevented 'the protagonist from wandering into dangerous unmarked space' in earlier travel-based fictions.[17] The crises of disempowerment and depersonalisation that male protagonists face in *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys* are continually framed through familial tensions and a compulsive return to a family dynamic which offers limited assurances of security or stability.

Fractured Subjectivities in *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys*

The underlying problem with Phillips' assertion that apocalyptic road films' protagonists have become vessels for the transmission of information is that he treats this transformation as a *fait accompli* to which travellers submit passively. In actuality, many road films that describe and reflect the rise of new technologies capable of eliding or simplifying the passage between the point of departure and the destination imagine the trauma of transition into, and within, a new mode of traversing time and space. In *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys*, Sam

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[13] Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), p. 67.
[14] Kirby, p. 70.
[15] Kirby, p. 69.
[16] Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture after Vietnam* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. 144.
[17] Corrigan, pp. 144-45.

and James are originally dispatched by their scientist guardians as purely functional collectors of information. However, each narrative describes an anxious re-centring of the male self, expressed through a return to sites, images and identities synonymous with a personal past and its assumed stability that is conducted via a form of transport different from that which previously unsettled the subject. However, this introspective withdrawal ultimately leads Sam and James down circular, unproductive and regressive pathways.

As indicated above, both films prominently feature female travellers who ultimately share in the dislocated male traveller's agony and insecurity yet whose experience differs significantly. Rather than casting women primarily as sites for the disavowal or relief of male anxiety, as per various texts examined in previous chapters, *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys* present Claire and Kathryn as individuals who are more deeply involved in society than the male 'outsider'. Whilst this greater degree of social engagement operates in Claire's favour when compared with Sam's experience of the journey, it exerts an altogether more restrictive influence upon Kathryn. The following analysis examines how male and female experiences of travel and the different technologies involved shift throughout each narrative. In view of substantial variations in their presentation of travelled space and the gender dynamics between the principal characters, this discussion refers to both the 151-minute version of *Until the End of the World* distributed in theatres and Wenders' 279-minute director's cut.

Whilst *Twelve Monkeys'* Kathryn does not experience the dislocations of time travel herself, throughout *Until the End of the World* Claire shares in the transformations of the road journey and several associated conflicts experienced by Sam. In various respects, Claire's movements and her attitudes towards the journey uphold the spontaneity conventionally associated with the road genre, with each juncture offering this impulsive traveller the possibility of 'chang[ing] the course of her own life', as Eugene's narration observes. Throughout the film Claire takes new routes and boards vehicles on a whim rather than as the result of any credible emotional attachment to Sam, with whom she is infatuated and who steals her share of the money she offers to carry for two bank robbers. In a pivotal early sequence Claire's approach to the journey is distinguished from the constricting dictates of an in-car satellite navigation device ostensibly focused upon efficiency rather than exploration. Here, she finds herself in a traffic jam in southern France, amid a national panic to escape the falling nuclear satellite's projected site of impact.

Claire swiftly overrides the device and goes off-map, reclaiming the euphoria of free movement as her car winds through extreme long shots (lavishly protracted in the director's cut) depicting mountainside and rural roads.

This sequence, however, proves an exception in a film with very few extended montages of travel. *Until the End of the World*'s tagline, which declared it 'the ultimate road movie', marketed the film as the culmination of Wim Wenders' directorial career within the genre, encompassing his German 'road movie trilogy', which comprises *Alice in the Cities* (1974), *The Wrong Move* (1975) and *Kings of the Road* (1976), and the American feature *Paris, Texas* (1984). The criterion for this label appears to be the range of countries visited and the distance travelled by the film-makers rather than the depiction of the journeys between locations. The shorter theatrical cut especially leaps abruptly between different countries, although both versions increasingly signify journeys through brief interior shots showing characters in airliners or boats. These compositions de-emphasise the space travelled and the sensations of moving, whilst attesting to the ease and efficiency with which contemporary travellers navigate an increasingly interconnected world. Whilst the foregrounded division between East and West Germany in *Kings of the Road* coheres with Wendy Everett's observation that European road films tend to emphasise the political, economic, linguistic and national boundaries that impede free movement, international travel in *Until the End of the World* appears surprisingly relaxed given the approaching apocalyptic event, even denying the popular American image 'of the open road vanishing into the horizon' in favour of a portrayal of swift travel.[18] The elision of the journey is connected with certain electronic technologies like detective Phillip Winter's 'phishing programme', which tracks fugitive Sam's intercontinental movements via his credit card transactions. Anthropomorphic touches like the cute animated characters that wander and fly across the maps on Winter's computer screens only pronounce the flatness of a journey that is traced electronically, rather than in the continuous and unhurried travelling shots in Wenders' earlier road films.

Several accounts of *Until the End of the World*, both as part of Wenders' directorial oeuvre and as a science fiction feature, have treated it as a critique of the image's devaluation of the real. Dimitris Eleftheriotis suggests that its

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[18] Wendy Everett, 'Lost in Transition? The European Road Movie, or a Genre "Adrift in the Cosmos"', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 37 (2009), 165-75 (pp. 168-69).

'male/female' binaries play into a 'stereotypical technophobia'.[19] More astutely, Christine Cornea has argued that Sam's addiction to digital visualisations of his dreams in the film's final act represents 'the embodiment of an immature American addiction to the image and image technologies',[20] although subsequent discussion will underline the importance of recognising that Europeans Claire and Henry share this addiction and that Claire recovers from it differently. Whilst Phillips similarly argues that the film presents 'a sub-text on the danger of simulated images over the real', his subsequent remark that this critique 'is only ever hinted at' acknowledges that the film's attitudes are rather more ambivalent.[21] Rather than examining the film in terms of a nature/culture divide or as a critique of new technologies, as other scholars have done, an analysis of the differences between Sam and Claire's experiences of the road journey demands attention to the distinct ways in which they convert their travels into images. Discussing the mnemonic recordings and re-envisioning of Edith's family and friends undertaken by both characters, Phillips qualifies his suggestion that the apocalyptic road traveller has decreased in narrative importance by noting that they crucially 'have to recreate the emotional charge of seeing the image' to transmit it to Edith.[22] Throughout the physical global journey itself, the images and memories that Claire produces and recollects and the disjointed series of static meetings Sam is instructed to capture illustrate a gendered difference in the prominence of the individual's own emotional experiences.

At one point, Claire is shown making her own road film as she records her trip through rural China on her camcorder. This sequence can be read as emblematic of a postmodern formulation of tourism discussed by Caren Kaplan, wherein the individual's journey is only held to be 'real' once it has been captured in films and photographs.[23] Moreover, Claire retains the detached Orientalist perspective of a tourist who regards Chinese culture as amusing and alien. Yet her footage of chance encounters and episodes of hitchhiking also possesses a sense of immersion, fullness, spontaneity and direct engagement that is notably lacking in Sam's recorded images and global trajectory. Claire talks and appears throughout her road

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[19] Dimitris Eleftheriotis, 'Global Visions and European Perspectives', in *Aliens R Us: The Other in Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. by Ziauddin Sardar and Sean Cubitt (London: Pluto Press, 2002), pp. 164-80 (p. 176).
[20] Christine Cornea, *Science Fiction Cinema: Between Fantasy and Reality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 205.
[21] Phillips, p. 270.
[22] Phillips, p. 270.
[23] Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 61.

film, whether conversing brokenly with Chinese acquaintances or turning the camera on herself to address the footage's recipient, Eugene, in an illustration of her urge to share emotional experiences of the road socially. Although Claire discovers that the route she has taken in pursuing Sam matches Edith's global 'adventure' with Henry in their youth, she also utilises the journey as a means of retracing geographically her relationship with Eugene.

Meanwhile, Sam's emotional subjectivity is conspicuously denied in the process of recording and recovering data, where he constitutes only a passive mediator. Sam appears entirely removed in his 'reaction' shots as he records others, who speak through him to Henry and Edith rather than interacting with him directly. The specifically masculine nature of this mode of (dis)engagement is underlined during the film's final third, in which the deactivated nuclear satellite's electromagnetic disruption of vehicle engines and international communications networks forces the travellers to stay at Henry's laboratory in the Australian Outback. The lack of sympathetic communication between Henry and Sam mirrors this infrastructural meltdown. Henry's preoccupation with the data's efficient transmission leads him to neglect Sam and Edith's physical exhaustion and emotional well-being. During a procedure intended to reconnect Edith with her loved ones, where she reprimands Henry for not providing any footage of Sam himself, 'the face I most wanted to see', Henry's response epitomises his remarkable detachment and principally technical focus: 'It doesn't help us to become emotional'. Whilst Claire is an active, emotionally engaged and autonomous traveller and creator, Sam is positioned as a detached vessel effaced from his own journey, constricted by the itinerary his father imposes upon him.

Twelve Monkeys' male traveller is similarly regarded by his scientist guardians as hardware, 'volunteered' to gather information from the past because he is a 'tough-minded' vehicle. Accordingly, James is praised when he realises his designated role as a mere receptacle by swallowing a 'sample', a spider. This objectification extends to aspects of the post-apocalyptic world's mise-en-scène, like the biohazard suit James dons before gathering specimens from the devastated surface and the concertinaed tube that fires him through a 'time tunnel' like a bullet from a gun. That he is repeatedly prepared for transit by being sealed in these transparent plastic wrappers, in a manner akin to processed goods, offers a newly explicit rendering of fanciful analogies describing industrial-age travellers as

'parcels to be transported by mechanical means'.[24] Drawn from Wolfgang Schivelbusch's work on nineteenth-century perceptions of the railway and extended by Rebecca Solnit to later '"time-saving" technologies' including automobiles and aeroplanes, this rhetoric describes the traveller as passive and alienated from surrounding space and their own bodies.[25]

On this evidence, it is understandable that Phillips should claim that the traveller's identity and subjectivity form increasingly marginal and incidental aspects of contemporary apocalyptic road films. However, the pre-apocalyptic settings of *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys*' road journeys actually intensify the focus upon the individual. Unlike numerous serialised post-apocalyptic texts examined in previous chapters, which often use the journey secondarily to present a cross-section of the social, moral, political and environmental changes wrought by a large-scale disaster, the apocalyptic event is presented throughout most of *Twelve Monkeys* as a concern and even the invention of a few individuals, whilst the threat posed by *Until the End of the World*'s malfunctioning nuclear satellite proves largely incidental to the narrative and is greeted with almost total indifference by central and incidental characters alike. Following a brief period of infrastructural collapse, it even emerges that the presaged apocalypse has not actually occurred in Wenders' film. Rather, both films focus upon quests undertaken by individual fugitives that prove neither preventative nor directly destructive where the world's wider fate is concerned and lack the imagery of masculine martyrdom and heroism familiar from 'The Cursed Earth' (1978), *Waterworld* (Kevin Reynolds, 1995) and *Sweet Tooth* (2009-2013). Whilst *Twelve Monkeys* and *La Jetée*'s protagonists are both doomed because they pursue the 'wrong' images from the past, *La Jetée*'s time traveller uncovers a means to regenerate the post-apocalyptic world before his assassination. Conversely, James and Kathryn's journey comprises an extended detour that precludes any significant intervention in the apocalyptic timeline. This tangent is motivated not only by their conviction that 'the Army of the Twelve Monkeys' (ultimately revealed to be an animal rights group specialising in publicity stunts that stem from their leader's antipathy towards his scientist father rather than sincere ethical protest) is responsible for the devastating virus's release, but also by James's personal desires and uncertainty. *Twelve Monkeys* sets the theme of catastrophic prophecy within

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[24] Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, rev. edn (London: Verso, 2001), p. 258.
[25] Solnit, p. 258.

discourses of mental illness, as James is increasingly influenced by suggestions that his prognostications are paranoid delusions and seeks to disprove the reality of his apparent apocalyptic mission. Combined with his growing infatuation with Kathryn and the pre-apocalyptic world that he only knew as a child and his fantasy of escaping to the Florida Keys, this psychiatric diagnosis distracts James from his reconnaissance and leads him down a circular path that reveals that the man's death he witnessed at an airport as a boy is his own.

In their decreased narrative focus upon global catastrophe, *Until the End of the World* and, in particular, *Twelve Monkeys* bear out Frank Kermode's assertion that modern constructions of apocalypse 'refer not to a common End but to […] perpetually recurring crises of the person, and the death of that person'.[26] Kermode argues that apocalyptic prophecy's primary attraction lies in the illusion of a coherent historical pattern that it grants individuals overwhelmed by 'irreducibly intermediary [and immediate] preoccupations', whether turbulent socio-political circumstances or the contemplation of one's own mortality.[27] The prospect of a definite temporal endpoint and the resultant impression that one inhabits an era uniquely 'filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end' convert on-going time into a structured history with definite beginnings and endings, and thus allow individuals to imagine that their lives fit into a larger meaningful plan.[28] This search for consonance is, consciously or unconsciously, the underlying focus of *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys*' male travellers, and stands in opposition to the bewildering compromise that their imposed itineraries place upon their sense of selfhood and emotional autonomy. Indeed, Sam and James do not submit to their functional reconfiguration as vessels, but rather experience considerable psychological and emotional distress as a result.

In *Until the End of the World*, Sam's difficult relationship with his own origins stems from a destructive Oedipal tension. Sam initially tells Claire that he agreed to travel the world in order to help his mother and because he wishes his 'father to know that [he] love[s] him'. However, after Claire witnesses the father and son's callous and contemptuous interactions, Sam confesses that he left his father's laboratory to distance himself from Henry. Sam's use of the alias Trevor McPhee throughout his journey is not only necessary in evading the CIA, but also

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[26] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 35.
[27] Kermode, p. 7.
[28] Kermode, p. 47.

illustrates the disruption of his familial identity. As the film's Oedipal aspects come to the fore in the Outback, we learn that Sam's subjugation to his father's research and his resultant fugitive status have led to a painful separation from his own wife and son. Sam's principal mode of 'contact' with his child and mother is limited to visual and aural reproductions: he persuades Claire to give him a ride by showing her a photograph of his son and plays an anthropological recording made by his mother on the car stereo. In the theatrical cut Sam's wife and child never appear outside of Sam's memories. Moreover, the technology through which Sam makes recordings on Edith's behalf threatens to blind him: a clear allusion to the punishment Oedipus inflicts upon himself after learning of his incestuous transgression. Indeed, Henry's cryptic decision to bar Edith from seeing a recording of Sam can perhaps only be explained as an attempt to contain the sexual threat of the mother's gaze falling upon her son's face. The emotional and physical suffering wrought by Sam's errand, then, fragments his familial identity and relationships.

James's journey across time fractures his identity even more explicitly. Unlike *The Time Machine*'s (George Pal, 1960) continuous rendering of the accelerated passage of time, where the traveller remains fixed in space as he witnesses the environment change around him, *Twelve Monkeys*' representation of time travel is heavily abstract. Here, a fast lateral movement across a series of black frames against a white background resembles both a blank film strip passing through a projector and a travelling shot linking contiguous spaces. Yet James's repeated delivery to the wrong time and place confuses this impression of linear succession, again indicating the elision of a coherent temporal and geographical passage. Accordingly, whereas the voyages of *La Jetée*'s time traveller seem motivated by personal desire, since he is chosen for the mission based on his exceptionally vivid memories of his own past and is directly conveyed each time to the location of the woman he recalls from his childhood, James struggles with the psychologically disruptive consequences of his jarring displacement. Remarking that 'the human mind is [not] meant to exist in two different […] dimensions', James is transformed into a fractured subject who, increasingly unable to discern between reality and delusion, longs to become 'a whole person' with a consistent history. However, Sam and James are not compliant victims of this depersonalising process, but subjects who discover an impression of comfort and stability in the past through a narcissistic regression. In view of the different physical and virtual forms

of travel through which each film's male protagonist recovers their inner child, the following discussion examines them separately at length rather than in parallel.

In *Twelve Monkeys*, this phenomenon relates to the characterisation of the various cars used by James and Kathryn as more benign time machines. Where the car is analogically or literally reimagined as a time machine in other science fiction road films, it often offers an affirmative image of transformative agency. *Back to the Future*'s (Robert Zemeckis, 1985) DeLorean literally blazes trails through history and enables Marty (Michael J. Fox) to remould his father and thus his social and economic circumstances without any dramatic personal change.[29] In *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (James Cameron, 1991), the repeated night-time travelling shot taken from a car racing down a highway into the 'unknown future' signifies the travellers' newfound capacity for 'making up history as [they go] along', as Sarah Connor's (Linda Hamilton) narration explains. Images of the car-as-time machine striking out into space optimistically proclaim the protagonist's ability to redefine and improve the course of history. Conversely, in *Twelve Monkeys* the camera focuses on the car's interior. Although he ultimately desires to determine his own future, inside the car James is more akin to an apocalyptic believer passively awaiting an outside authority's disclosure of a coherent order and judgement. Rather than positioning the car as a vehicle for decisive action or a canvas onto which personal weaknesses are displaced, as was observed of *Waterworld* and *The Postman* (Kevin Costner, 1997) in Chapter 2, *Twelve Monkeys* epitomises Corrigan's claim that road cinema's male protagonists do not tend to 'initiate events' but are instead 'act[ed] upon' by 'materially assertive' objects.[30] James's subjective transformations appear to be generated by the car's interior environment, and look inwards to the past rather than into the future.

In this regard, *Twelve Monkeys* exemplifies one of several 'quintessentially Gilliamesque' ontological confusions observed by Linda Ruth Williams: a profound 'fascination with the machine as body and the body in the machine'.[31] The apparent merging of organic and artificial forms in the aforementioned image of the time traveller's body as plastic-packaged goods persists in the language used by Jeffrey Goines (Brad Pitt), an ex-psychiatric patient and leader of the Twelve Monkeys.

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[29] For a discussion of *Back to the Future* as a road film, see Mills, pp. 163-66.

[30] Corrigan, p. 147.

[31] Linda Ruth Williams, 'Dream Girls and Mechanic Panic: Dystopia and its Others in *Brazil* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*', in *British Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. by I.Q. Hunter (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 153-68 (p. 155).

Jeffrey's description of 'insanity, oozing through telephone cables, oozing into the ears of all these poor sane people, infecting them' underlines the confluence between time travel,[32] madness,[33] and contemporary communications networks as phenomena that provoke anxiety because of their intangibility and resistance to direct physical representation. Later, Jeffrey compares James to malfunctioning hardware: 'Your processor's all fucked up'. Yet whilst *Twelve Monkeys* flirts with this anxious mechanisation of human minds and bodies, it is, as Williams observes of *Brazil* (Gilliam, 1985), 'hard to find *any* images of a fully and successfully mechanised self' lacking in self-consciousness.[34] Indeed, James's peculiar transformation in the car describes not a process of mechanisation but his reconnection with a past self that seemingly transcends his original impersonal directive.

In *Twelve Monkeys*' final scene, the eight-year-old James climbs into his parents' car, having just unwittingly witnessed his own death as an adult. The boy gazes up at the departing plane carrying Dr Peters (David Morse), the virus's true dispatcher, and one of the post-apocalyptic scientists, who tells Peters that she works in 'insurance', inviting the conclusion that she has come to clear up following the adult James's failure to accomplish his mission. These closing shots establish an integral link between the car, the family and formative childhood events which unfold alongside, rather than as a pivotal part of, a larger apocalyptic narrative, the apparent resolution of which is reduced to an incidental pun. This connection is anticipated or, rather, resurrected by actions and relationships within the vehicles James shares with Kathryn. James's behaviour in the car, especially when he first ambushes Kathryn in Baltimore and demands that she take him to Philadelphia, departs jarringly from his dry cynicism and relative composure throughout the film's first third and later post-apocalyptic scenes. Within the psychiatric hospital he firmly distinguishes himself from the environment and the other patients, flatly telling the doctors, 'This is a place for crazy people. I'm not crazy'. Yet upon entering the car he becomes oddly childlike: a development that simultaneously suggests his identity's further fragmentation and greater stability. In

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[32] As Veronica Hollinger states, to tell a time travel story 'is necessarily to have performed a kind of reading, to have interpreted time in order to structure it as the "space" through which a traveller can undertake a journey', since movement through time is a 'sign without a referent'. Hollinger, 'Deconstructing the Time Machine', *Science-Fiction Studies*, 14 (1987), 201-21 (p. 201).

[33] As Patrick Fuery claims, the cultural anxiety over madness is grounded in its excess and resultant resistance to 'all attempts to define, represent or even record it'. Fuery, *Madness and Cinema: Psychoanalysis, Spectatorship and Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 10.

[34] Williams, p. 157 (Williams' emphasis).

one regard, the fact that he relies upon Kathryn in order to get moving and is never in control of the vehicle suggests a 'failed' adult masculinity. Only a child when the devastating virus was released, James has not undertaken 'the *rite of passage* of taking to the road' and gaining a licence and one's own vehicle that Ron Eyerman and Orvar Löfgren identify as 'the *sine qua non* of manhood in the United States'.[35] Although he initially assumes the appearance of an aggressive masked assailant, James's situation in the backseat prompts an abrupt return to an infantile state. This is signalled by his insistence that Kathryn call him James rather than 'Mr Cole' and his beatific, almost babyish delight at the sensation of air rushing past the car and the music on the radio, which reduce him to preverbal sounds of ecstasy. Additionally, James misconstrues a radio spot advertising the Florida Keys as a holiday destination as 'a special message to [him]' and later fashions from it a fantasy of escape. The sense of temporal disjunction created by James's attempt to answer the advert relates not only to his misapprehension of a pre-recorded message as a dialogue, but also his demonstration of a level of naivety below that of an eight-year-old child. In removing Kathryn from the distance that academic settings like her preceding lecture on madness and apocalypticism afford her from her patients, the confined space of the car also renders her increasingly receptive to, and complicit in, James's attempts to make sense of his experiences and his dependence upon her sympathy and professional judgement. Accordingly, Kathryn comes to occupy the role of the faceless mother from James's flashbacks, later cradling James's head with a tenderness that, combined with her body's non-sexualised softening beneath a baggy jumper, appears more motherly than erotic despite their situation in a hotel used for prostitution.

These behavioural changes and interpersonal relationships suggest a decline in male authority and self-awareness. Examining 'failed and incomplete' male maturation in the films of Steven Spielberg,[36] Murray Pomerance draws upon sociologist Erving Goffman's distinction between the 'natural and social primary frames' of children and adults respectively. Whilst the adult 'owns action, […] as indications of his intent, alignment and will', children 'exist in nature, without fully internalized – and therefore, automatic – socially constructed systems of guidance

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[35] Ron Eyerman and Orvar Löfgren, 'Romancing the Road: Road Movies and Images of Mobility', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 12 (1995), 53-79 (p. 78, Eyerman and Löfgren's emphasis).
[36] Murray Pomerance, 'The Man-Boys of Steven Spielberg', in *Where the Boys Are: Cinemas of Masculinity and Youth*, ed. by Murray Pomerance and Frances Gateward (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), pp. 133-54 (p. 136).

in place to assist them in navigating the world with control'.[37] *Twelve Monkeys'* James certainly conforms more to the latter frame than the former. Although he behaves in ways that appear sexually predatory and excessively aggressive, tying Kathryn to a motel bed and sniffing her hair and not only incapacitating a man who attempts to rape her but wildly beating him to death, these are presented as the actions of an animalistic (therefore more 'natural') individual with limited self-awareness.

Yet whilst James's abrupt psychological and emotional regression suggests infantile passivity and even failed manhood, his experiences within the car also restore some impression of temporal continuity and consonance and begin to validate his formerly dismissed stories. Although the journey's circular temporal trajectory undermines any sense of *Twelve Monkeys* as a narrative of male self-determination, James's childlike behaviour within the vehicle also grants him something of the 'narcissistic and idiosyncratic worldview' and perspective upon history that Karen Lury associates with cinematic child protagonists.[38] James's recollection of the resolution of a news story unfolding over the radio concerning a young boy who fooled his community into believing he was trapped down a well ultimately leads Kathryn to believe James's account of himself as a time traveller and the apocalyptic threat. Crucially, James describes not only the story's facts but also how it frightened him as a child, thus asserting an emotional subjectivity that verifies his status as something more than a mere vessel, in a manner loosely comparable to Claire's portrayal in *Until the End of the World*. James's return to his childhood, then, establishes a fixed point of reference that affords his voice some measure of authority.

Ultimately, this narcissistic regression also feeds a form of apocalyptic wish-fulfilment premised upon self-destruction. At the film's conclusion, James's younger self watches as he is killed by airport security whilst pursuing Dr Peters. *Twelve Monkeys'* pre-determined ending removes that element of freedom or the capacity to choose one's fate, even if it is death, showcased in road texts since the 1970s (*Thelma and Louise'*s [Ridley Scott, 1991] simultaneously tragic and affirmative conclusion being the most distinctive example).[39] Moreover, James's destined end also lacks the aspect of martyrdom that David Savran considers

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[37] Pomerance, pp. 133-34.
[38] Karen Lury, *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairy Tales* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p. 141.
[39] Seth Cagin and Philip Dray, *Hollywood Films of the Seventies: Sex, Drugs, Violence, Rock 'n' Roll and Politics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 88.

integral to the masochistic white male narrative:[40] a departure all the more pronounced by the resemblance between James's falling body and Christ on the cross. In marked contrast to the sensationalism of Harry Stamper's (also played by Willis) final words to his family in *Armageddon* (Michael Bay, 1998), James does not die saving the world. Yet James's journey does partly gratify the apocalyptic desire for consonance between personal beginnings and endings. At the moment of his death, James finds an affirmation of his identity as a time traveller who was telling the truth all along, albeit one that only Kathryn lives to acknowledge as she meets the eight-year-old James's gaze with a tranquil look of recognition, completing the circuit of his life. *Twelve Monkeys* thus vindicates James through a primal scene of inadvertent self-destruction.

However, in reading *Twelve Monkeys* and *Until the End of the World* as road narratives that foreground differences in gendered experience, it is important to recognise that their portrayals of fractured male subjectivities are not as narcissistic or solipsistic as some scholars have claimed. Discussing *Twelve Monkeys* alongside several other millennial apocalyptic and dystopian films, Jeanne Hamming argues that Kathryn exists 'only as a symptom of James's constantly repeating experience of his own alienation': an image in which he seeks the assurance of an essentially culturally constructed escape into 'nature' and the promise of becoming 'whole' that offers liberation from the forces that upset his sense of self.[41] Since Hamming understands Florida and Kathryn exclusively as constructs and 'object[s] of masculine desire', in seeking to obtain them she argues that James encloses himself in a self-defeating cycle entirely of his own making.[42] Similarly, Robert Phillip Kolker and Peter Beicken have described Claire's role in *Until the End of the World* as strictly functional, arguing that she is simply 'another road wanderer, assisting her man'.[43]

These suggestions are not groundless, but they are certainly exaggerations. Claire's initially sexually impulsive relationship with Sam increasingly becomes more supportive, yet subsequent discussion will show that she ultimately re-establishes a life separate from his. In *Twelve Monkeys*, Kathryn successively

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[40] David Savran, *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism and Contemporary American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 147-48.

[41] Jeanne Hamming, 'The Feminine "Nature" of Masculine Desire in the Age of Cinematic Techno-Transcendence', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 35 (2008), 147-53 (p. 152).

[42] Hamming, p. 151.

[43] Robert Phillip Kolker and Peter Beicken, *The Films of Wim Wenders: Cinema as Vision and Desire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 83.

becomes both the mother and the blonde woman of James's prophetic dreams/memories, the latter transformation occurring whilst they hide in a theatre showing *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958). The episode's similarities with Scottie's (James Stewart) aggressive reinvention of Judy (Kim Novak) as 'Madeleine', however, must not be overstated. As is often the case throughout the journey, James stands passively on the side-lines whilst Kathryn decides their course of action, independently selecting his and her new clothes and identities in a department store. Additionally, in treating Kathryn as a symptom of James's desire, Hamming's analysis overlooks the fact that she is not, like *La Jetée*'s nameless woman, a largely static image with no life beyond her meetings with the time traveller. More so than their fellow male travellers, Kathryn and Claire act within the public social sphere.

Until the End of the World portrays this difference more optimistically, largely as a result of its more straightforward demonisation of the narcissistic regression triggered by new technologies. Following Edith's death, Henry becomes obsessed with another application for his memory-visualisation apparatus: the translation of dreams into video. Whilst Henry's colleagues from the local Mbantua aboriginal community are repulsed by this sacrilegious experiment and leave the area with their families, Sam and Claire consent to act as test subjects and become addicted to re-watching their own dreams. Eugene's narration describes the venture as 'another journey, down dangerous pathways, down into the garden of dreams'. Accordingly, the dreamers' withdrawal from social engagement is consolidated by a geographical image of isolation. Sam and Claire are finally shown gazing at handheld monitors whilst sitting on opposite banks of a lake within a labyrinthine network of gorges. Framed by Eugene's maritime imagery, the landscape becomes a figurative illustration of an interior state rather than a physical space: 'They had arrived at the island of dreams together, but in a short time they were oceans apart, drowning in their own nocturnal imagery'. Where previously restrictions upon communication and movement were externally imposed through the apocalyptic collapse of global infrastructures (now restored), the dreamers' indifference to their spectacular surroundings indicates that the isolating post-apocalyptic wastelands through which they wander, unlike the devastated landscapes that appear throughout other apocalyptic road narratives, are self-constructed and internal.

Previous analyses of this final section by scholars including Roger Bromley tend to emphasise racial contrasts, to the exclusion of gender differences.[44] Cornea focuses exclusively on Sam, reading him as one of several American male protagonists in 1990s 'Euro-American' science fiction cinema 'who, initially detached […] from [their] surroundings, finally embrace[s] an exotic new world'.[45] Indeed, Sam is cured of his addiction to images through an Mbantua rite in which he sleeps between two elders who 'take [his] dreams'. Differences in male and female attitudes towards Henry's technology, however, perform an equally important role within the characters' regressive inward journeys and recoveries. The film continues to distinguish between socially isolating approaches to image technology that concentrate exclusively on technical factors and reproductions, and socially unifying, emotionally involved and/or creative activities and uses of technology. The latter is not exclusively identified with feminine experience, as demonstrated by a scene where the international travellers and aborigines, both male and female, celebrate the discovery that 'the world is still alive' by rapturously playing music together outside the laboratory. Inside Henry's laboratory, however, gender differences are more firmly drawn along the aforementioned reductive lines, wherein men are associated with reason and individualist endeavour and women with emotional sensitivity and communal conscience. Whilst several Mbantua women work as researchers, neither they, Edith nor Claire share Henry and Sam's obsessive technical focus. Spheres of action are divided according to gender rather than race alone, as female scientists identify the experiments as 'men's business' and accuse Henry of being 'a user' (an epithet with both exploitative and computer-related associations) of his family and their people. The Mbantua men, meanwhile, ignore their female peers' criticisms, only objecting to Henry's actions once they intrude upon spiritual traditions.

As established by the preceding global journey, this specifically feminine concern with the technology's emotional aspects and ramifications is shared by Claire, whose responses to the images formed by the dream-visualisation technology and agonising withdrawal from them are primarily emotional. Henry dismisses her concern for his son's wellbeing, instead marvelling at his innovation's psychoanalytic significance: '*Herr Doktor* Jung! *Herr Doktor* Freud! If only you could see us now'. This remark is rendered ironic by Henry's disregard for the

[44] Roger Bromley, *From Alice to Buena Vista: The Films of Wim Wenders* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), pp. 88-94.
[45] Cornea, p. 208.

Oedipal tensions in his family. In a remarkable scene from the director's cut, Henry and Sam co-operate for the first time in order to persuade a reluctant Claire to let them see her dreams. As in the science fiction action films considered below, the technical work that once alienated two generations seemingly binds them together, as they appeal to Claire's curiosity and compare the opportunity to becoming 'the first woman to walk on Venus'. Yet whilst Sam interacts warmly with his father here, Eugene's narration indicates that his agreeability to his father's experiments is more a matter of filial duty (a recognition of what he is 'expected to do') than genuine support. Moreover, the implication that Sam and Henry have already walked on 'Venus' themselves suggests a male conquest of the feminine that, along with their efforts to stare Claire down, lends the scene the aspect of a quietly forceful sexual proposition. This unnervingly coercive behaviour represents the only means through which Henry and Sam find a temporary familial unity, grounded in technical interests and obligations rather than love.

The absence of emotional harmony between father and son defines Sam's addiction and recovery. Significantly, the dreams Sam, Henry and Claire uncover are family memories, offering a voyage into the past. In one respect, this new journey unearths aspects of the personal history displaced by the filial duty Sam's global travels privilege, as one of his dreams appears to show him, his wife and his son walking together. Whereas Claire dotes upon images of herself, her childhood home and her sister, though, Sam obsesses over improving his images' resolution, showing little interest in their content. Accordingly, whilst Claire is able to return to a set of emotional ties formed during the global journey, Sam, who often sits on the side-lines during the travellers' gatherings, lacks any such connections. Claire ultimately finds a definite altruistic purpose whilst remaining in continued motion, taking a job aboard a satellite that monitors the Earth's climate rather than threatening its destruction. She is last shown receiving video messages congratulating her on her thirtieth birthday from Eugene and other companions met on the road. Thus the female traveller who delights in the incidents of the physical journey as socially and emotionally valuable experiences in their own right, rather than a means to an end, is able to create a new life for herself. Meanwhile, Sam leaves his trance and returns to America to reclaim his life, only to find that Henry has died in the CIA's custody and that his own family has moved on with a new husband/father. Unlike *Twelve Monkeys*' James, Sam epitomises what Hamming describes as the self-defeating aspect of the millennial male subject who seeks

wholeness through self-constructed utopic images.[46] The only familial unity Sam discovers is an illusory one, as the indistinct posterised forms of his wife, his son and himself in his dream footage momentarily merge into a single body. Sam fails to find closure with his father in reality or recover his identity as a father upon returning to the road due to his fixation with out-dated imagery and his subsequent naïve self-centred assumption that the dreams' actual subjects will remain unchanged in the interim. Feminine maturation through the responsible, emotionally invested and socially interactive use of technology is thus contrasted with a regressive Oedipal male will to introversion.

Like Claire, *Twelve Monkeys*' Kathryn is an independent subject. Rather than reading her as a symptom of James's desires, it is more clearly the case that James repeatedly defers to her professional authority, to the point where his sense of who he is (time traveller or delusional paranoiac?) relies upon, and shifts with, Kathryn's diagnosis. Nor is it entirely correct, however, to reverse the formula and suggest that James's identity is symptomatic of Kathryn's judgements regarding his sanity. Whilst James associates the prospect of his own madness with the possibility of starting a new life free from his apocalyptic mission's horrors and uncertainties, Kathryn appears a public scapegoat for his suggested madness and even the artificer of his confusion. As she struggles to unravel the situation, she unwittingly determines the (mis)direction of their journey by leaving contradictory information in the past, including graffiti suggesting the Army of the Twelve Monkeys' culpability and an answerphone message apparently disproving this conclusion. Whereas James discovers other men on the margins of society who claim to be time travellers, Kathryn suffers increasing public alienation. A crowd of onlookers that includes the vagrant and possible time traveller frequently in communication with James watches in bewilderment as she frantically sprays an apocalyptic message across a storefront. Her visual representation also increasingly falls in line with the measurement of women's sanity 'against a detailed standard of grooming and dress' that Elaine Showalter observes throughout modern English culture.[47] Within this tradition, mentally ill women's voices and experiences, like the disastrous prophecies of the mythological Cassandra, to whom *Twelve Monkeys* alludes, are disregarded in favour of representations and interpretations formed by male

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[46] Hamming, p. 153.
[47] Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), p. 212.

observers.[48] Ophelia in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is integral to this iconography of hysteria, her dishevelled hair being synonymous in Elizabethan culture with 'an improper sensuality':[49] a detail replicated within Kathryn's shifting appearance. Rather than reproducing the perception of women's pathological susceptibility to madness that Showalter interrogates, however, *Twelve Monkeys* presents Kathryn's experience as the most extreme example of a fluidity in identity that affects most characters, albeit in varying ways according to their gender and social status.

Social chameleonism forms an integral aspect of numerous road narratives, including *Twelve Monkeys* and *Until the End of the World*. Like Mike Hammer in *Kiss Me Deadly* (Robert Aldrich, 1955), another film in which an instrument of nuclear devastation constitutes a background detail, Claire is thrust into a deadly intrigue when she picks up a mysterious hitchhiker, Sam/Trevor's fedora-wearing *homme fatale*. In addition to the malleability of identity commonplace within *film noir*, a genre often regarded as a precursor to road cinema,[50] self-transformation also figures significantly in the influential literary mode of the picaresque, where it forms part of the 'picaro' hero's 'survival kit'. As Ulrich Wicks states of the picaro, 'as the world is in flux, so he can change roles to face it'.[51] The relationship between the picaresque and road narratives pivots on matters of volition and social status. The picaro is born into a state of exclusion and strives for inclusion, whereas Wicks notes that novels like Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) concern 'the insider who wants to be out', attempting to leave a position of social privilege and identify with marginal persons.[52]

In many of the films and comics discussed throughout this thesis, self-transformation is the preserve of white men. *Y: The Last Man*'s (2002-2008) Yorick and *Waterworld*'s Mariner, apparently anomalous survivors in gendered and genetic terms, perform femininity in order to survive or bond with female travelling companions, whilst retaining aspects of white heterosexual privilege. Meanwhile, *Y: The Last Man*'s African-American bodyguard Agent 355 is deeply conscious of continuing regional prejudices and barriers to movement, explaining during their

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[48] Showalter, p. 97.
[49] Showalter, p. 11.
[50] Geraint Bryan, 'Nowhere to Run: Pulp Noir on the Road', in *Lost Highways*, ed. by Sargeant and Watson, pp. 43-54.
[51] Ulrich Wicks, *Picaresque Narrative, Picaresque Fictions: A Theory and Research Guide* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. 65.
[52] Wicks, p. 278.

passage through Boston, 'This is Southie, Yorick. You might be able to look like a lady … but I can't look white'.[53] It should be noted that *Twelve Monkeys* is curiously uncritical of its simplistic characterisations of African-American men and women as static obstacles impeding the white travellers' movements, including the hospital guard Billings (Rozwill Young), who disregards James's request for a phone call, and the airport security guard who tries to stop James and Kathryn from pursuing Peters.

Through the double displacement effected by time travel and the road journey, *Twelve Monkeys* acknowledges how discursive contexts that vary according to historical period and geographical location reveal the malleability of all identities (albeit predominantly white identities), whilst recognising the skewed distribution of power. This is signalled through repeated acknowledgements of the elusiveness and even the impossibility of truth that bear comparison with Foucault's notion of the '*episteme*'. Foucault refers here to the conceptual infrastructure that underpins all forms of knowledge during a particular historical era, by which certain ideas and utterances are judged to be 'true' and others invalid. Historical changes in *episteme* do not indicate a teleological progression towards some essential truth; rather, such variations call into question the existence of objective knowledge.[54] Indeed, when her conviction in her authority and sanity falters Kathryn observes that psychiatry is just 'the latest religion', grounded not in reason but 'faith'. In this and several other instances, *Twelve Monkeys'* characters underline the volatility of cultural frameworks and 'truths'.

As the structuring device of the road narrative illustrates, such frameworks vary across locations as well as time, and privilege certain voices at the expense of others, even as all remain circumscribed by wider discourses. For Jeffrey, the character most in control of his metamorphoses, power derives from class and patriarchal privilege. In addition to recognising the performative nature of all social roles ('I'm a mental patient: I'm supposed to act out!'), Jeffrey also appeals to his respected virologist father's (Christopher Plummer) 'god'-like standing as a means by which he can freely return to his earlier socialite lifestyle, whilst simultaneously fighting it as a petty insurrectionary. James and Kathryn, meanwhile, possess little control over their own transformations as they move between locations. James is

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[53] Brian K. Vaughan, Pia Guerra and José Marzán, Jr., *Y: The Last Man, The Deluxe Edition, Book 1* (New York: Vertigo, 2008), p. 114.
[54] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. by Anon. (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. xxii-xxiv.

identified, and occasionally reads and presents himself, as a mentally ill individual and a doctor in the hospital, a violent kidnapper on the news, a childlike naif in the car, and a customer at a sleazy hotel soliciting Kathryn for sex. Like the child who has yet to internalise society's rules and regulations, this dislocated time traveller is unaware of the sexual and social discourses that preside over different locations and his actions within them, correcting the hotel receptionist about Kathryn's identity without recognising his statement's fetishistic implications: 'She's not "Honey-babe". She's a doctor'. Yet in contrast to the constantly adapting picaro, James's ignorance becomes a means of surviving the hazards of the environments through which he and Kathryn travel. For instance, in what is initially implied to be a violent attack on the pimp who mistakes Kathryn for a prostitute intruding on his territory, James removes several of his own teeth in case they contain tracking devices implanted by the post-apocalyptic scientists. The act, only intelligible to himself, enables the pair to escape the horrified man. The same fantastical mode of travel that fragments James's sense of self and threatens to depersonalise him, then, also grants him a continual separation from the social connections that the archetypal American man in flight discussed in the Introduction seeks to evade.

There is nothing fantastical or incidentally empowering about the female traveller's precarious social situation. Kathryn suffers as a result of the perceived tension between her femininity and her medical authority, depicted as symptomatic of the sexist and sexually transgressive ideologies that dominate marginal and respectable spaces alike. In the most narratively important of these repeated dismissals of female authority, Jeffrey's virologist father condescendingly assures her of his laboratory's security before hanging up the phone with a disdainful hiss of '*Women* psychiatrists!'. The camera reveals Dr Peters in the background, an attendee of Kathryn's earlier lecture on apocalypticism and madness who easily defends his apocalyptic plan from detection by coolly remarking that she has probably 'succumbed to her own theoretical Cassandra disease'. Patriarchal privilege and prejudice are thus directly identified as elements that enable the virus's release. Whilst *Until the End of the World*'s Claire is able to rebuild her life through emotional and social ties, Kathryn's dedication and sympathy towards James lead to the dismissal of her judgement as clouded by automatically presumed sexual involvement, as a detective casually implies that she is suffering from Stockholm syndrome.

The reduction of women's presence within certain scenarios to perceived sexual motivations arises from an enduring social prejudice surrounding female travellers. As Solnit observes, women's walking and public visibility on the streets have often been historically 'construed as [sexual] performance [for a male audience] rather than transport'.[55] Whilst the threat of James's objectification is expressed through outlandish imagery of the plastic-packaged male body, Kathryn is subject to the altogether more quotidian, disturbingly immediate threat of urban female travellers' perception as 'either commodities or consumers' from the nineteenth century onwards, who can only show that 'they [are] not for purchase by purchasing'.[56] Among Philadelphia's derelict shops, theatres and hotels, Kathryn suffers violence and attempted sexual assault, from which only James can protect her.

Whilst *Twelve Monkeys* acknowledges that mobile men and women are subject to various identifications based on geographical and social situation and appearance that deem them mentally healthy or ill, respectable or transgressive, authoritative or disempowered, the fatalism of James's journey extends to the film's refusal to imagine a sustainable alternative. Tellingly, the only stable time traveller is a female post-apocalyptic scientist. Although, like Kathryn, she is the sole woman on the committee, she is asexual and emotionally cold. She introduces herself to Peters on the plane simply with the alias 'Jones', with no female title (played by Carol Florence, the credits list her simply as 'Astrophysicist'). 'Jones' retains stability because she lacks any individual emotional identity that might interfere with her professional aims; indeed, she and the other scientists, speaking in immediate succession, often resemble a hive consciousness. Female travellers, then, either retain an emotional and sympathetic self at the risk of finding their voice compromised, or maintain control by discarding selfhood. Meanwhile, the male traveller dislocated by a fantastical form of travel and socially outside an alien yet familiar world finds in his marginality not simply a 'nonperson' status, but also the freedom to find himself, even if his self-validation is premised upon self-destruction. Judging by her previous treatment, it seems unlikely that Kathryn, last seen being apprehended by police, will find any such validation.

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[55] Solnit, p. 234.
[56] Solnit, p.237.

The drive to rematerialise in contemporary road narratives and science fiction action cinema

Writing in 1999, Phillips regarded *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys* as indicative of a nascent 'period of dislocation' within road cinema.[57] This conclusion is derived as much from speculative inference based upon infrastructural changes during 'the Information Age' as from his cinematic case studies. Nevertheless, recent road films have certainly begun to engage more explicitly with a perceived conflict between road travel and digital technologies that substantially compress or transform time and space. The imagery and anxieties associated with this tension remain conspicuously gendered.

Numerous contemporary travel and road films that depict the physical journey's constriction or displacement centre on middle-aged, usually white male subjects. The drama *Up in the Air* (Jason Reitman, 2009), the comedy *Wild Hogs* (Walt Becker, 2007) and *Content* (Chris Petit 2010), a British autobiographical documentary about these technological transformations, concern men with careers or lifestyles built around the pleasures of free-wheeling cross-country journeys that are complicated by technologies privileging efficiency or new models of navigation. These include GPS navigation devices in *Wild Hogs*, the discrepancy between the Internet's dizzying rhizomatic structure and the linear road journey examined in *Content*, and the videoconferencing scheme that removes the need for the interstate flights relished by *Up in the Air*'s protagonist. Such technologies confront older male travellers with feelings of generational disconnection or the threat of emasculating social humiliation.

These digital technologies are frequently identified with female subjects or voices. Whilst *Up in the Air* presents the woman who introduces the ill-fated videoconferencing initiative as sympathetic and the protagonist's mobile lifestyle as emotionally unsatisfying, navigation technologies' disembodied female voices in other recent films are often treated in a straightforwardly negative manner. Unlike the male-voiced KITT's camaraderie with 'his' driver/partner in *Knight Rider* (1982-1986), female-voiced navigation devices tend to constrain drivers looking for adventure, frequently coded as a masculine form of experience. In *Fast & Furious* (Justin Lin, 2009), an action film about street-racers, the white hero overrides the limitations imposed by his satellite navigation system's monotonous female voice

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[57] Phillips, p. 273.

and takes a spectacular detour that almost enables him to win a race. *Until the End of the World*'s Claire literally crashes into a world of male criminal intrigue by disregarding her navigation system's spoken instructions. The female-identified GPS device has taken the place of the watch cast aside in *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969), its search for the path of greatest efficiency and least excitement removed from the realities of the physical terrain and the rewards awaiting drivers once they go off-route.

Whilst the preceding survey demonstrates the spread of concerns over road travel's displacement by digital communications into films of various genres, science fiction imagery remains a preferred means of articulating these technological anxieties. In bringing discussion of the tendency observed by Phillips up to date, it is instructive to follow Laderman's lead and consider changes in road imagery within recent advertising. Produced more swiftly than feature films and distributed more widely than comics, advertisements provide useful thumbnail sketches of the popular rhetoric surrounding cultural and technological developments and the emotional, business and leisure needs extrapolated from those changes. Dystopian and apocalyptic science fiction imagery pervades two lauded car advertisements: a 2012 television advert for the Toyota GT86 entitled 'The Real Deal' and Mercedes-Benz UK's 2011-2012 'Escape the Map' campaign, which comprised television and print adverts and an online 'Alternate Reality Game'. Drawing inspiration from *THX 1138* (George Lucas, 1971), *The Matrix* (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1999) and *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010), the adverts depict drivers seeking to escape dehumanising computer-generated cities, dominated by conveniences like Google Map and 'gimmicks' like 'driver assist'. Through the 'real' driving experience promised by the advertised cars, characters escape these restrictive worlds and rematerialise: in Toyota's campaign, the male driver finally bursts through a virtual wall signposted as the 'end of the world' onto a live-action mountainside road.

These advertisements utilise a dual address. In one respect, their creators and the press regard their computer-generated imagery and high concept dystopian premises as a means of appealing to young first-time buyers who 'know cars from *Forza* and *Gran Turismo*' video games and seek a vehicle 'that fits their internet-defined platonic ideal'.[58] Yet both campaigns also conform to Brooks Landon's

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[58] Raphael Orlove, 'Why Toyota's *Brazil*-like commercial is the best car ad in years', *Jalopnik*, 20 August 2012

observation that science fiction films construct a 'counter-narrative [through their spectacular special effects] that often conflicts with the ostensible [often technophobic] discursive narrative'.[59] These advertisements sell the product as a return to a liberated, 'authentic' driving experience, utilising the 'apocalyptic rhetoric' that David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins associate with 'the so-called digital revolution'. Such language hyperbolically predicts scenarios where 'human experience itself is "denatured" or displaced by the virtual reality of the computer screen'.[60] As part of this desire to recover the Real, a nostalgic masculine address even re-emerges in an advertisement framing the virtual driving experience offered by the game *Forza Motorsport 4* (2011) as the 'last bastion of automotive lust' amid a contemporary road culture of 'restraint'. Narrated by *Top Gear* (1997-2001; 2002-) presenter Jeremy Clarkson, notorious for his 'car chauvinism' (to use Mark Williams' term) and male chauvinism,[61] the advert promises a return to a halcyon era of open roads and the freedom to push one's engine to its limits familiar from American road films.

What could be termed the drive to rematerialise within the Toyota and Mercedes-Benz advertisements is also identified as masculine within the science fiction action films *Death Race* (Paul W.S. Anderson, 2008), *Tron: Legacy* (Joseph Kosinski, 2010) and *Real Steel* (Shawn Levy, 2011). A brief examination of gender, genre and technology in these examples bears out the Introduction's observation that apocalyptic science fiction is not the only fantastical genre to have incorporated elements of the road genre, and anticipates the Conclusion's efforts to situate the thesis's findings within a wider context. The two more recent films prominently feature younger male protagonists raised on video games. However, *Death Race*, *Tron: Legacy* and *Real Steel*'s central character arcs follow single fathers who strive to reconnect with estranged children by fighting to escape or regain mastery over spectacular yet constrictive environments associated with video games. These virtual prisons are associated with a technical career that has separated each man from his parental duties. In *Tron: Legacy*, Kevin Flynn's (Jeff Bridges)

<http://jalopnik.com/5936239/why-toyotas-brazil+like-commercial-is-the-best-car-ad-in-years> [accessed 20 October 2012] (para. 3 of 5).

[59] Brooks Landon, 'Diegetic or Digital? The Convergence of Science-Fiction Literature and Science-Fiction Film in Hypermedia', in *Alien Zone II: The Spaces of Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. by Annette Kuhn (London: Verso, 1999), pp. 31-49 (p. 39).

[60] David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, 'Introduction: Toward an Aesthetics of Transition', in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, ed. by David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 1-16 (p. 1).

[61] Mark Williams, *Road Movies: The Complete Guide to Cinema on Wheels* (New York: Proteus, 1982), p. 9.

preoccupation with realising the world-changing scientific benefits of the video game world he has created, and his subsequent entrapment within it, have inadvertently removed him from his son Sam's (Garrett Hedlund) life. Similar aesthetics dominate movement in *Real Steel*, a father-and-son road film set in a future America where battles between remotely controlled robots in arenas reminiscent of 'dated video game stages' have replaced human boxing.[62] Swamped by debt and uninterested in his son Max (Dakota Goyo), touring robot operator and ex-boxer Charlie (Hugh Jackman) is initially trapped within a repetitious life on the road. Similarly, in *Death Race*, an ex-racer falsely indicted for his wife's murder is challenged to regain his freedom and custody of his daughter by participating in a gruesome televised demolition derby staged in the prison. *Death Race*'s Ames (Jason Statham, whose Britishness is addressed momentarily) competes on an offshore racetrack scattered with 'power-ups': an environment reminiscent of the enclosed level maps in vehicular combat video games like *Twisted Metal* (1995).

In keeping with these texts' basis in films, games and short stories created decades earlier, their fathers can only reclaim control of their family lives by returning to industrial pasts. The struggle to prove parental responsibility in these texts is described not through the spatialised emotional negotiations observed within *War of the Worlds* (Steven Spielberg, 2005), *The Road* (John Hillcoat, 2009) and *Sweet Tooth* in Chapter 4, but through the technology of the father's career, represented both as the means of their entrapment and their liberation. Charlie's past boxing career, Kevin's freely shared technological genius and Ames' rugged life of industrial labour (things deemed obsolete by a superhumanly demanding entertainment culture, an exploitative corporate ethos, and a collapsing economy respectively) are romanticised as the foundation upon which paternal power is restored. *Death Race* is bookended by scenes showing Ames as a family man at work in a steel mill and an automobile repair shop. The representation of these professions coheres with constructions of traditional working-class British masculinity that celebrate homosocial 'pride in hard, physical labour' and treat the security of the father's job as a guarantor of family stability.[63] Industrial ingenuity and the male friendships forged through it enable Ames and former rival Machine

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[62] Nick Pinkerton, 'Robot on the Ropes, Love or Something Like It in His Corner in *Real Steel*', *The Village Voice*, 5 October 2011
<http://www.villagevoice.com/2011-10-05/film/robot-on-the-ropes-love-or-something-like-it-in-his-corner-in-real-steel/> [accessed 20 October 2012] (para. 4 of 6).
[63] John Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980s: Issues and Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 168.

Gun Joe (Tyrese Gibson) to flee the racetrack by car and freight train: an escape involving anachronistic images redolent of American road films centring on the 'hobo' like *Sullivan's Travels* (Preston Sturges, 1941) and *Boxcar Bertha* (Martin Scorsese, 1972), in which the migrant worker is presented as both victim and working-class hero.

Similarly, *Tron: Legacy* and *Real Steel*'s narratives culminate in scenes of physical road travel that mark a return to an autonomous and mature state of masculine and paternal experience, even though, as per Landon's thesis, sequences of video game-esque spectacle are positioned and marketed as the films' principal attraction. On their way to escaping what is often culturally perceived as the 'childish' realm of video games, Kevin and Sam bond as they discuss Sam's restoration of Kevin's vintage motorcycle, recalling American culture's equation of the driver's licence with manhood.[64] *Tron: Legacy* concludes as Sam and Kevin's apprentice Quorra (Olivia Wilde) enjoy a ride down an empty road, revelling in an experience of unbounded movement and natural beauty aboard the motorcycle that, along with the revolutionary digitised discoveries Kevin bequests to Sam through Quorra, represents the father's 'legacy'. *Real Steel*'s Charlie and Max reconcile on the road through their efforts to make a champion out of the scrapped robot Atom, a machine more 'industrial' in appearance than its opponents. Conveniently, Kevin and Charlie's sons are fascinated by their fathers' occupations from the outset. Rather than requiring that each father develop in new directions and improve his work-life balance, these films suggest that his paternal capacities may simply be verified by reawakening a past identity associated with industrial technologies. In this regard, the films hark back to a tendency that Claudia Springer observes within cyborg science fiction films of the 1980s, which express nostalgia for an 'industrial-age metaphor of externally forceful masculine machinery'.[65]

Real Steel, however, concludes with an image of a powerful male body that surpasses this characterisation of industrial technology as a masculine crutch, as Charlie is finally obliged to direct Atom by shadowboxing alongside him. In this indulgent slow-motion sequence, Charlie is a fighter without an opponent, and is thus positioned as a self-evidently powerful masculine ideal. By couching transcendent, even god-like portrayals of the father like this and Kevin's final act of martyrdom in *Tron: Legacy* in road-based imagery expressive of a return to 'real'

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[64] Eyerman and Löfgren, p. 78.
[65] Springer, p. 111.

bodies and natural landscapes, these films attempt to install them as essential incarnations of paternal masculinity that are apparently stable and unassailable, even in the face of disorientating technological change. *Death Race*, *Tron: Legacy* and *Real Steel*, then, perpetuate patriarchal efforts to glaze over the constructed nature of masculinity, transposing paternal 'becoming' onto a division between restrictive video game worlds and images of characters driving down, or preparing vehicles for, the open road.

Conclusion

Throughout contemporary Western popular culture, a hyperbolic anxiety over modes of travel and communications technologies that elide the freedoms and pleasures generically associated with the road journey has been identified principally with men. Phillips has asserted that these transformations are reflected in the decentralisation of both journey and traveller in favour of a focus on the information they transmit within apocalyptic science fiction road films. Conversely, this chapter has shown that several relevant apocalyptic films of the 1990s and recent science fiction action features incorporating road film imagery are more preoccupied with the male traveller's attempted recovery of agency and an 'authentic', independent self. *Until the End of the World*, *Twelve Monkeys*, *Death Race*, *Tron: Legacy* and *Real Steel* use the journey to describe a return to the past that brings male travellers into contact with the ostensibly anchoring images or presence of families. Often using this return as part of a narrative of maturation, the more recent examples draw a simplistic equation between the protagonist's escape from, or regained control over, a video game world and his recovery of family ties.

In *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys*, conversely, a narcissistic, altogether more regressive turn to past familial dynamics, stimulated by a technological shift in the journey, forecloses the male traveller's fate even as it affords him the illusion of a stable centre. This discussion crucially acknowledged the films' equal emphasis upon introspective male travellers and more socially engaged female travellers. It was argued that *Until the End of the World* contrasts Sam's obsessive, strictly technical engagement with new technologies with Claire's emotionally invested, creative and communally engaged use of similar devices. Meanwhile, *Twelve Monkeys* uses the dual displacements of time travel and the more conventional linear road journey to illustrate the volatility of all identities,

whilst acknowledging the patriarchal discursive frameworks that constrict the movements and authority of women especially. By displacing its post-apocalyptic male traveller into a recognisable present rather than a fantastical wasteland, *Twelve Monkeys* presents a particularly powerful, if hardly flawless, portrait of the differences between a male 'outsider' who finds a perverse validation of self in death and a female traveller whose voice is always marginalised within society.

Conclusion

This thesis has interrogated the persistent focus upon American white male subjects throughout apocalyptic science fiction road narratives in films and comics. Both informed by, and diverging from, the millennial boom in critical studies that emphasise the traditionally male-centred road genre's increasing interest in the journeys of female, black and international travellers, the study has observed how this generic hybrid has accommodated a range of masculine subjects. The preceding chapters have demonstrated the various ways in which journeys set before, in the midst of, and after disaster have long proven attractive and productive as fictional settings for articulating, interrogating and critiquing white masculine anxieties and desires. This concluding chapter will draw together the thesis's observations, recapitulating its objectives, assessing its methods and consolidating its academic intervention. To this end, the following summary and reflections are structured around a selection of themes prominent across the chapters' case studies. Additionally, the Conclusion will emphasise the benefits and considerations that the study of comics, in addition to film, has introduced to inquiries into gender and genre. The thesis will close by identifying several further avenues of research indicated and illuminated by its findings, necessary omissions and several on-going production trends.

As outlined in the Introduction, the study has sought to address a general academic neglect regarding 'the apocalyptic road story', a term that has gained increasing currency among reviewers and film and comic book creators since the turn of the millennium. Many road genre studies acknowledge from an early stage a natural bond between science fiction and apocalypse and the settings and technological preoccupations of road stories, and various literature and film scholars have noted journeys and nomadism as integral aspects of post-apocalyptic science fiction. Much of this work, however, understates apocalyptic road stories' prevalence and variety, often tending towards over-generalisation. Whilst some critics and scholars lean too heavily on a single, allegedly paradigmatic example, the *Mad Max* trilogy (George Miller, 1979; Miller, 1981; Miller and George Ogilvie, 1985), other studies by academics like Karl Phillips construct models of the hybrid's development that, whilst they identify certain prime tendencies, are too

reductive.[1] In order to move beyond these restricted understandings, the study departed structurally from key work that offers a linear chronological reading of the development of apocalyptic cinema and suggests that each isolated period is defined by a single character 'type', whether the traveller who is simply reduced to a vessel for transferring information in several films released throughout the 1990s discussed by Phillips,[2] or the nomadic male hero of the 1980s considered by Mick Broderick.[3] Instead, chapters were formulated according to the identification of several types of male traveller prominent across apocalyptic road narratives in films and comics released between 1975 and the present, the most recent example being Jeff Lemire's maxi-series *Sweet Tooth*, published between September 2009 and February 2013. These subjects were fundamentally distinguished and discussed according to their relationship with technology, age and familial status, and only secondarily in terms of certain constituent historical trends' rise and fall. Accordingly, the Introduction asked how the apocalyptic science fiction road narrative has continued to accommodate certain white male anxieties and desires across film and comics.

Whereas historical overviews regularly and necessarily sacrifice depth and the recognition of specific differences in order to formulate broad models, a methodology built around detailed textual analysis better suited these research questions. Discussions of individual texts were informed by relevant work on white masculinities in American popular culture, studies of road stories, science fiction and apocalyptic fiction in film, comics and literature, and reference to the growing body of research into visual and narrative form within comics. This mixed approach accommodated an on-going attention to the fundamental differences between media whilst allowing for cross-media comparisons of the treatment of masculinity.

In arguing for a greater diversity than is acknowledged by existing scholarship, the thesis extended this methodology to case studies ranging from independent and art films and comics produced by independent creators to action and adventure blockbusters and popular comic strips. This approach challenged a continuing purism prevalent in single-authored studies of road cinema, wherein independent productions are isolated as true road narratives, often by virtue of their

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[1] Karl Phillips, 'We're Virtually There: SF Film on the Road to Ruin', in *Lost Highways: An Illustrated History of Road Movies*, ed. by Jack Sargeant and Stephanie Watson (London: Creation Books, 1999), pp. 266-74.

[2] Phillips, p. 270.

[3] Mick Broderick, 'Surviving Armageddon: Beyond the Imagination of Disaster', *Science-Fiction Studies*, 20 (1993), 362-82 (p. 378).

comparatively marginal industrial status, whilst higher budgeted action films are dismissed by writers like David Laderman as populist 'generic skeletons gutted by an "entertainment" mentality'.[4] In the process, it was discovered that blockbusters like *Waterworld* (Kevin Reynolds, 1995) and *War of the Worlds* (Steven Spielberg, 2005) include and acknowledge moments of compelling ambiguity in their treatments of masculinity, recapitulated below, that are suppressed both in work that overlooks their road genre elements and in thematically similar independent productions. In addition to observing previously neglected complexities that arise within individual examples as a result of the road genre and apocalyptic science fiction's shared focus upon spaces and periods of personal, social and/or political instability, uncertainty and transition, the study also observed and examined several overarching tendencies and concerns that draw together texts produced and sold within varied industrial circumstances.

Principal themes and conclusions

In order to bind together the thesis's discussions of a range of masculine subjects within two media, each chapter regularly returned to general variables like the physical, perceptual, sexual and psychological implications of different modes of travel, the shape, scope and pace of the journey and the characterisation of the travelled environment, considering the gendered impact of each. From these discussions, four recurrent concerns have emerged.

Subjectivity and transformations in technology and transport

Most studies of road narratives in film, literature and other media have examined the spaces and structure of the genre almost exclusively in terms of the road and the travelled landscape, with several remarking only cursorily upon the narrative and visual treatment of vehicles themselves. As indicated in the Introduction, technology's foregrounded role in science fiction examples regularly distinguishes them from what 'little detailed examination of the actual machinery' usually features in road cinema:[5] an aspect that is especially conspicuous within the texts

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[4] David Laderman, *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), p. 133.
[5] Mark Williams, *Road Movies: The Complete Guide to Cinema on Wheels* (New York: Proteus, 1982), p. 11.

examined in Chapters 1, 2 and 5. The first two chapters in particular examined films and comics in which narratives of apparent male self-transformation and adaptation to social change are developed through the transforming function and treatment, substitution and destruction of certain industrial and organic vehicles. These chapters used cultural studies of the automobile as both possession and threat, together with broad definitions of vehicles' mutable role throughout individual road narratives, as a starting point for building upon existing remarks regarding the supposed union of vehicle and traveller in science fiction examples.

Introducing the thesis's character-centred approach, Chapter 1 examined the integral role that intermittent generic shifts from the urban police procedural to the post-apocalyptic road story have played in the development of a comic book protagonist who physically and psychically emblematises the fusion between man and machine integral to perceptions that science fiction road stories are dominated by 'hyperindustrialised' imagery.[6] Throughout the lengthy history of the popular comic strip *Judge Dredd* (1977-), extended serialised stories set within a post-nuclear American wasteland have been introduced as a space for exploring crises and transformations in the eponymous oppressive anti-hero's institutionally imposed, genetically pre-determined identity as a merciless law-enforcer. With reference to the road genre's concern with themes of 'autonomy, mobility, and identity' and,[7] specifically, 'how one *constructs* a sense of self',[8] Chapter 1 considered how two major road serials, 'The Cursed Earth' (1978) and *The Dead Man* (1989-1990), both dissect and bolster a persona that reincarnates the discourses of 'armoured masculinity' outlined in Klaus Theweleit's landmark research into proto-fascist military rhetoric.

Unlike previous applications of Theweleit's work to *Judge Dredd*-inspired hypermasculine cyborg characters in 1980s science fiction cinema that have tended to abstract these characters from the changes they physically undergo during each film, the chapter explored how the failure, loss and destruction of vehicular and bodily armour gradually change in effect and function throughout Dredd's journey in 'The Cursed Earth' especially. Anticipating a theme and source of tension integral to various texts discussed in later chapters, it was observed that 'The Cursed Earth' frequently treats the breakdown of Dredd's convoy not as a source of

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[6] Laderman, p. 18.
[7] Katie Mills, *The Road Story and the Rebel: Moving Through Film, Fiction, and Television* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2006), p. 12.
[8] Mills, p. 19 (Mills' emphasis).

anxiety, as discourses of armoured masculinity would typically dictate, but as an excuse for bringing the hardened traveller into closer contact with marginalised communities and persons than the strip's urban stories usually permit. This was seen to contribute a more compassionate, sensitive and even-handed aspect to the character. However, the fact that the road story appears as part of a long-running comic strip in *Judge Dredd*, rather than occupying the entirety of the series like later chapters' comic book case studies, evidently restricts the opportunities it creates for uncovering an emotionally autonomous sense of self behind Dredd's machine-like qualities. As a result of the road serial's ultimate inseparability from the repetitive iterative scheme that dominates the strip, it was argued that even the final images of Dredd's triumphal exposed body in 'The Cursed Earth', having destroyed or lost its vehicular and body armour, reinstate a gender ideology based upon the policing of bodily boundaries, the abjection of internal threats onto others' bodies and the denial of an autonomous ego, self-awareness and a separate, internal life in favour of total mechanical devotion to the state. The same genre settings and imagery of technological failure and destruction used throughout *Judge Dredd*'s history to explore the tension between man and machine manifest within its protagonist serve to exorcise it.

Partly due to this British comic strip's critical outsider's view of American culture, the reinstatement of Dredd's fascistic qualities as he returns from the road to the totalitarian dystopia of Mega-City One does indicate a remarkable refusal to perpetuate the uneasy endorsement of 'fascist values' and violence as a means of establishing or upholding 'democratic ideals' that John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett observe throughout American incarnations of the USA's 'superhero monomyth'.[9] Chapter 2 extended the study of the gendered and narrative function of scenes of vehicular destruction, transformation and substitution to two post-apocalyptic blockbusters that ostensibly imagine the rise of peaceful democratic utopian societies in opposition to tyrannous, violent and ultimately self-destructive masculinist forces. *Waterworld* and *The Postman*'s (Kevin Costner, 1997) stories of male nomads who help to liberate a part or whole of the isolated racially diverse communities of men and women they originally exploit were read as symptomatic of an anxiety over the social place of white heterosexual men following post-war advances in gay, black and women's rights.

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[9] John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), p. 282.

The chapter observed the role that the vehicles and patterns of movement initially associated with *Waterworld*'s Mariner and the eponymous Postman and, in particular, scenes of that vehicle's violation that recall Sigmund Freud's model of female masochism play in conveying the moribund fate of white men who refuse to fulfil a socially and often sexually productive role within a transformed society. As is considered in a later section of this Conclusion dealing with the status of 'Otherness', the road journey subsequently opens up intriguing opportunities for the Mariner in particular to adapt in line with the interests of his socially disenfranchised fellow travellers as the boundaries of his ship are renegotiated and the vehicle itself is ultimately destroyed. Examining the visual presentation of later changes in the Mariner and the Postman's trajectories, however, Chapter 2 noted that the films turn to narcissistic images of independent vertical movement that imagine a literal (re)ascension to power. Outwardly, these films announce the importance of community among rebels and outsiders and are, like the self-mocking persona star Kevin Costner has cultivated, playfully aware of the performativity of male power. Yet such aspects are undermined by an accompanying hyperindividualist visual narrative of restored male potency and the return of an allegedly natural white patriarchal order, articulated through the vehicles to which the protagonist's sense of self is bound.

The thesis's analyses of the roles played by vehicles in *Judge Dredd* road serials, *Waterworld* and *The Postman* indicate the value both of recognising and addressing the function of action in the road genre and of tempering the contemporary academic bias towards isolating the study of science fiction spectacle from the narrative context in which such sequences appear. In these texts, the construction and cultivation of the male self that takes place on the road is realised less through the creation, acquisition or reinforcement of a set of vehicular armour, or through fusion with the vehicle as a mobile fortress, than through the gradual loss, collapse, destruction or sacrifice of certain machines. Whilst this fosters moments of compelling volatility in 'The Cursed Earth' and *Waterworld*, *The Postman*'s expression of male transformation through images of movement in a void, as opposed to representations of movement as progressive social action, invites scepticism about any genuine internal transformation. A similar focus upon external rather than internal change was observed in the concluding part of Chapter 5. This segment brought the chapter's study of the cultural characterisation of the physical road and journey's displacement or elision as a source of masculine

anxiety up to date by examining the use of road genre iconography in several recent science fiction films that, with one exception, resist categorisation as road narratives: *Death Race* (Paul W.S. Anderson, 2008), *Tron: Legacy* (Joseph Kosinski, 2010) and *Real Steel* (Shawn Levy, 2011). In these films, the often literal drive to re-materialise, following entrapment in environments and modes of being narratively, visually or analogically associated with video games, is celebrated unequivocally as the means by which estranged family men automatically unlock a supposedly innate paternal authority and competency. Yet whilst the masculine assurances granted by a simple return to industrial machinery, physical roads and antiquated transport supplant the emotional work of fathering in these non-apocalyptic science fiction films, the thesis also observed a more critical agenda within a contemporaneous body of post-apocalyptic road narratives about travelling fathers and children.

Family on the road

Whilst 'The Cursed Earth' and *The Postman* configure the corresponding transformations of vehicles and male travellers in close, if dubious, relation to the fortunes of static communities, the thesis has more generally discovered a departure from trends like the characterisation of motion as a means of communal restoration that Broderick observes within 1980s post-apocalyptic cinema.[10] Whether as a result of a withdrawal from the road genre's traditionally rebellious spirit, the journey's structure, or a new-found pragmatism or, conversely, an irresponsibly solipsistic quality, examples like *A Boy and His Dog* (L.Q Jones, 1975), Brian K. Vaughan and Pia Guerra's *Y: The Last Man* (2002-2008), *The Road* (John Hillcoat, 2009) and *Twelve Monkeys* (Terry Gilliam, 1995) refuse to imagine the male traveller catalysing or effecting a progressive social transformation. Instead, familial units and dynamics have steadily assumed greater prominence in apocalyptic science fiction road narratives, especially throughout the 1990s and early twenty-first century. In *Waterworld*, *The Road*, *Until the End of the World* (Wim Wenders, 1991) and *Twelve Monkeys*, the family functions less as a microcosmic illustration or promise of society's future restoration than as a structure isolated from the larger human population. The 'absence of the people'

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[10] Broderick, p. 378.

that Bennet Schaber remarks across various post-war road films, then, has become particularly aggressive within several apocalyptic science fiction road narratives.[11]

Chapter 4 linked the recurrent use of the road journey across *War of the Worlds*, *Sweet Tooth*, *The Road* and *Waterworld* as a narrative device for exploring fathering to essentialist perceptions of motherhood as an innate biological state of being and fatherhood as a process of learning. In the most recent examples, this process has centred on dilemmas of paternal responsibility and agency arising from the travelling child's scopic exposure to potentially traumatic horrors. Chapter 4 observed how *War of the Worlds*, *Sweet Tooth* and *The Road* formally resist the detachment, apathy and irresponsibility of the 'just passing through' mentality and aesthetic specifically associated with the American road and road stories and originally endorsed by the three texts' paternal protagonists. Particularly crucial here is the emphasis these examples place upon geographically marginal spaces and extra-diegetic borders, whether the edges of the screen or the different effects and affects generated by Jeff Lemire's distinctive uses of the 'gutter' throughout his comic book series, and the child 'passenger's' greater attention to persons, objects and spaces on the roadside and in the travellers' wake than to the road ahead. In addition to provoking anxiety, the chapter argued that the child's divergent gaze paves the way for the father's putative redemption and growth. By attending to the child's different way of seeing, *War of the Worlds*, *Sweet Tooth* and *The Road*'s negligent, aggressive or distrustful fathers learn to renegotiate travelled and shared spaces in ways that demonstrate, respectively, a greater sensitivity towards the child's desires and needs, a recognition of the consequences of the father's neglectful and violent actions, and respect for the child's thirst for wider social contact.

However, there is remarkably little sense in the post-apocalyptic texts that the father is obliged to change dramatically, especially in his own exercise of violence and interactions with survivors outside the family unit. *The Road*'s unnamed Man discovers at the cost of his life that his paranoid and possessive behaviour is not a sustainable strategy for the future, yet is granted an improbably blissful return to the world of middle-class materialism. *Sweet Tooth* even implies that Jepperd would have saved his biological family and been spared the challenge of learning to care for others if only he had ignored his wife's pleas at a critical

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[11] Bennet Schaber, '"Hitler Can't Keep 'Em That Long": The Road, The People', in *The Road Movie Book*, ed. by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 17-44 (p. 38).

moment and stuck by his original resolve to distrust other survivors! Whilst *The Road* and *Sweet Tooth* disregard their internal contradictions, as an apocalyptic road story in which total destruction is finally prevented and peace is restored *War of the Worlds* does not overlook the impasse ultimately facing a father who, though a failure in the domestic sphere, has proven his parental mettle through wartime violence on the road.

Chapter 5 considered further the differences between texts set prior to, during, or after a global disaster by addressing two films in which apocalypse and its implications of isolation and the desire for historical coherence are less an objective condition than a state of mind. *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys* depict two male voyagers whose journeys are informed not by the engagement with wider society favoured by, or required of, their fellow female travellers, but by remembered or remote familial ties. Interrogating Phillips' salient yet heavily limited discussion of *Until the End of the World*'s Sam and *Twelve Monkeys*' James as little more than compliant vehicles for the efficient transmission of required data,[12] the chapter argued that these two fugitives intentionally or unconsciously resist the depersonalising and disorientating effects of the itineraries imposed upon them by emotionally disinterested scientists. The male travellers' resistance hinges upon a narcissistic and regressive retreat inwards that reveals a desire, granted by family memories, for the presumed stability and validation of a sense of self independent of the mission. This withdrawal is expressed through James's positioning and behaviour within Kathryn's car in *Twelve Monkeys* and what *Until the End of the World*'s script describes as Sam's digitally enabled 'journey […] into the garden of dreams'. However, these solipsistic voyages were shown to preclude the genuine reparation of Sam's relationships with estranged family members and James's capacity for changing both his fate and that of the world. Indeed, James cannot himself appreciate the final perfect moment of apocalyptic consonance between a formative childhood experience and his end because it is premised upon his self-destruction. *Twelve Monkeys* and *Until the End of the World*, then, recognise the inherent contradictions that lie in a search for personal and familial reconciliation attempted through an emotional, moral and physical flight from societal obligations and connections.

If *Waterworld* and *The Postman* resurrect a frontier fantasy through their concluding images of male travellers who, with a newfound sense of paternal duty

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[12] Phillips, p. 270.

and purpose, strike or gaze out across newly virgin post-apocalyptic landscapes, Chapters 4 and 5's discussions of familial themes demonstrated the equal prominence of an inwardly directed focus. Whilst *War of the Worlds* conflates a moment of identification with a patriarchal military with the development of respect between father and son, *The Road*, *Until the End of the World* and *Twelve Monkeys* especially portray a schism between the personal and public spheres that proves self-destructive for the adult protagonists upholding it. Yet the thesis also considered how another major case study, *Y: The Last Man*, sustains this division by reflecting pragmatically upon the disjunction between generic and gender ideals and individual experience.

Disputing myth

Numerous readings of 1980s post-apocalyptic films, especially the *Mad Max* sequels, emphasise the importance of mythology within these texts, whether biblical, national or bound to gender. Whilst Jerome F. Shapiro reads Max as a heroic figure who ably performs the messianic duties communities place upon him,[13] Jonathan Rayner has more persuasively argued that Max is distinguished by his repeated failure to fulfil these mythological prophecies and roles.[14] Looking beyond these films, the thesis has demonstrated that post-apocalyptic road narratives have variously functioned as generic settings where myths of masculine and patriarchal power are mercilessly reinforced, as in 'The Cursed Earth', simultaneously exposed as performances and disguised as natural inevitabilities, as in *The Postman*, and, in the most interesting case, criticised as psychologically damaging forces.

This last aspect formed the focus of Chapter 3's study of *Y: The Last Man*, which considered how the comic's portrayal of extended adolescence and the popular post-apocalyptic figure of 'the last man on Earth' interrogates generic, hegemonic and phallic myths of masculinity. Redressing the general paucity of scholarship regarding the gender politics of the contemporary last man narrative in examining *Y: The Last Man*'s Yorick alongside earlier literary treatments and contemporary heroic cinematic constructions of the last man, the thesis presented a

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[13] Jerome F. Shapiro, *Atomic Bomb Cinema: The Apocalyptic Imagination on Film* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 179-80.

[14] Jonathan Rayner, *Contemporary Australian Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 41-43.

further intervention in this area. The chapter's analysis clearly revealed an aspect of the productive friction between apocalyptic science fiction and the road story remarked in the Introduction. Using the figure of the traveller as transient visitor observed in Chapter 1's discussion of 'The Cursed Earth' to distinct effect, the division *Y: The Last Man* draws between action and intervention in the public sphere and Yorick's dialogues and explorations of his own anxieties and illusions regarding masculinity, love and sex in the static private sphere establishes an important discrepancy between the apocalyptic focus upon 'grand narratives' and ultimate spiritual and scientific 'truths' and the road story's more personal, immediate focus. Combining this aspect with the adolescent *Bildungsroman*'s preoccupation with the boy hero's 'false starts and wrong moves' on the road to manhood,[15] Vaughan and Guerra's comic pragmatically unpicks concepts of masculinity rooted in damaging notions of violent redemption, romantic destiny and the phallic mystique, the latter being a regular preoccupation of reactionary male-authored stories about female-dominated societies. Simultaneously, Chapter 3 also observed that *Y: The Last Man* remains frustratingly reticent as regards the imagination of new roles for men and alternate female masculinities in a matriarchal world. This last aspect ties into another major strand of the thesis: the presentation of characters identified as 'Other' relative to the white male traveller and, indeed, those male subjects who are either identified by the text or openly identify themselves as Other.

The status of 'Otherness'

Several of the thesis's case studies position white male protagonists' travelling companions in a largely ancillary capacity, whether as decoys onto which anxieties are displaced or abjected in the process of consolidating the armoured male in 'The Cursed Earth' or as barriers to maturation, as in *A Boy and His Dog*, discussed in Chapter 3. Yet the characterisation of various female, black and queer subjects in particular has also demonstrated the differing ends to which white, usually heterosexual men continue to be presented as marginalised subjects in apocalyptic road narratives, whether as nomadic mutants, last men on Earth, or time-travelling fugitives.

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[15] Michael Minden, *The German Bildungsroman: Incest and Inheritance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 5.

Chapter 2 noted that *The Postman* incorporates the errors made by the Postman's African-American apprentice Ford, a character who otherwise plays a pivotal role in making the protagonist's false stories of national recovery a reality, into a cynical iteration of the retroactive historical *white*washing observed within millennial rhetoric by Jean Baudrillard.[16] Yet the chapter also noted that *Waterworld* presents a progressive 'queering' of the male nomad's gender identity that is overlooked by scholars who focus strictly upon the gendered binaries apparently reinstated at the film's conclusion and thus fail to recognise the fluidity, volatility and transformative potential that characterise the journey itself. The analysis emphasised scenes in which the originally misanthropic and misogynistic Mariner is recoded corporeally and behaviourally as both paternal and, more intriguingly, maternal, as he comes to respect the emotional needs of the women who travel with him and discovers a mutual pleasure and recuperative quality in their shared experiences of social marginalisation. Though interspersed with imagery suggestive of a heteronormative and castrating masculinity, these episodes remain intriguing moments of gender fluidity that linger on the margins of the text, not fully carried through to the narrative's conclusion yet also never cancelled out or presented as moments of emasculating weakness.

Simultaneously, however, Chapters 2 and 3 recognised the particular consequences that such transformations and identifications pose for the female travellers that accompany *Waterworld*'s Mariner and Yorick's female African-American companion Agent 355 in *Y: The Last Man*. Chapter 2 was careful to note how the masculine appropriation of 'the maternal' in *Waterworld* supplants the non-biological mother-and-daughter relationship between Helen and Enola, relegating the previously protective and proactive Helen to a romantic partner who watches moments of action and familial tenderness from the side-lines. Similar difficulties surround the homosocial and heterosexual bond that develops between Yorick and 355, an androgynous woman identified at several points as butch. 355's complex characterisation is a definite improvement over aggressively misogynistic treatments of lesbian sexuality and female masculinity within earlier male-authored 'battle of the sexes' science fiction stories. However, Chapter 3 argued that *Y: The Last Man* pathologises 355's female masculinity, and moreover denies the possibility of her self-(re)discovery and an interracial heterosexual romance with

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[16] Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End*, trans. by Chris Turner (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 11-12.

queer aspects in favour of presenting a tragic narrative of unrequited love that focuses on Yorick's experience of loss. Frequently, then, black, queer and female subjects continue to be denied full access to the opportunities for self-exploration offered by the apocalyptic road story.

In examining two pre-apocalyptic road narratives in which the fantastical circumstances of the male traveller's journey intrude upon the relative normality of a woman's life, Chapter 5 demonstrated a particular awareness of this friction between the marginalisation of white male travellers imagined in science fiction and the actual barriers to movement, autonomy and authority faced by the female traveller. The chapter countered simplistic earlier readings in which *Until the End of the World*'s Claire and *Twelve Monkeys*' Kathryn are perceived as mere helpmeets or extensions and objects of white male journeys and desires. Instead, Claire and Kathryn were examined as characters who, unlike their male companions, engage with wider society: a distinction with both positive and negative effects. The chapter firstly observed the contrast that Wenders' film draws between Sam's regressive withdrawal into video reproductions of the past and the capacity for maturation and greater pleasure in the global journey generated by Claire's emotional and creative engagement with technology and other people on the road. *Twelve Monkeys* was then discussed in terms of its exceptionally self-conscious sense of the institutional, geographical and historical discourses that privilege certain voices and compromise others throughout James and Kathryn's journey from Baltimore to, and around, Philadelphia. Within these circumstances, it was argued that James's ignorance of contemporary social mores is less a disadvantage than something which enables him, however unwittingly, to move through different environments and conflicts unscathed, unmarked and free to continue his self-centred quest. Meanwhile, Kathryn is continually dismissed and misidentified as a result of the patriarchal preconceptions attached to a woman's movements and presence in certain locations. The study thus concluded with a crucial recognition of the differences between a fantastical Othering of the white male protagonist and the altogether more familiar restrictions to self-determination and free movement faced by female travellers.

More than just tearing up the strip: The value of studying apocalyptic road comics

As a key secondary research question, the Introduction asked what the study of apocalyptic road narratives and their representations of masculinity, hitherto limited to film, can gain from the examination of this generic hybrid's similar prevalence in comics. In analysing a range of examples, including the *Judge Dredd* road serials, *Y: The Last Man*, *Sweet Tooth* and Harlan Ellison and Richard Corben's 1987 *Vic and Blood* comic books, the thesis identified a variety of structural, formal and generic factors that shape treatments of gender and genre.

One of the primary considerations highlighted by this thesis is the impact of seriality upon masculine characterisations. By addressing serialisation in particular detail, the thesis contributes to an area of research which, as road genre studies and comic scholars alike have indicated, continues to be neglected despite the absolutely integral role it plays within each field. The analysis of the *Judge Dredd* road serials, *Y: The Last Man* and *Sweet Tooth* expanded upon existing work on televised road stories that observes a recurrent connection between the road story in serialised media and the use of a 'anthology' format, in which the central traveller's journey serves as a framework for exploring, in a brief, episodic manner, the circumstances of settled communities and, often, individual travelling companions. Even apocalyptic road films featuring ensemble casts, such as *Until the End of the World*, resist this formula, reducing secondary characters to thumbnail sketches or relegating them to minor subplots in the interests of narrative coherence and restricted runtimes. The thesis noted how the anthology format conversely generates opportunities for dramatising the stories of characters on the roadside and socially and otherwise narratively marginal figures. The greater potential that this structure creates for a decentred approach to the road story also reflects back on the white male traveller's characterisation. In particular, Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 demonstrated how this episodic format tends to humanise rather than mythologise the protagonist, whether recreating Dredd as an even-handed hero in 'The Cursed Earth' or credibly imagining Yorick as a figure with limited social influence in *Y: The Last Man*.

The thesis also considered the gendered and generic ramifications of the different approaches to seriality that shape the *Judge Dredd* comic strips, the two-issue *Vic and Blood* series and the maxi-series *Y: The Last Man* and *Sweet Tooth*, adjusting and reflecting upon its methodology accordingly. Contrasts were drawn

between examples like *Judge Dredd* in which character developments within the road serial must ultimately be undercut in accordance with the strip's overarching iterative structure and the commitment to an image of unchanging yet obsessively reinforced armoured masculinity, and texts that are structured entirely around road stories. At the opposite end of the scale from *Judge Dredd*, for instance, the inconclusive nature of the *Vic and Blood* comic books was examined in Chapter 3 as a reflection of the destabilisation of road narratives of male maturation in a post-apocalyptic setting. The thesis has thus shown how different serial structures within comics and the positioning of apocalyptic road narratives therein shape and correspond to varying portrayals of masculinity.

Another major issue that the thesis addressed is the seemingly curious compatibility between a genre that emphasises motion and a medium physically composed of static images. Given Laderman's assertion that road cinema illustrates an aesthetic and narrative investment in 'travel for travel's sake',[17] there is an on-going danger of dismissing comics as a pale imitation of the high-speed movement more readily realised in film. To offset this bias, the formal analysis intermittently drew upon several integral recent essays that contest a previous tendency of examining movement, structure and pace within comics according to several conventions of moving image media. By referring to work that considers the variety of complex graphical strategies that comics use to communicate motion, the study was better able to consider comics on their own terms as well as in conjunction with film analysis. Simultaneously, however, the thesis has demonstrated that an analytic approach focusing primarily on comics' practical techniques of conveying motion as an end in itself is insufficient when considering the generic and gendered significance attached to movement in apocalyptic road narratives. Various formal studies examine comics' evocation of motion primarily in terms of speed and frenzied energy.[18] This approach coheres with the aggressive armoured masculinity articulated through *Judge Dredd*'s energetic line work and images of sleek human bodies and vehicles slicing across panel boundaries, but is altogether less applicable to apocalyptic road texts with firmer generic ties to character-driven drama than action. By addressing a range of examples that vary in art style and narrative complexity, the thesis was able to present a more balanced discussion of how comics engage with the thematic and narrative weight that apocalyptic road

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[17] Laderman, p. 2.
[18] Angela Ndalianis, 'The Frenzy of the Visible in Comic Book Worlds', *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 4 (2009), 237-48.

narratives attach to both movement and stasis and their implications for the visual and narrative characterisation of the texts' male travellers.

To this end, the thesis accounted for the ways in which several comics convey and explore different masculine characterisations by focusing on portrayals of the subjective experience of the journey rather than an objective illusion of movement. Chapter 3 considered how Corben's expressionistic artwork and renderings of movement in the *Vic and Blood* comics generate a greater focus upon the arrestment of Vic's emotional development than is permitted in the film *A Boy and His Dog*. In contrast to the naturalistic aesthetic of contemporaneous film examples like *The Road*, Chapter 4 also noted how the heightened attention to the child's subjective experience of traumatic post-apocalyptic violence apparent in recent travelling father-and-child narratives is articulated and explored with particular vividness through Jeff Lemire's heavily stylised artwork and progressive changes in his use of comics form. As a concept as much as a visual effect, then, movement figures prominently in apocalyptic road comics' engagement with gender.

As illustrated in the Introduction, terms like 'post-apocalyptic road trip' and 'post-apocalyptic road story' have recently gained increasing currency among comics reviewers and creators. Evidently, then, a detailed consideration of comics' different visual, structural and generic approaches to this hybrid phenomenon appears both timely and valuable to the understanding of not only apocalyptic road stories but also road narratives more generally as highly adaptable forms. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the thesis has borne out this terminological bias towards post-apocalyptic examples. This focus reflects the greater prevalence of post-apocalyptic comics, but should not be misconstrued as an indication that pre-apocalyptic road stories have no standing in the medium. One such major example is Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon's *Preacher* (1995-2000), which was excluded from consideration here because it belongs to the genre of apocalyptic supernatural fantasy. Yet whilst many of the thesis's findings are specific to apocalyptic science fiction road narratives, the intermittent acknowledgement of similarly themed apocalyptic horror road stories and even non-road-based science fiction films in Chapters 4 and 5 indicates potential for extending the study of the intersections between the road genre and multiple fantastical genres in future research.

Surveying the road ahead

As this study concludes, syntheses of fantastical genres and the road narrative continue to flourish. An on-going boom is indicated by not only the recent trends and examples discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, but also the multitude of examples currently in production, many of which indicate further directions for research. The development of *Mad Max: Fury Road* (George Miller, 2014) over twenty years since the last entry in the series marks only one indication of the steadily increasing visibility of road-based (if not always journey-based) apocalyptic films. The upcoming British science fiction/horror road film *Under the Skin* (Jonathan Glazer, 2013) and the post-apocalyptic *rail* movie *Snowpiercer* (Joon-ho Bong, 2013), a South Korean/American/French co-production, illustrate journey-based science fiction narratives' growing presence within international film-making. That *Snowpiercer* is adapted from Jacques Lob, Benjamin Legrand and Jean-Marc Rochette's graphic novel series *Le Transperceneige* (1982; 1999-2000) attests to comics' on-going role in the combination of the road genre and fantastical genres. Indeed, Robert Kirkman and Tony Moore's comic book series *The Walking Dead* (2003-) forms the core of what is currently the most commercially successful and expansive contemporary apocalyptic story to incorporate aspects of the road story. This thesis has focused on original comics in dialogue or readily comparable with developments in apocalyptic science fiction film and, in the case of the *Vic and Blood* comics, comic book adaptations of shared literary source material rather than as adaptations of an earlier film dramatisation. *The Walking Dead* illustrates another tendency, detected within the road genre more broadly by Katie Mills:[19] the generic hybrid's capacity for spawning substantial franchises built around what Henry Jenkins defines as 'transmedia storytelling'. In a transmedia franchise, a narrative and fictional universe unfold 'across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole', rather than retelling the same story from the same perspective.[20] *The Walking Dead*'s post-apocalyptic universe has expanded across games and novels that fill in some of the gaps regarding the histories of certain characters from the comics and/or their television adaptation (2010-), whilst presenting new experiences. These include stories about protagonists from different racial backgrounds. Whilst the comic and television

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[19] Mills, p. 218.
[20] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, rev. edn (New York: New York University Press, 2008), pp. 97-98.

series centre on white patriarch Rick, in *The Walking Dead: The Game* (2012) the player assumes the role of African-American surrogate father Lee, whose coastward journey feeds into the contemporary focus upon father-and-child journeys examined in Chapter 4.

The apocalyptic road narrative's association with comics has also recently shaped the female-centred American film *Best Friends Forever* (Brea Grant, 2013). One of *Best Friends Forever*'s two protagonists is a comic book artist who extends their adventures beyond the limitations of the film's low budget through drawings showing the women battling post-apocalyptic marauders in souped-up trucks. Whilst the film unfortunately lacks a cohesive engagement with the intriguing theme of female friendship amid disaster, it also indicates an increased attention to an imbalance in apocalyptic road stories' treatment of gender within film and comics. As such fresh approaches to the mixture of the road story and apocalyptic science fiction, horror and fantasy and issues of gender and race proliferate, so too do new avenues of inquiry.

In addition to looking to future developments, it is also important to identify those further directions indicated by the thesis's findings and a final evaluation of its methodology. The chapters' detailed textual analyses have countered the over-generalisations that characterise numerous prior academic and popular critical discussions of apocalyptic science fiction road narratives, particularly in the field of gender. By this same token, however, the study's approach is more selective than comprehensive. In particular, one must acknowledge the ramifications of a study based around the identification of certain common masculine subjects and subject positionings. Since the chapters were primarily organised according to topics such as adolescent male sexuality and paternal anxiety and violence, whilst additional ties with action, adventure or the teen genre formed only a secondary concern, some combinations of the apocalyptic road story with other genres have received little consideration. One example is the romantic apocalyptic road story, as exemplified by *Monsters* (Gareth Edwards, 2010) and *Seeking a Friend for the End of the World* (Lorene Scafaria, 2012). Unfortunately, a suitably detailed consideration of these additional generic intersections' impact on the treatment of gender was incompatible with the thesis's set structure by the time of both films' release. News

of other romantic apocalyptic road films in development also suggests that this nascent area is better left to future study.[21]

Rather than excessively limiting the field of study, the specific areas covered in individual chapters present a foundation for the possible future examination of examples that exceed this thesis's particular generic focus. A productive comparison can be made between Chapter 4's conclusions regarding the portrayal of travelling fathers and children in apocalyptic science fiction road narratives and in the *Walking Dead* comics, which tie into horror's frequent treatment of children as figures of fear. *The Road*'s father acts in isolation from wider social interactions, whilst Ray's actions in the public sphere increasingly benefit his familial relationships in *War of the Worlds*. Conversely, *The Walking Dead*'s Rick is a father continually torn between raising his son Carl responsibly and managing communal affairs in a violent world: a situation which has led Carl to undergo a disturbing physical and psychological transformation throughout the comic. A comparative study of these approaches to the father's violence would form a timely extension of the thesis.

That Rick and Carl's relationship is not the only interesting family dynamic in the *Walking Dead* franchise highlights another methodological consideration. The thesis opted for a character-focused approach that centred on American white male travellers, usually cast as protagonists, on the grounds that they commonly receive the most protracted narrative attention and provide a nexus for various textual and generic themes. By favouring this focus, however, one risks complicity in the textual strategies by which characters representing other voices, desires, values and interests can be side-lined. For instance, to treat the redemptive 'queering' of *Waterworld*'s Mariner as unequivocally progressive would entail neglecting the simultaneous marginalisation of Helen and Enola's mother-daughter dynamic. Whilst attending to the texts' narrative focus upon white masculinities, the study has sought to account in some measure for the positioning of other subjects and the matter of granting female and child characters independence from their adult male counterpart's actions and stories. It therefore proved apt to conclude the thesis by considering *Twelve Monkeys*' recognition of those institutions and

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[21] Borys Kit, 'Paramount Developing Post-Apocalypse Road Movie with Shawn Levy', *Hollywood Reporter*, 15 June 2012 <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/paramount-shawn-levy-brian-duffield-337848> (accessed 1 August 2012).

geographically specific discourses that colour the perception and treatment of female travellers especially.

Indeed, the awareness of apocalyptic road narratives' extensive use as a form that accommodates certain white male anxieties and desires developed throughout this study can serve as a foundation for interrogating the space it affords and denies for the exploration of female and black identities especially. For instance, Phillips glosses over the specificities of gender, racial, sexual, class and national identity in broadly claiming that contemporary apocalyptic road film travellers are now narratively positioned as anonymous vessels for the transfer of information.[22] The thesis has shown that this argument obscures crucial discrepancies between white characters' resistance to depersonalisation and the continued marginalisation of black travellers especially conspicuous in *Twelve Monkeys* and *The Postman*. It is particularly telling that the recent apocalyptic road film that most closely matches Phillips' argument is not a story of futuristic time-saving and time-jumping technologies, but the pilgrimage undertaken on foot by the eponymous African-American hero of *The Book of Eli* (Albert and Allen Hughes, 2010). Eli is literally devoted single-mindedly (he has also memorised the text) to the task of carrying the last surviving copy of the Bible to a private archive, where its wider social and cultural role is unclear.

Future inquiries in this area should not restrict themselves to texts that position female, black or queer subjects as protagonists, but would also benefit from a more protracted discussion of travelling companions' parallel journeys and the representation of roadside communities. Judith Roof's work on comedic secondary female characters in Hollywood cinema indicates the particular merits of this approach for future work on apocalyptic road narratives. Roof combines her discussion of minor characters with an emphasis upon the narrative 'middle', discussing how both introduce 'detour[s]' accommodating an ambiguity,[23] alterity and 'something queer, some other possibility' that studies of a film text as a narrative whole can overlook, one such example being the road film *Boys on the Side* (Herbert Ross, 1995).[24] Just as this thesis has shown how the intermediate space of the road can accommodate a greater flexibility and volatility in male characters' representation or sense of self in texts like the *Judge Dredd* road serials

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[22] Phillips, p. 270.

[23] Judith Roof, *All about Thelma and Eve: Sidekicks and Third Wheels* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 4.

[24] Roof, p. 184.

and *Waterworld*, a greater appreciation of marginality in apocalyptic road narratives may be developed by examining the representation of truly narratively marginal characters: the local and national communities encountered on the roadside. Only Schaber and Pamela Robertson have addressed such characters in detail.[25] Whilst their studies centre on film, the 'anthology' structure adopted by various serialised apocalyptic road comics, wherein the central travellers encounter various local characters and conflicts on their extended journeys, also accommodates further reflections on this topic.

The study of community can also expand an understanding of nationhood within many apocalyptic road narratives. However, character-focused approaches can risk obscuring the importance of the national landscape itself. Where relevant, the thesis has addressed the gendered implications of relocating the road story to trackless oceanic and desert settings, coastal paths and cyberspace. That issues of specific geographical context have received limited attention in this thesis, however, is not incidental. In addition to the introspective shift from the landscape to a more intimate focus upon the survivor discussed in Chapters 3 and 5 and major shifts in the spatial relationships between travellers and the shape of the route discussed throughout the thesis, elements like the combination of shooting locations and digitally composited photographs from recent disasters featured throughout *The Road* erode a definite sense of place. This methodological omission is also symptomatic of the study's relatively abstract focus upon the road and journey primarily as structuring devices: an approach that allowed for a more cohesive line of argumentation. Especially as the scope of the apocalyptic road narrative moves from cross-country journeys to global voyages, however, the American traveller's representation in other national settings emerges as an important consideration for future research. It is certainly striking that *Until the End of the World* and *Y: The Last Man* head eastward rather than westward, the former reducing Sam to an American pioneer only in terms of his non-productive, socially disengaged ventures into futuristic technology.

Another possible approach to nationality and gender within the American-set apocalyptic road story is suggested by the 'outsider' perspectives foregrounded in examples like the comic book series *Preacher*. Here, Northern Irish writer Garth Ennis explores the cultural imaginary surrounding the USA, and particularly

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[25] Schaber, pp. 17-44; Pamela Robertson, 'Home and Away: Friends of Dorothy on the Road in Oz', in *The Road Movie Book*, ed. by Cohan and Hark, pp. 271-86.

masculinity and violence in the South, through the eyes of Texan protagonist Jesse and his friend Cassidy, an Irish immigrant. Where necessary, the thesis has considered aspects like the British perspective on American culture in early *Judge Dredd* comics. In the interests of methodological cohesion, however, it has proven unfeasible to attempt a survey of the various outside perspectives upon the USA that apocalyptic road narratives have accommodated. Indeed, even as recent work by Wendy Everett,[26] Jonathan Rayner,[27] and Devin Orgeron sets out to differentiate European, Australian and Iranian road films from the American tradition,[28] these studies typically concentrate on specific national cinemas rather than broadly ranging across texts depicting various international experiences of a particular country. Instead, the thesis's examination of apocalyptic texts' differing treatments of the road as a site for exploring American masculinities has presented observations against which the place of apocalyptic road stories and their treatments of gender in other national media cultures may be compared in greater detail. Examples range from the *anime* series *Wolf's Rain* (2003), to Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón's UK/USA co-production *Children of Men* (2006): texts which critics have begun to discuss as part of the thriving scholarship on Japanese and British apocalyptic science fiction.[29]

It seems apt to conclude the thesis with a sense of being 'in the middest', that interstitial state of uncertainty which Frank Kermode describes as so fertile and integral to the apocalyptic imagination and which is just as crucial within the road genre.[30] As the preceding survey illustrates, the completion of this research coincides with an exciting period of vitality and rapid transition in the growth and academic recognition of apocalyptic science fiction road narratives. By tracing this generic hybrid's persisting, yet not uncontested, focus upon white masculinities in film and comics from the mid-1970s to the present, this thesis has presented an account of its adaptability and breadth. This study has worked to open up what may initially appear a rather closed field and uncover several of the ambiguities and

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[26] Wendy Everett, 'Lost in Transition? The European Road Movie, or A Genre "Adrift in the Cosmos"', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 37 (2009), 165-75.

[27] Rayner, pp. 149-53.

[28] Devin Orgeron, *Road Movies: From Muybridge and Méliès to Lynch and Kiarostami* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[29] See Susan J. Napier, *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 139-45; Aidan Power, 'Invasion of the Brit-Snatchers: National Identity in Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema', in *British Science Fiction Film and Television: Critical Essays*, ed. by Tobias Hochscherf and James Leggott (Jefferson: McFarland, 2011), pp. 143-55.

[30] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 8.

complexities that thrive in the transitional space of the apocalyptic road. The conclusions reached indicate and illuminate various further avenues of inquiry regarding corresponding issues of gender, race and nationality. In these remarkably fruitful wastelands, there are many uncharted routes still to be mapped.

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Armageddon, dir. by Michael Bay (Buena Vista Pictures, USA, 1998).

Back to the Future, dir. by Robert Zemeckis (Universal Pictures, USA, 1985).

Best Friends Forever, dir. by Brea Grant (Storeyteller Films, USA, 2013).

Bonnie and Clyde, dir. by Arthur Penn (Warner Bros., USA, 1967).

The Book of Eli, dir. by Albert and Allen Hughes (Warner Bros., USA, 2010).

Boxcar Bertha, dir. by Martin Scorsese (American International Pictures, USA, 1972).

Boys on the Side, dir. by Herbert Ross (Warner Bros., USA/France, 1995).

Brazil, dir. by Terry Gilliam (Universal Pictures, UK, 1985).

The Cars That Ate Paris, dir. by Peter Weir (New Line Cinema, Australia, 1974).

Cherry 2000, dir. by Steve De Jarnatt (Orion Pictures, USA, 1988).

Children of Men, dir. by Alfonso Cuarón (Universal Pictures, USA/UK, 2006).

Content, dir. by Chris Petit (Channel 4, UK/Germany, 2010).

Crash, dir. by David Cronenberg (Fine Line Features, Canada/UK, 1996).

Damnation Alley, dir. by Jack Smight (20th Century Fox, USA, 1977).

The Day After Tomorrow, dir. by Roland Emmerich (20th Century Fox, USA/Canada, 2004).

Death Race, dir. by Paul W.S. Anderson (Universal Pictures, USA/Germany/UK, 2008).

Death Race 2000, dir. by Paul Bartel (New World Pictures, USA, 1975).

Detour, dir. by Edgar G. Ulmer (Producers Releasing Company, USA, 1945).

Dirty Harry, dir. by Don Siegel (Warner Bros., USA, 1971).

The Divide, dir. by Xavier Gens (Anchor Bay Films, Germany/USA/Canada, 2011).

Dredd, dir. by Pete Travis (Lionsgate, UK/South Africa, 2012).

Duel, dir. by Steven Spielberg (Cinema International Corporation, USA, 1971).

Easy Rider, dir. by Dennis Hopper (Columbia Pictures, USA, 1969).

Empire of Ash, dir. by Michael Mazo and Lloyd A. Simandl (North American Releasing, Canada, 1988).

E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial, dir. by Steven Spielberg (Universal Pictures, USA, 1982).

Fast & Furious, dir. by Justin Lin (Universal Pictures, USA, 2009).

Field of Dreams, dir. by Phil Alden Robinson (Universal Pictures, USA, 1989).

Fight Club, dir. by David Fincher (20th Century Fox, USA/Germany, 1999).

Five, dir. by Arch Oboler (Columbia Pictures, USA, 1951).

Five Easy Pieces, dir. by Bob Rafelson (Columbia Pictures, USA, 1970).

The Grapes of Wrath, dir. by John Ford (20th Century Fox, USA, 1940).

I Am Legend, dir. by Francis Lawrence (Warner Bros., USA, 2007).

Inception, dir. by Christopher Nolan (Warner Bros., USA/UK, 2010).

Judge Dredd, dir. by Danny Cannon (Buena Vista Pictures, USA, 1995).

Kings of the Road, dir. by Wim Wenders (Bauer International, Germany, 1976).

Kiss Me Deadly, dir. by Robert Aldrich (United Artists, USA, 1955).

La Jetée, dir. by Chris Marker (Argos Films, France, 1962).

The Last Man on Earth, dir. by Ubaldo Ragona and Sidney Salkow (American International Pictures, Italy/USA, 1964).

Le Dernier Combat, dir. by Luc Besson (Triumph Releasing Corporation, France, 1983).

Mad Max, dir. by George Miller (Warner Bros., Australia, 1979).

Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior, dir. by George Miller (Warner Bros., Australia, 1981).

Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome, dir. by George Miller and George Ogilvy (Warner Bros., Australia/USA, 1985).

The Matrix, dir. by Andy and Larry Wachowski (Warner Bros., USA/Australia, 1999).

The Mist, dir. by Frank Darabont (MGM, USA, 2007).

Monsters, dir. by Gareth Edwards (Magnet Releasing, UK, 2010).

My Own Private Idaho, dir. by Gus Van Sant (Fine Line Features, USA, 1991).

Natural Born Killers, dir. by Oliver Stone (Warner Bros., USA, 1994).

The New Barbarians, dir. by Enzo G. Castellari (New Line Cinema, Italy/USA, 1983).

Night of the Comet, dir. by Thom Eberhardt (Atlantic Releasing Corporation, USA, 1984).

The Omega Man, dir. by Boris Sagal (Warner Bros., USA, 1971).

On the Beach, dir. by Stanley Kramer (United Artists, USA, 1959).

Panic in the Year Zero!, dir. by Ray Milland (American International Pictures, USA, 1962).

Paper Moon, dir. by Peter Bogdanovich (Paramount Pictures, USA, 1973).

Paris, Texas, dir. by Wim Wenders (20th Century Fox, Germany/France/UK/USA, 1984).

Paul, dir. by Greg Mottola (Universal Pictures, USA/UK, 2011).

Planet of the Apes, dir. by Franklin J. Schaffner (20th Century Fox, USA, 1968).

The Postman, dir. by Kevin Costner (Warner Bros., USA, 1997).

The Quiet Earth, dir. by Geoff Murphy (Cinepro, New Zealand, 1985).

Real Steel, dir. by Shawn Levy (Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, USA/India, 2011).

Repo Man, dir. by Alex Cox (Universal Pictures, USA, 1984).

Resident Evil: Extinction, dir. by Paul W.S. Anderson (Screen Gems, France/Australia/Germany/UK/USA, 2007).

The Road, dir. by John Hillcoat (Dimension Films, USA, 2009).

Road to Perdition, dir. by Sam Mendes (DreamWorks Pictures, USA, 2002).

Robocop, dir. by Paul Verhoeven (Orion Pictures, USA, 1987).

The Searchers, dir. by John Ford (Warner Bros., USA, 1956).

Seeking a Friend for the End of the World, dir. by Lorene Scafaria (Focus Features, USA, 2012).

Shane, dir. by George Stevens (Paramount Pictures, USA, 1953).

The Sound of Music, dir. by Robert Wise (20th Century Fox, USA, 1965).

Soylent Green, dir. by Richard Fleischer (MGM, USA, 1973).

Stake Land, dir. by Jim Mickle (IFC Films, USA, 2010).

Starman, dir. by John Carpenter (Columbia Pictures, USA, 1984).

Star Wars, dir. by George Lucas (20th Century Fox, USA, 1977).

Steel Dawn, dir. by Lance Hool (Vestron, USA, 1987).

Sullivan's Travels, dir. by Preston Sturges (Paramount Pictures, USA, 1941).

Tank Girl, dir. by Rachel Talalay (United Artists, USA, 1995).

The Terminator, dir. by James Cameron (Orion Pictures, USA/UK, 1984).

Terminator 2: *Judgement Day*, dir. by James Cameron (Tristar Pictures, USA/France, 1991).

Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines, dir. by Jonathan Mostow (Warner Bros., USA/Germany/UK, 2003).

Thelma and Louise, dir. by Ridley Scott (MGM, USA/France, 1991).

THX 1138, dir. by George Lucas (Warner Bros., USA, 1971).

The Time Machine, dir. by George Pal (MGM, USA, 1960).

Transamerica, dir. by Duncan Tucker (IFC Films, USA, 2005).

Tron: Legacy, dir. by Joseph Kosinski (Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, USA, 2010).

Twelve Monkeys, dir. by Terry Gilliam (Universal Pictures, USA, 1995).

Two-Lane Blacktop, dir. by Monte Hellman (Universal Pictures, USA, 1971).

Until the End of the World , dir. by Wim Wenders (Warner Bros., Germany/France/Australia, 1991).

Up in the Air, dir. by Jason Reitman (Paramount Pictures, USA, 2009).

Vertigo, dir. by Alfred Hitchcock (Paramount Pictures, USA, 1958).

War of the Worlds, dir. by Steven Spielberg (Paramount Pictures, USA, 2005).

Waterworld, dir. by Kevin Reynolds (Universal Pictures, USA, 1995).

Weekend, dir. by Jean-Luc Godard (Athos Films, France/Italy, 1967).

Wild Hogs, dir. by Walt Becker (Buena Vista Pictures, USA, 2007).

The World, the Flesh and the Devil, dir. by Ranald MacDougall (MGM, USA, 1959).

The Wrong Move, dir. by Wim Wenders (Bauer International, Germany, 1975).

Y Tu Mamá También, dir. by Alfonso Cuarón (20th Century Fox, Mexico, 2001).

Zombieland, dir. by Ruben Fleischer (Columbia Pictures, USA, 2009).

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Quantum Leap, NBC, 1989-1993.

Route 66, CBS, 1960-1964.

The Stand, ABC, 1994.

Supernatural, The WB, 2005-2006; The CW, 2006-.

Survivors, BBC1, 1975-1977.

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Wolf's Rain, Fuji TV/Animax, 2003.