Apocalypse Now, Dystopia Later

The End of the World and Beyond in YA Literature
Yellow Locust: An Origin Story

• Images
  • Brother and sister sifting through rubble
  • Man with a switchblade fighting in a village square
  • Man smiling behind reflective sunglasses

• Characters
  • Selena – young, tough, street brawler
  • Simon – innocent, bespectacled, artistic
  • Marcus – sardonic, deadly, masterly with a switchblade
  • The Mayor – enigmatic, erudite, devious

• The Story -> The World
  • Where are they? What happened to bring them there?
Armageddon: a Noble History

• Myths/Religious Texts
  • Ragnarok, Revelations

• Classical Literature
  • Omega: La Fin du Monde, The Last Man

• The Atomic Age
  • On the Beach, the Chrysalids, I Am Legend

• Modern Era
  • The Stand, The Road, Cat’s Cradle, Y: the Last Man
  • The Handmaid’s Tale? The Hunger Games? 1984?
Post-Apocalypse versus Dystopia

Post Apocalyptic Fiction
- Catastrophe experienced by characters (in backstory or as part of narrative)
- Society crumbling or vanished
- Governments small and factional, if present

Dystopian Fiction
- Catastrophe experienced in character’s past (backstory) or before their lifetime
- Society partially or fully reformed
- Government omnipresent, violent, or repressive

Post-apocalyptic fiction = Dystopian prequel?
Dystopia = (possible) post-apocalyptic sequel?
Apocalypse to Dystopia: A Timeline

The Stand (1st half)
- Catastrophe occurs in opening pages
- Social breakdown witnessed firsthand

The Stand (2nd half)
- Characters emerge from chaos, form communities
- First seeds of despotism (Flagg’s Vegas)

The Road
- Catastrophe occurred in recent past
- No social cohesion; lawlessness reigns

The Handmaid’s Tale
- Catastrophe occurred in remembered past
- Despotic government holds sway
- New laws/mores emerging

The Hunger Games
- Multiple generations removed from catastrophe
- Despotic government established
- Rebellious factions remain (District 13)

1984
- Catastrophe expunged from memory
- Despotic government is all-powerful
- Rebellious factions assimilated/quashed

The Chrysalids
- Catastrophe in distant past, becomes myth
- Governments return to pre-industrial form
Placing Yellow Locust on the Timeline
Why post-apocalypse/dystopia?

• Human as social animal

• Political/environmental/technological anxiety

• The need for authority vs the need to rebel

• Others?