

MASTER'S THESIS

The archived future: North American apocalyptic fiction and the ambiguous construction of the present

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**The Archived Future:
North American Apocalyptic Fiction and the
Ambiguous Construction of the Present**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Philosophy**

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Abstract

The human world and human civilization are constructed on the deferral and referral of referents. Different archives of referents, like the abstract you are now reading, offer guidelines, information, and expectations about the not-but-yet-to-come future. Before you read my work, you are pre-reading it. You use this abstract to obtain a glimpse of my thesis. This abstract, however, is not the thesis itself. It is only a condensation, a fragment, if not a simulacrum. As all archived referents in the world, the contents of this abstract are filtered and pre-selected. Their existence is not just coincidental. They are written and left behind as an archive of a past. They are traces from the past that speak to the future. Like the apocalypse.

The apocalypse has a long history of origin in human civilization. There are different doomsday stories portraying different ways that the world ends. Whether these stories are valid or not, they become part of a present that engineers the future. The future is archived far before it arrives. In this way, can I ask if our future is really a future? Merely another version of the past? an illusion of the present? This thesis examines and investigates the role of referent deferring in the construction of human perception. Through four apocalyptic texts, Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), Wilson's *Spin* (2005), McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), and Brockmeier's *The Brief History of the Dead* (2006), I investigate the relationships between memory and archive, history and narration, *and* ideology and institutional authorities, in so far as how these contribute to our views of the past, the present, and the future.

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