



**REFRAMING PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS ON FREEDOM, CHOICE,
PERFECTIBILITY AND SELF-REALISATION IN SELECTED
CONTEMPORARY POST-APOCALYPTIC FICTIONS**

By

REZAEI ZAHRA

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

April 2021

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chairman : Ida Baizura Bahar, PhD
Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication

From 18th century onwards, due to the advancement of social consciousness and individual choice, the issues of freedom, choice and self-realisation have become the main topic for a great number of novelist and philosophers who attempt to criticise totalitarian system of society and depict the real situation of their time. Through fiction, the novelists challenge readers to think differently about their social and political circumstances, and to react to the changes that have happened around the world. These issues have been the focus of scholarships on contemporary fictions set in a dystopian world (Bollinger 2007, Humann 2010). More importantly, the selected contemporary fictions, namely *Parable of the Talents* (1998) by Octavia E. Butler, *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* (1999) by Doris Lessing, *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy and *The Pesthouse* (2007) by Jim Crace, have been classified within post-apocalyptic fiction genre where the authors depict social and environmental disintegration in the far distant future. The selected novels revolve around the lives of the protagonists who face not only environmental changes but also gender and race discriminations, destructions of communities and government corruptions. In the works of literature, considerable scholarship on the notions of dystopia/ utopia as well as the degradation of human identity and subjectivity, have been conducted on post-apocalyptic fiction (Bollinger, 2007; Edwards, 2009; De Bruyn, 2010; Søfting, 2013). Yet, more research needs to be conducted on post-apocalyptic texts using the social contract approach through the concepts of self-realisation, freedom and choice because there is a lack of scholarship on how authors portray characters who wish for a just society in order to act freely and make choices for perfectibility which is achievable through social agreement. Accordingly, I have decided to explore these concepts in the selected science fictions. I will use the conceptual frameworks of freedom, choice and perfectibility by John Rawls and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and self-realisation by Karl Marx. The objectives of the study are to discover how the protagonists of the texts interact with society and externalise their personal potential for perfectibility, to examine the authors' depictions of moral freedom, choice and self-realisation through the protagonists of the selected texts and, lastly, to

explore how the model of perfect society by Rousseau and Rawls are reflected through the protagonists. Through the frameworks, the analyses examine how the characters can change and develop psychologically and physically, or whether they can attain perfectibility if they have freedom and independency. As such, this study investigates the selected characters' potentials and abilities for making choices and changing their world after freedom and realisation of the selves. More specifically, Luran Oya Olamina in *Parable of the Talents* becomes a leader who spreads her new religion, Earthseed, in the world and sends people to the stars; Mara and Dann in *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* can change their destinies and create a small self-sufficient community; the father in *The Road* fails to reach his ideal society but his son can change his own destiny and find good people; and Margaret and Franklin in *The Pesthouse* cannot change their society, but they find their home, America, a good place for starting a new life. Therefore, this study has found how the various understanding of the concepts of freedom, choice and self-realisation are used to highlight the selected characters' development and perfectibility in the selected post-apocalyptic fictions, and also to demonstrate the adoption of conceptual frameworks for analysing human connection with others and the environment (nature) in the selected post-apocalyptic novels. Findings of this study suggest that freedom, choice and self-realisation can further be examined based on views by other philosophers, such as David Gauthier, and many other science fictions written to this day. Furthermore, the selected authors chosen for this study have published a number of science fictions that may open up opportunities for future researchers to examine them from the aspects of dystopia and utopia.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**MERANGKA SEMULA PANDANGAN FALSAFAH MENGENAI
KEBEBASAN, PILIHAN, KESEMPURNAAN DAN KESEDARAN DIRI
DALAM FIKSYEN PASCA APOKALIPTIK KONTEMPORARI TERPILIH**

Oleh

REZAEI ZAHRA

April 2021

Pengerusi : Ida Baizura Bahar, PhD
Fakulti : Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

Sejak abad ke-18 dan seterusnya, kerana kemajuan kesedaran sosial dan pilihan individu, isu kebebasan, pilihan dan realisasi diri telah menjadi topik utama sebilangan besar novelis dan ahli falsafah yang berusaha mengkritik sistem masyarakat totalitarian dan menggambarkan keadaan sebenar masa mereka. Melalui fiksi, para novelis mencabar pembaca untuk berfikir secara berbeza mengenai keadaan sosial dan politik mereka, dan untuk bertindak balas terhadap perubahan yang telah berlaku di seluruh dunia. Isu ini telah menjadi tumpuan keserjanaan mengenai fiksi kontemporari dalam dunia distopia (Bollinger 2007, Humann 2010). Lebih penting lagi, fiksi kontemporari yang dipilih, iaitu *Parable of the Talents* (1998) oleh Octavia E. Butler, *Mara dan Dann: An Adventure* (1999) oleh Doris Lessing, *The Road* (2006) oleh Cormac McCarthy dan *The Pesthouse* (2007) oleh Jim Crace, telah diklasifikasikan dalam genre fiksi pasca-apokaliptik di mana penulis menggambarkan perpecahan sosial dan persekitaran dalam masa yang jauh. Novel-novel terpilih berkisar pada kehidupan para protagonis yang tidak hanya menghadapi perubahan lingkungan tetapi juga diskriminasi gender dan perkauman, pemusnahan masyarakat dan korupsi pemerintah. Dalam karya sastera, banyak kajian sarjana mengenai pengertian distopia/utopia serta kecelaruan identiti dan subjektiviti manusia, telah dilakukan pada fiksi pasca-apokaliptik (Bollinger, 2007; Edwards, 2009; De Bruyn, 2010; Søfting, 2013). Namun, lebih banyak kajian perlu dilakukan pada teks pasca-apokaliptik menggunakan pendekatan kontrak sosial melalui konsep realisasi diri, kebebasan dan pilihan kerana terdapat kekurangan keilmuan tentang bagaimana pengarang menggambarkan watak yang menginginkan masyarakat yang adil agar bertindak bebas dan membuat pilihan untuk kesempurnaan yang dapat dicapai melalui perjanjian sosial. Oleh itu, saya telah memutuskan untuk meneroka konsep-konsep ini dalam fiksi sains terpilih. Saya akan menggunakan kerangka konsep kebebasan, pilihan dan kesempurnaan oleh John Rawls dan Jean-Jacques Rousseau, dan realisasi diri oleh Karl Marx. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengetahui bagaimana protagonis teks berinteraksi dengan masyarakat dan memanfaatkan potensi peribadi mereka untuk kesempurnaan, untuk memeriksa gambaran penulis mengenai

kebebasan moral, pilihan dan realisasi diri melalui protagonis teks yang dipilih dan, terakhir, untuk meneroka bagaimana model masyarakat sempurna oleh Rousseau dan Rawls dicerminkan melalui protagonis. Melalui kerangka kerja, analisis meneliti bagaimana watak dapat berubah dan berkembang secara psikologi dan fizikal, atau apakah mereka dapat mencapai kesempurnaan jika mereka memiliki kebebasan dan kebebasan. Oleh itu, kajian ini menyelidiki potensi dan kebolehan watak terpilih untuk membuat pilihan dan mengubah dunia mereka setelah kebebasan dan merealisasikan diri. Lebih khusus lagi, Luran Oya Olamina dalam *Parable of the Talents* menjadi pemimpin yang menyebarkan agama barunya, *Earthseed*, di dunia dan menghantar orang ke bintang; Mara dan Dann dalam *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* dapat mengubah nasib mereka dan mewujudkan komuniti kecil yang mencukupi; bapa dalam *The Road* gagal mencapai masyarakat idealnya tetapi anaknya dapat mengubah nasibnya sendiri dan mencari orang yang baik; dan Margaret dan Franklin dalam *The Pesthouse* tidak dapat mengubah masyarakat mereka, tetapi mereka mendapati rumah mereka, Amerika, adalah tempat yang baik untuk memulakan kehidupan baru. Oleh itu, kajian ini telah menemui bagaimana pelbagai pemahaman tentang konsep kebebasan, pilihan dan realisasi diri digunakan untuk menyoroti perkembangan watak dan kesempurnaan dalam fiksyen pasca-apokaliptik yang dipilih, dan juga untuk menunjukkan penerapan kerangka konsep untuk menganalisis hubungan manusia dengan orang lain dan persekitaran (alam) dalam novel pasca-apokaliptik terpilih. Penemuan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kebebasan, pilihan dan realisasi diri dapat dikaji lebih lanjut berdasarkan pandangan oleh ahli falsafah lain, seperti David Gauthier, dan banyak fiksyen sains lain yang ditulis hingga hari ini. Selanjutnya, penulis terpilih yang dipilih untuk kajian ini telah menerbitkan sejumlah fiksyen ilmiah yang dapat membuka peluang kepada penyelidik masa depan untuk meneliti mereka dari aspek distopia dan utopia.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Ida Baizura Bahar, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Arbaayah Ali Termizi, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Manimangai a/p Mani, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

ZALILAH MOHD SHARIFF, PhD

Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 8 December 2022

Declaration by Members of Supervisory Committee

This is to confirm that:

- the research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
- supervision responsibilities as stated in the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Graduate Studies) Rules 2003 (Revision 2012-2013) are adhered to.

Signature: _____
Name of Chairman
of Supervisory
Committee: Dr. Ida Baizura Bahar

Signature: _____
Name of Member
of Supervisory
Committee: Associate Professor Dr. Arbaayah Ali Termizi

Signature: _____
Name of Member
of Supervisory
Committee: Dr. Manimangai a/p Mani

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Human beings have always dreamt of living in a perfect society established on human rights and liberty. In moral and political philosophies, social contract, or the idea of agreement, is a theory questioning the origin of society and the legitimacy of the authority of the state over the individual. In other words, the individuals' moral and political obligations are dependent upon a contract or agreement among them to form the society in which they live. Social contract philosophers seek to describe, in different methods, why individuals would freely consent to surrender their natural freedom in order to achieve the benefits of political order. The social contract, in modern form, goes back to philosophers, such as Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), that was developed in different methods to identify the legitimating grounds of political authority.

Social contract philosophy is also described as going “beyond concerns with establishing the legitimate grounds for political authority to the legitimating basis for citizens living together” (Hickey, 2011). Modern philosophers, such as Rousseau, have tried to define a social order, which is created on man's freedom and justice. Rousseau defines social contract as “the mechanism by which moral transformation takes place—that is, from activity guided by the particular will or self-interest, to that inspired by one's real or rational will and the common good” (Boucher and Kelly 2003). In his philosophy, the social agreement is between all members of society and the parties contain only the people themselves who assent to rule over themselves, basically replacing “natural” rights as the principal for human rights.

In the 20th century, the most important contribution of the social contract philosophy comes from a book *A Theory of Justice* (1971) by John Rawls (1921-2002). Here, Rawls rewrites social contract theory to involve “the legitimacy of all social and political institutions whereby ... people would not agree to subject themselves to political authority unless certain conditions were in place to ensure their basic freedom and equality” (Hickey, 2011). In other words, in his philosophy, free and equal moral people have full autonomy or the moral power to apply the principles of justice. Charged with redefining the principles of a good society and, without knowing in advance what their socio-economic and political statuses would be within it, people will seek to ensure that minimal standards of freedom and livelihood are guaranteed for all as a means of protecting themselves and their fellow citizens from subordination and destitution.

Rawls also revives social contract as a mechanism for understanding the nature of justice and the nature of political community, where he was mostly influenced by the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), especially the principles of autonomy, which explains the political autonomy of the citizen of a democratic society. Later, Rawls' Kantian account of social contract theory was followed by a new examination of

the subject by David Gauthier (b.1932) among others. Quite a number of literary narratives also deal with themes of social contract, such as sovereignty, legitimate political authority, freedom and choice. For example, the philosophical issues of novels *Notes from Underground* (1864) and *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* (1877) by Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) are very similar to those Rousseau explores in the social contract theory. Dostoevsky, in these two novels, grapples with problem of the individual versus society which “expose[s] humanist conceptions of man and society in general as fiction creating a model of ideal society that absorbs morality, not into politics (as does Rousseau’s model), but into the sanctity of the Word” (Stuchebrukhov, 2007).

Freedom is one of the longest-standing ideals in the world, which has been a main focus for human beings. It is a term whose meaning is so intricate that it is not easy to pin it down. Debates about freedom were first described in modern form by Rousseau, who sought to examine the connection between freedom and equality in his theory of social contract. His beliefs and analyses were often influential during the French Revolution (1789-1799), and still affect present-day debates of freedom. In English, the terms “liberty” and “freedom” can be used interchangeably. The political sense of freedom, how much or how little should be allowed, goes back to the Greeks during the 5th century as do questions of social dependence and about inner freedom as a means to happiness. For instance, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-1880) by Dostoevsky might be considered as one of the early novels, which is deeply involved with the ethical debates of God, free will and morality. The novel imagines:

metaphysical freedom as constitutive of the human condition—we are condemned to be free, we are compelled to choose—with the simultaneous recognition that practically, ethically, politically we are also constituted to be weak, to find it difficult to choose, to find it difficult to be free. (Gagnier, 2010)

Considering the importance of freedom in every human lives and social institutions, Dénes argues that freedom is “a network of relations between human beings... [and] an artificial institution of the dissimilarities and coexistence of people, a construct of politics, the achievement of the ancient polis” (12). Freedom is in the variety of the opportunities and the individual’s inner autonomy and independence. Tunick, however, defines freedom differently and argues, “true freedom involves experiencing a deep sense of fulfillment or satisfaction...and of being ‘at home’ in one’s world” (130). According to Hegel, the limits on our desires enforced by the obligations and duties are not to be assumed as constraints on our freedom “if we are ‘at home’ in our state and its institutions, and so long as we freely choose them” (ibid).

Isiah Berlin, also, in his work “*Two Concepts of Liberty*” (1985), defines two forms of liberty, namely positive liberty and negative liberty – freedom to and freedom from. Negative freedom means “to be free from the interference of others in the pursuit of activities that one is capable, within a given culture, of performing without their help” (Brunet and Guillarme 217). On the other hand, positive freedom involves more than being free from exterior obstacles made by others’ interference. Positive freedom is the ownership of the capacity to act upon one’s free will.

In contrast, Sugarman argues that the essence of choice is “freedom from external constraint in what we shall do, and thus the assumption of full responsibility for the consequences that transpire” (2008). In this sense, Sugarman explains Berlin’s negative freedom as a means to make choices and be responsible in what we do. Due to the connection between freedom and choice, most literary books deal with both themes together. Historically, the emergence of the concept of choice is connected to the tasks of the French Enlightenment in the 17th century. In this period, the idea of the Enlightenment stressed a politics of reason, which centered upon rational choice and freedom. Hanappi argues that social societies had to evolve until they were involved in a certain degree of consciousness and a certain capacity to choose (2008). On the other hand, Elster defines the concept of choice differently and argue that, in Marx’s philosophy, the Capitalist communities govern the individual, who is left with little space for free choice or individual self-realisation. The lack of self-realisation, or freedom, is one of the main forms of alienation, which play a role in the account of the breakdown of communities. To Elster, individual self-realisation is connected to freedom and choice. So, he describes self-realisation “as the full and free actualisation and externalisation of the powers and abilities of the individual” (Elster, 43).

The concept of self-realisation was developed by a branch of Advaita Vedanta that is a school of Hindu philosophy and religious practices, which pursue paths to spiritual realisation of the self. Rawls argues that the realisation of the self comes from “a skillful and devoted exercise of social duties” (73). Taylor later uses Rawls’s conception of self-realisation and explains that it is a kind struggle versus the natural inertial inclinations and human’s success as this is seen as a representative of their autonomy as “the struggle of rationality against untoward desires” (2004). Taylor further states that, for Kant, the development of one’s skills is a self-regarding duty: an individual, as a rational being, certainly wills that all the capacities in him or her be developed, since they assist him or her to persevere the chosen end. Therefore, for Kant, as for Rawls, self-realisation is a moral imperative.

Self-realisation is considered as a value itself and has become the fundamental goal of humanity, which instills life with meaning. In neo-Marxist’s view, self-realisation is an autonomous process, which is connected to morality. Ignatow (1985), for instance, argues that the moral improvement of the person ... is an important aspect of self-realisation which is not part of the struggle for the victory socialism but an autonomous processing (391). In other words, realisation of the self is impossible without moral accomplishments. Accordingly, many literary works deal with the theme of self-realisation which explores significant aspects of the human self and, potentiality, investigates human nature and their positions on moral experience. For example, in *Emile, or On Education* (1762), Rousseau explores the nature of education and nature of man through self-realisation and morality, and the text might be considered as the first and important novel with these themes, serving as the inspiration for what became a new system of education during the French Revolution (1789-1799). As a matter of fact, with the emergence and development of post-apocalyptic science fiction, the concept of self-realisation and freedom have been explored within a new literary paradigm.

With regards to literary scholarship, a number of studies have been conducted on Rousseau and Rawls’s concepts of social contract, freedom and choice. Yet, these

concepts have rarely been applied to science fictions or any modern texts. There have been a number of noteworthy studies on other literary genres; for instance, *Rousseau and Freedom* (2010), a study by Hoffmann and Christie, examines Rousseau's approaches to the idea of freedom in his texts, such as *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) and *Emile* (1762), in the literature, religion, theatre, women, the body, music and the arts. Another study is "'Ridiculous' Dream Versus Social Contract: Dostoevsky, Rousseau, and the Problem of Ideal Society" by Olga Stuchebrukhov (2007) which draws on the *Second Discourse* (1755), *The Social Contract* (1762), *Notes from Underground* (1864) and *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man* (1877). In this study, Stuchebrukhov investigates the problem of the individual versus society as the keystone of Rousseau and Dostoevsky's ideas and examines their solutions to the problem through their conceptions of ideal society. "A Literary Anthropology of Freedom and Choice" by Gagnier (2009) is another study, which explores Western notions of freedom and choice with the kind of lens that can account for humans as both biological and cultural animals in Dostoevsky's book *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879–80).

On the other hand, the issue of self-realisation has been examined in previous studies (Ignatow, 1985; Elster, 1986; Taylor, 2004; Varga, 2011); for example, Ignatow, in "Self-Realisation and Changing the World" (1985), investigates how Neo-Marxists in Eastern and Central Europe respect the relation between self-realisation and changing the world while Elster in *An Introduction to Karl Marx* (1986), explores Marx's idea of self-realisation in order to explain that the lack of self-realisation is one of the main forms of alienation. In contrast, Taylor, in "Self-Realisation and the Priority of Fair Equality of Opportunity" (2004), explores Rawls's idea of self-realisation and how he construes self-realisation as a facet of human's autonomy while Varga, in "Self-Realisation and Owing to Others: An Indirect Constraint?" (2011), examines whether we attain self-realisation in terms of moral perfection or not.

While these scholars have investigated the issue of self-realisation, the concept itself appears to have been applied in very few studies. The first one is "*The Subject and Its Body: Love of Oneself and Freedom in the Thought of Rousseau*" (2010) by Brunet and Guillaume, applying freedom and self-realisation on *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761) by Rousseau. Brunet and Guillaume explore Rousseau's idea of freedom by examining it through the prism of the subject's relationship with its own body; analysing the character's feeling of plenitude and self-realisation through absorption into nature in the novel. Another study is "Empty Hands: Communication, Pluralism, and Community in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*" (1974) by Plaw which partly describes self-realisation and the human pleasure through their relationship to objects and even his possession in Le Guin's science fiction *The Dispossessed* (1974). The findings show that some of the novel's characters attain real appealing pleasure, fulfillment and self-realisation through their relationship to objects. Hence, due to the importance of self-realisation and the lack of previous studies on the above-mentioned concepts through social contract, it is worth to examine the issue of self-realisation by addressing another overlooked issue, which is the implication of man's freedom and choice in post-apocalyptic texts.

The concept of perfectibility was first coined by Rousseau in *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (1755). According to Rousseau, perfectibility is a characteristic of human

beings that distinguishes humans from other creatures in which humans can improve, learn and to be educated by the aid of environment. He describes a new concept of perfectibility that introduces “a new concept of humans and their action on the world that values their indetermination and autonomy” (Le Devedec 2018). In this sense, a human being is a social and historical being who has autonomy to shape his/her own nature and freely to also freely choose his/her own destiny. For Rousseau and the other enlightenment thinkers, the perfect human is a being who has the ability to master his/her own autonomy and to question the social and cultural norms of their society in order to change their circumstances (Le Devedec 2018). Rousseau also points out that humans and, in the large-scale society, might be affected by “external and extrinsic causes, such as climate or natural disasters or overpopulation”, which make humans communicate with each other and therewith to create the conditions for his/her development (Rousseau, Major Writhing 69). Or, in other words, humans have the potential for perfectibility, just that they must create the condition for their progress.

According to Rousseau, human perfectibility has close relationship with the passion of self-love (*amour de soi* and *amour-propre*) in which this passion assists human beings to improve their abilities. Rousseau, in *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (1755) and his other critical writings, focuses on the themes of perfectibility and self-love along with freedom in which he attempts to justify human nature and the role of self-love within it. *Amour de soi* is a natural sentiment which assists humans to satisfies their needs and which are guided by reason. *Amour de soi*, or self-respect, which is modified by pity, creates humanity and true virtue. On the other hand, *amour-propre* is an artificial sentiment born in society and which is the source of honour as well as evils in human beings. In works of literature, many literary studies have been carried out discussing Rousseau and other philosophers’ views on human perfectibility and improvements in the span of his life (Jubb 2011, Sonenscher 2015). However, they have yet to examine the characters’ perfectibility in post-apocalyptic fictions and the way they attain self-improvement through interactions with their environment and society.

In my study, the problem of the individual versus society is considered as a phenomenon, which exposes the social societies of the selected texts. These societies seem very similar to our own, facing issues such as breakdown of society, environmental changes, economic crisis as well as gender and class discriminations. The characters are treated with discrimination and deprived of their rights, freedom and independence. Also, the social and political context of these fictions present the existing problems and the future dystopias of the world in general. As a whole, these selected fictions not only present the future of humanity and of the world but also reveal the past and the present in order for us to understand the whole picture. They mostly demonstrate dystopian societies which are run by hierarchical authorities and which were fragmented or have collapsed during centuries. In this horrible condition, the characters consciously or unconsciously make deep connections with their surroundings; forced to make difficult choices in order to not only survive but also change their world and make it a better place for human beings.

The first novel, *Parable of the Talents* (1998) is a post-apocalyptic fiction by Octavia E. Butler (1947-2006) which tells the story of a black female character who negotiates a weak government of America and institutional Christianity, and attempts to change her society through her new religion, Earthseed; consequently spreading her religion to other

parts of the world. The second novel is *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* (1999) which is a post-apocalyptic fiction by Doris Lessing (1919-2013); depicting the hardship of two protagonists who face many challenges from the effects of social and environment problems, especially societal collapse, and attempt to change their circumstances. The female character goes against a number of traditions in her society as well as tries to change cultural norms, patriarchal traditions and the hierarchal systems of society. The third one, *The Road* (2006), is a post-apocalyptic fiction by Cormac McCarthy (b.1933) about an unnamed father and son who face harsh environmental and social disintegrations, and collapse of civilisation in which they attempt not only to preserve the moral codes and goodness within themselves but also to make a better world or new civilisation. The last novel, *The Pesthouse* (2007), is a fiction by Jim Crace (b.1946); telling the story of two young protagonists who battle starvation, famine, harsh seasons and brutal violence, and travel eastwards in order to make a better world for themselves. Crace in *The Pesthouse* creates a dystopian world where America has reverted to a medieval condition and collapses to the dark ages, where the protagonists face many challenges from the effect of social and environment problems. These selected texts are categorised as post-apocalyptic fictions which includemostly a dystopian government, and which depict the collapse of civilisation.

These selected texts contain the characters attempting, first of all, to improve their personal potentials and abilities in order to achieve perfectibility and, then, to overcome racial antagonism, gender discrimination, destruction of local community and government corruption. These novels all have interdisciplinary grounds in literature under liberalism philosophy and freedom. They are set in the far distant future, when societies have undergone social and environmental changes affecting the characters' lives and causing the futuristic dystopias in society. In the dire circumstances of these texts, the characters try to keep a degree of freedom and self-realisation, and, consequently, to attain the ability to make choices and to make a new ideal society.

As discussed in the above paragraphs, all the characters and societies of the selected novels are affected by environmental crisis and societal collapse which brought the characters into continuous contact with their environments and the other characters, and therewith create the situation for their progress and elevation. Owing to perfectibility, in the selected novels, the characters can not only improve their capacity but also "change their environment (both social and natural) and create favorable conditions for their existence" (Ugleva and Vinogradova 2019). Therefore, the first objective of this study is to examine the portrayals of the selected characters' perfectibility through their interactions with their surroundings and other human beings. Perfectibility gives the characters autonomy or self-determination to ennoble their natures and to enlarge their ideas and, consequently, they can question the dominant social norms or the totalitarian systems of society. Or, in other words, they achieve self-consciousness, rationality and, also, realise themselves as free agents. Accordingly, for the second objective, the study examines the portrayals of the character's freedom, self-realisation and act of making choices in the face of circumstances. Due to their perfectibility and self-determination, the characters can keep a degree of autonomy and self-realisation, and fight religious dogma and societal crisis.

Besides, the selected novels portray characters who succeed either to change the socio-political system of their society or create a new utopian society. These ideal societies are mostly created on social contracts or agreements among their members which value social cooperation and egalitarian practices, or morality, and goodness which are referred to Rawls and Rousseau's idea of perfect society, respectively. The issue of social contract will thus be discussed in Section 3.2. Accordingly, the third objective of my study is to analyse the portrayals of Rawls and Rousseau's perfect or ideal society through the characters in the selected novels. Rawls, in *A Theory of justice* (1971), identifies a just society protecting individual autonomy and justice, and tends to decrease economic inequality, social division and gender discrimination. For Rawls (1971), a free autonomous individual is interested in developing and practising two moral powers, namely a capacity for a sense of justice and a capacity for a conception of the good. Individuals are conceived as free and equal in their moral powers, so that they have the ability to choose and act according to their sense of justice and conception of good.

Rousseau's ideal or perfect society is a communitarian society which is formed on the connection between individuals and society. Meanwhile, Rousseau's social contract is between all members of society and the parties contain only the people themselves who assent to rule over themselves. In such a society, the responsibilities and duties of citizenship outweigh individual rights and freedoms (Dunn, 9). Unselfishly, citizens bind and pursue the common good through obedience to law and the willingness to sacrifice some of their freedom for the sake of community. Through their devotion to their community, their self-control and loyalty, they develop as rational and moral beings.

As discussed earlier, for Rawls, as for Rousseau, the perfect society is a political society which promotes a kind of contract among members of society, and which protects human autonomy and acts of making choices in society. As recalled, human perfectibility relies on human's social nature and his action which values his "indetermination and autonomy" (Le Devedec 2018). Due to these characteristics, human beings can take action, make choices and change his circumstances for a better world. Besides, we may say that human beings can achieve perfectibility "in, by, and for society" which means that perfectibility happens through social relations and human action in society (Le Devedec 2018). On the other hands, a perfect human, as Le Devedec suggests, has the autonomy to "question religious dogma and dominant social mores" in order to create a politically and socially just society.

This study considers freedom as the first concept, which is explored differently in the context of the selected post-apocalyptic fictions. I explore Rousseau's conception of "moral freedom" based on Berlin's "positive freedom" which involves more than beings free from external obstacles made by others' interference. It involves "being free from internal obstacles as well as weakness, instinct, [and] ignorance" (Brunet and Guillarme, 217) which gives individuals inner autonomy and independence. I also explore Rawls's idea of freedom based on Kant's moral idea, that the moral law indicates a positive concept of freedom; that we are not only able to act independently of our natural desires and needs but, also, we have the capacity to form, to revise and to pursue a conception of good (Ege and Igersheim, 2008).

Choice is another concept in my study, which is closely connected to Berlin's negative freedom, meaning "to be free from the interference of others in the pursuit of activities that one is capable, within a given culture, of performing without their help" (McDonald and Hoffmann, 217). I explore the concept of choice in the selected novels through Berlin's negative freedom, or what Rousseau calls "perfectibility". This means that human beings possess capacity for improvement and choices, which is not shared by other creatures and animals (Curtis, 114).

Self-realisation is the third concept of my study, which is closely connected to freedom and choice. I explore the concept through Karl Marx's idea that self-realisation is "the full and free actualisation and externalisation of the powers and abilities of the individual" (Elster 43). In this sense, the study examines how the characters, firstly, can develop their potential abilities and then deploy them; and secondly how the characters show and externalise their powers and abilities through acting and speaking in the presence of others.

Perfectibility is also one of the concepts in my study that has an important role in the characters' autonomy and freedom in the context of narratives. I explore the concept through Rousseau's views of perfectibility and of self-love (*amour de soi* and *amour propre*) as self-love acts as a motivational role that leads individuals to sociability and, then, to morally worthy behaviours and progress. Therefore, the study examines the characters' portrayals of perfectibility in the selected fictions and how they attain self-improvements through interactions with their environment and society.

For the purpose of exploring the concepts and the related issues, I have selected four post-apocalyptic fictions, namely *Parable of the Talents* (1998) by Octavia Butler, *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* (1999) by Doris Lessing, *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy and *The Pesthouse* (2007) by Jim Crace, which deal with apocalyptic themes. Among the pertinent questions which I am to address are how is perfectibility projected through the selected characters in the selected texts? How are the protagonists' sense of freedom, choice and self-realisation? How are the model of perfect society presented through the protagonists?

1.2 Problem Statement

With the advancement of social consciousness and individual choice, the issue of human freedom, choice and self-realisation have become the main topics for a number of authors and philosophers who attempt to criticise the totalitarian system of society and depict the real situations of their time. Through post-apocalyptic or dystopian fictions, the authors challenge us to think differently about their social and political circumstances, and to react to the changes that occur around the world. In my study, the selected post-apocalyptic fictions depict the characters' issue of freedom and choice in the social and political contexts of the novels. Although many notable scholarships have been conducted on the selected novels, yet there is a gap of knowledge in this study; and only some limited studies have been conducted on the characters' freedom and choice in the selected post-apocalyptic novels. For example, Bollinger (2007) examines maternity and

intersubjectivity in *Parable* series, *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents* by Butler. In another study, Humann (2010) investigates Hume's conception of hypothetical liberty and choice in *The Road* by McCarthy. Therefore, these are the gaps of knowledge that I will discuss in detail in Chapter Two.

In works of literature, many literary studies have been carried out concerning different aspects of human lives in post-apocalyptic fictions, such as dystopia/utopia, the degradation of human identity, subjectivity and hypnotical liberty which will be discussed in the following sections. However, this study focuses on other overlooked areas, namely freedom, self-realisation and the ability to make choices within a political society or outside of a political society. For example, Bollinger believes that physiological experience allows the characters to restructure their sense of self and their subjectivity since it brings them into major correlation with others who participates in that restructuring (Bollinger, 2007). However, the issues of freedom and choice in the social and natural worlds has not been particularly addressed. In contrast, Humann (2010) believes that individuals do not have the agency and liberty to make moral choices in a dystopian world, but they can maintain a degree of agency and autonomy while they negotiate their moral and physical situations of the dystopian world. To Humann, in a dystopian condition, human beings do not have moral freedom to act morally. Similarly, Berlin points out that individuals always have the freedom to make choices even in the most difficult circumstances but sometimes they are forced to make agonising choices which means it is difficult to make a choice. As a result, this is one of the hypotheses in my study; that the selected characters always have freedom and autonomy to make choices in the face of circumstances but sometimes they are forced to make agonising choices.

On the other hand, Marx argues that the lack of self-realisation, or freedom, is one of the main forms of alienation, which plays a role in the account of the breakdown of communities. He believes that individuals can achieve self-realisation through creative activities, or labours, and cooperation with others as these activities assist them to deploy and develop their potential powers and capacities (Marx, 1867). What Marx is implying here is that individuals realise themselves when they engage in these kinds of activities, which enable them to actualise and externalise their potential capacities. In line with Marx, Shield (2015) also makes a connection between autonomy and self-realisation, where he points out that individuals should reach, to some extent, a level of self-knowledge in order to attain autonomy, namely Rawlsian autonomy. In fact, the issue of self-realisation has been examined in earlier studies (Elster, 1986; Yonah, 1993; Chadwick and Schroeder, 2002; Taylor, 2004). For instance, a number of studies have been published on self-realisation but they have mostly focused on the ethical consequences of the lack of self-realisation in civil society and little has been conducted on the characters' process of self-realisation in dystopian or post-apocalyptic societies which I will discuss further in Chapter Tree. Less focus, however, has been given on characters' self-realisation and how they attain a degree of self-realisation and autonomy in the selected texts rather than their alienation. Therefore, this is one of the gaps of knowledge that will be addressed in this study.

From another point of view, some political thinkers, such as Rousseau, have opined that perfectibility gives human beings the power of self-determination and moral progress.

Rousseau points out that a human being is a social and historical being who has the ability to shape their own nature and also to freely choose their own destiny. Similarly, the Enlightenment philosophers claims that the perfect human is “a being whose duty is first and foremost to master his own autonomy, in other words, to be able to question religious dogma and dominant social mores” (Le Devedec, 2018). In this sense, I aim to examine how the characters attain perfectibility and the way it aids the characters to freely make choices and change the social and cultural norms of their societies in the selected novels. Few studies have examined the selected character’s perfectibility in dystopian fiction but, as far as I know, they have generally focused only on the concept of perfectibility rather than the characters’ perfectibility and progress. Therefore, one of the hypotheses in my study is that perfectibility gives the characters a degree of autonomy to make choices, and also make a perfect society.

Political philosophers have attempted to define a perfect society based on human freedom and justice. In this sense, the study uses social contract as an idea which suggests a model of perfect society, and which value freedom, justice and social cooperation within human beings. Rousseau and Rawls, as I explained in Section 1.1, have suggested a democratic society in order to reduce inequality, social division and discrimination. In this regard, I aim to investigate Rousseau and Rawls’s perfect/ideal society which are reflected through the selected characters in the selected texts, namely *Parable of the Talents* (1998) by Octavia E. Butler, *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* (1999) by Doris Lessing, *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy and *The Pesthouse* (2007) by Jim Crace. Based on my literary reviews, several studies have been conducted on Rousseau and Rawls’s concepts of social contract and ideal society. For example, Stuchebrukhov investigates the problem of the individual versus society as the keystone of Rousseau and Dostoevsky’s ideas and examines their solutions to the problem through their conceptions of ideal society, the portrayals of the characters in making their ideal societies have not been focused on. Therefore, this study examines the role of the characters’ freedom, and their conscience in acting morally and justly, and consequently in making a new utopian/ ideal society based on Rousseau’s philosophy. Besides, this study investigates the roles the characters’ freedom, social cooperation and egalitarian practices in making Rawls’s ideal society.

My initial research shows that there has been limited contemporary post-apocalyptic fictions that have been analysed according to concept of freedom, choice and self-realisation albeit separately in previous studies. However, the combination of these four concepts is yet to be explored in detail. Besides, there are only few post-apocalyptic texts that have been analysed based on Rawls’s and Rousseau’s concepts of freedom, choice and perfectibility, and Marx’s concept of self-realisation. For example, Gagnier, in “A Literary Anthropology of Freedom and Choice” (2009), explores the concept of freedom and choice in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) by Dostoyevsky, whereas Tunick in *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin’s The Dispossessed* (2005) examines *The Dispossessed* by Ursula K. Le Guin based on the concept of choice and Hegel’s concept of freedom. Brunet and Guillaume in *Rousseau and Freedom* (2010) by McDonald and Hoffmann investigates *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761) by Rousseau based on the concepts of freedom and self-realisation.

In particular, Gagnier explores the Western notion of freedom, choice and constraint in cross-cultural contexts, “to show the ways that different cultures approach problems of agency, choice, preference, and their perceived limits” (383). He argues that, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, the masculine’s power leaves no space for a woman’s freedom and autonomy. On the other hand, Tunick examines Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* with regards to Hegel’s concept of freedom. Here, Tunick affirms, “true freedom involves experiencing a deep sense of fulfillment or satisfaction” (130). In Hegel’s view, the obligation and duties are not to be assumed as constraints on human freedom if he is at home in his state as long as they freely choose whatever they want (Tunick, 130). On the other hand, Brunet and Guillarme examine Rousseau’s vision of freedom “through the prism of the subject’s relationship with its own body” (216). In their view, “ownership of self ... is the basis for ownership of things” (216) and, when an individual possesses his or her own body, he or she has been given freedom to do the right things and make choices. Therefore, a gap of knowledge has been recognised here, where there is a lack of studies on the lens of Rousseau and Rawls’s theoretical views on freedom and choice, perfectibility, and also Marx’s views on self-realisation in post-apocalyptic fiction. In this regard, the study attempts to examine the characters’ challenges and difficulties in attaining freedom, self-realisation and perfectibility, and the way they attempt to make choices and to overcome societal problems.

1.3 Justification of Texts Selection

As I discussed earlier, this study is based on a textual analysis of four contemporary post-apocalyptic fictions, namely *Parable of the Talents* (1998) by Octavia E. Butler, *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* (1999) by Doris Lessing, *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy and *The Pesthouse* (2007) by Jim Crace. Each fiction presents settings of dystopian societies which have collapsed due to environmental catastrophe or economic crisis. These fictions have been chosen because they revolve around social and political changes within communities which affect the lives and dreams of the characters. Or in other words, their themes focus on human freedom, ability to make choices, self-realisation and perfectibility. Therefore, the selected fictions are suitable for my study due to the issues of character freedom, choice and self-realisation in the dystopian world of the novels. The authors all portray the characters’ autonomy and acts of making choices in the face of circumstances, and also their responses and reactions to the activities happening around them. On the other hand, the dystopian settings of the novels represent a kind of complex relationship between the characters as well as between the characters and environments, in which the characters attempt to shape their own nature and change their world. While there are other dystopian novels that depict a distant future where social organisations and human societies are destroyed by natural disasters; for example, *Floodland* (2000) by Marcus Sedgwick (b.1968) and *How I Live Now* (2004) by Meg Rosoff (b.1956), which depict the destruction of society in a near future where a group of young people create an independent community, these four novels have yet to be critically analysed in terms of their research problems.

The first selected text is *Parable of the Talents* by Butler which is the story of Lauren Olamina in a socially and economically depressed California in the 2030s. Olamina depicts a totalitarian regime of America and creates her ideal society which is called Acorn, a small cooperative community committed to the teachings of a new religion,

Earthseed. Butler, in most of her novels, creates assertive black women who reside in oppressed societies, and consequently, they search a degree of freedom and self-realisation in order to make a better world for themselves. The concept of perfectibility, freedom, self-realisation and the character's ability to change her circumstances have been examined in Butler's series, *Parable of the Sower* (1993), *Parable of the Talents* (1998). However, the importance of *Parable of the Talents* for my study lies in Butler's powerful criticism of a weak government and of institutional Christianity, and also the way Butler depicts Olamina's effort of spreading her new ideology, Earthseed, to other parts of the world in order to make a better world.

The second selected text is *Mara and Dann* by Lessing, which depicts a distant future where the characters face many challenges from the effects of social and environment problems. In the novel, social organisations and human societies are destroyed by natural disasters. The main characters, Mara and Dann, are forced to join a group of refugees who flee to the north in the search of a better world. In the course of the narrative, Mara faces not only social and environmental disintegrations but also race and gender discriminations in her society, in which she tries to change the situation. Lessing's novels are mainly autobiographical depicting her childhood memories and her serious engagements with politics and social concerns. Lessing's *Mara and Dann* is also an autobiographical novel which depicts not only issues of freedom and the characters' acts of making choices in a dystopian world but also the characters' interactions with the society. I have selected this text because Lessing challenges cultural norms and patriarchal traditions of that time in an African society, and the way the character, Mara, battles her social and environment problems.

The third selected text is *The Road* by McCarthy revolving around human futurity and a great lack of human regeneration. The narrative tells the story of an unnamed father and son who face an unspecified catastrophe that has destroyed most of civilisation and almost all life on Earth. The father and son decide to reach the south, their destination. They attempt not only to preserve the moral codes and goodness within themselves but also to make a better world or new civilisation. In this fiction, McCarthy tries to reveal the power of morality and goodness in the quest of the survival of human generation and humanity. All of McCarthy's writings, particularly *Outer Dark* (1968), *Child of God* (1973), *Blood Meridian* (1985) and *The Road* (2006), deal with issues of human degradation, violence, both natural and human evils (Barochová, 11). However, for the purpose of my study, I have chosen *The Road* due to the depictions of the characters' autonomy and their struggles in preserving morality and making choices in the dying world of the novel.

The last selected fiction is *The Pesthouse* by Crace which depicts a dystopian world where America has reverted to a medieval condition and collapses into a dark age in which travelers, robber bands, bizarre millenarian religious sects, hunters and scavengers of all types are portrayed. Margaret and Franklin, the two young protagonists, face the effects of environmental and social problems in their journey to the east and try to find or make a better world for themselves. Crace's works always evoke a sort of fictional independent world which is in parallel with the real world that we inhabit (Ray, 2007). However, I have chosen *The Pesthouse* because of Crace's depictions of communal existing and cultural values that are faded in America such as civility, hospitality and

ethical practices. Here, he attempts to reveal the power of communal thinking and cooperation in creating an ideal society that values human freedom, self-realisation and the characters' ability to make choices.

All in all, what all these post-apocalyptic fictions have in common are the characters' autonomy to make choices and to react to what is happening around them. All the authors implicitly provide us an understanding of human challenges and difficulties in attaining freedom, choice and self-realisation in a civil society. Butler, Lessing, McCarthy and Crace have created characters who live under very difficult situations, forced to make difficult choices in the face of circumstances. These characters react to and response to the changes that happen around the world and try to make their own destiny. More importantly, all the characters and societies are affected by environmental crisis and societal collapse which bring the characters into continuous contacts with their environments and the other characters and therewith create the situations for their progress and perfectibility. However, all of them endeavour to keep a degree of freedom or autonomy and self-realisation to make an ideal world through their different acts of making choices: in *Parable of the Talents*, Olamina decides to create a new religion; while in *Mara and Dann*, Mara chooses to go against the social and cultural norms of her society, whereas, in *The Road*, the father and son attempt to preserve morality and goodness within themselves, and, in the last novel, *The Pesthouse*, Margaret and Franklin decide to go back to their land America. The selected fictions are suitable to address the research objectives of this study as the selected characters show their abilities and power for making a better world.

1.4 Conceptual Frameworks

Social contract, or the idea of agreement, questions the origin of society and the legitimacy of the authority of the state over the individual, and is connected to moral and political theories. The idea of agreement goes back, in modern form, to Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), which was developed in different methods by Locke, Rousseau and Kant. After Kant, the idea mostly fell into disregard until in the 20th century when Rawls revived it. Rawls, who promoted the social contract theory, was influenced by Kant's moral philosophy especially the principles of autonomy which explains the political autonomy of the citizen of a democratic society. Earlier, Rousseau attempted to define a social order created on a person's freedom and intended to overcome the immorality and degradation following upon creating a society based on a diversity of particular wills. He defines social contract as "the mechanism by which moral transformation takes place—that is, from activity guided by the particular will or self-interest, to that inspired by one's real or rational will and the common good" (Boucher and Kelly, 2003). He was dedicated to civil liberty and the full responsibility of all citizens to participate in the legislative system. On the other hand, Rawls's idea of agreement moves from the good and back to the right, where, through *A Theory of Justice*, he revives the social contract as a mechanism for understanding the nature of justice and the nature of political community; that free and equal moral people could get full autonomy, or moral powers, to apply the principles of justice.

This study is an overview on the transcendental possibility for human development, or perfectibility, and debates of modern philosophers, exclusively Rousseau and Rawls, about human rights and liberty, or liberalism of freedom. I will use the conceptual framework of freedom as a concept in which humans will have advancement through their autonomy, as well as the concept of choice, which is closely related to freedom. These concepts are closely related to the third concept of my study called self-realisation, which acts as an element to assist human beings to attain their freedom.

Freedom is one of the longest-standing ideals in the world, which has been a main subject for human beings. It is a term whose meaning is so intricate that it is not easy to pin down. Debates about freedom were first set out in their modern form by Rousseau, who sought to examine the connection between freedom and equality in two potentially conflicting arenas: that of humankind and that of citizen. The concept of freedom has been specifically described by Berlin in his work “Two Concepts of Liberty” (1985) which has been identified as one of his main and influential contributions in political theory. Berlin defines two forms of liberty: positive and negative liberty – freedom to and freedom from. Negative freedom means “to be free from the interference of others in the pursuit of activities that one is capable, within a given culture, of performing without their help” (Brunet and Guillarme, 2010). On the other hand, positive freedom involves more than being free from exterior obstacles made by others’ interference; which is the possession of the capability to act upon one’s free will.

According to Dénes, freedom is “a network of relations between human beings... [and] an artificial institution of the dissimilarities and coexistence of people, a construct of politics, the achievement of the ancient polis” (12). Freedom is also in the variety of the opportunities and the individual’s inner autonomy and independence. In Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, the concept of freedom is described differently as a kind of metaphysical freedom (Gagnier, 2009). In Dostoevsky’s view, freedom is simultaneously divine and a problem, polemically in conflict with a more cheering faith. However, in “Close to God, Negotiating a Moral Terrain: Question of Agency and Selfhood in *The Road* and *Sophia’s Choice*” (2010) by Heather Duerre Humann, the notion of freedom is explained through Hume’s philosophy, which is “the power of acting or not acting according to determination of the will” (Humann, 2010). Here, an individual must have liberty and free will in order to really make a choice, that is, to do something of her or his own accord (Humann, 2010).

Choice, on the other hand, “can be described as the lack of constraints on an agent’s doing something” (Carter, 2004). Historically, the emergence of the concept of choice is connected to the times of the French Enlightenment in the 17th century. Descartes refused to accept the authority of preceding theorists and had set the foundation of continental rationalism, which was a move to the possibility of a secular science. In this period, social consciousness has been gradually developed among societies and individual choice became the important topic for philosophers, such as Daniel Defoe and Rousseau. Hanappi notes that social societies had to evolve until they were involved in a certain degree of consciousness and a certain capacity to choose (2008). In contrast, Curtis argues that human beings possess a capacity for improvement, which is what Rousseau calls “perfectibility”, a concept not shared by other animals and creatures. According to Rousseau, humans “have a share in [their] own operations, in [their]

character as a free agent[s]” and consequently they can choose what they want (qtd. Curtis, 96).

On the contrary, self-realisation is considered as a value itself and has become the fundamental goal of humanity, which instills life with meaning. The branch of Advaita Vedanta, which is a school of Hindu philosophy and religious practices, has developed the concept of self-realisation, pursuing paths to a spiritual realisation of the self. In Marx’s ideology, for realisation of the self, individuals need to externalise and actualise their powers and abilities (Elster, 43). In other words, people realise themselves when they engage in the kind of activities which enable them to develop their potential capacity.

According to Chadwick and Schroeder, individuals can achieve self-realisation when they have a view of their nature and potentiality (Chadwick and Schroeder, 207). This means that the more individuals realise their nature and potentialities, the more they attain self-realisation as there is a relationship between self-realisation and morality. Varga argues that an individual “must aim to attain self-realisation in terms of moral perfection, which means aiming at promoting a morally good disposition in ...[himself] , so that ...[he] can respect humanity in ...[his] own person as well as in others” (Varga, 2011). In Varga’s view, self-realisation is only achievable within societal conditions, which involve and maintain practices of mutual respect and recognition. Thus, we come closer to the connection with morality through the idea of obligation and responsibility.

1.5 Research Methodology

This study aims to discover the interconnection of freedom, choice and self-realisation in the selected post-apocalyptic novels, namely *Parable of the Talents* by Butler, *Mara and Dann: An Adventure* by Lessing, *The Road* by McCarthy, and *The Pesthouse* by Crace, through the social contract theory based on the concepts of freedom, choice and self-realisation. Consequently, this study employs literary conceptual and character analysis with a close reading of the selected texts. I will then analyse the following characters for my analyses: Olamina from *Parable of the Talents*; Mara and Dann from *Mara and Dann: An Adventure*; the unnamed father and the son from *The Road*; and Margaret and Franklin from *The Pesthouse*. Findings from the selected novels, with examples extracted from these texts, will be used to explain the ways in which selected characters interact with society and make choices for improvement and perfectibility.

As I will discuss in Chapter Two, the selected novels have not been analysed according to selected Rousseauian and Rawlsian concepts; thus, this study will conduct such a conceptual analysis on these texts. Heading towards this aim, I will use the concepts of freedom and choice advocated by Rousseau and Rawls as the analytical tools. In the selected texts, I will also apply the concept of self-realisation according to Marx’s views, and its connection to freedom and choice. I have chosen Marx’s definition of self-realisation because he defines self-realisation “as the full and free actualisation and externalisation of the powers and abilities of the individual” (Elster, 43). In my view, this definition is very close to what Rawls defines as freedom or autonomy. Therefore, I hope to be able to show the connection between freedom, choice and self-realisation. I

will also focus on these concepts as outlined in *Two Concepts of Liberty* (1969) by Berlin, *A Theory of Justice* (1971) by Rawls, *An Introduction to Karl Marx* (1986) by Elster, *The Social Contract and The First and Second Discourses* (2002) by Rousseau and May; and *Rousseau and Freedom* (2006) by McDonald and Hoffmann.

Accordingly, I attempt to examine how the selected characters interact with society, and externalise their personal potentials for improvement and perfectibility in the selected novels. The writers of the selected novels depict how the sustained interactions among the characters develop their needs and passion, and thus activates perfectibility. According to Rousseau, perfectibility is connected to human self-love, namely *amour de soi* and *amour propre*. *Amour de soi* is a natural passion, which promotes all creatures to peruse their own preservation. When *amour de soi* is guided by reason, the true virtue arises in human, namely *amour propre*, and this will happen only in civil society. This is to say “the human’s consciousness of free will contributes to the development of *amour propre*, morality and vice” (MacLean, 2002).

The selected characters of the selected novels may be seen as having a progressive potential of changing their destiny and society by presenting their individual self through freedom, choice and self-realisation. Each protagonist of the selected text must make choices differently in the face of circumstances where he or she possesses freedom or autonomy. Besides, each character attempts to externalise his or her potential capacities and talents in different ways, and to get the ability to choose. In this light, my study attempts to explore Rousseau and Rawls’ concept of freedom, choice and self-realisation to provide further understanding of the characters’ autonomy in the society and, also, to establish a relationship between these three concepts. The exploration of freedom and choice in the selected texts is based on how the selected characters act and make choices in different situations where they either possess real freedom or they do not. The study also explores self-realisation based on how the selected characters freely express their nature and potentiality, and also get the ability to choose. According to Rawls, realisation of self “comes from a skillful and devoted exercise of social duties” (Rawls, 73).

Each writer of the selected text constructs one or few utopian communities in a post-apocalyptic wilderness, which mostly present power relations and communal living. The study attempts to explore Rousseau and Rawls’ model of perfect society in the selected novels through the protagonists, where Rawls “take the idea of reciprocity – the idea that social cooperation should be to mutual advantage – as fundamental” (Freeman, 18). For Rawls, a well-ordered society is formed around the principle of right and liberties, which guarantee equality for all citizens. Rousseau, like Rawls, is concerned with equality and use social contract to explain his idea, but he places an emphasis on the equality of political conditions. For Rousseau, “a society is well ordered when men’s passions are tempered by law and customs, and where harmony and restraint take the place of generalised conflicts” (Viroli, 2). Therefore, the study will examine the ways in which the selected characters interact and work with each other in order to connect with their culture and society as well as to explore whether freedom and equality exist for all citizens in utopian communities of the selected novels or not.

1.6 Research Objectives

My research objectives are as follows:

1. To examine how the protagonists of the texts interact with the society and externalise their personal potential for perfectibility in the selected texts.
2. To explore how moral freedom and choice associated to self-realisation are depicted by the authors as reflected through the protagonists of the selected texts.
3. To discover how the model of perfect society by Rousseau and Rawls are reflected through the protagonists of the selected texts.

1.7 Research Questions

My study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do the protagonists of the texts interact with the society and externalise their personal potential for perfectibility in the selected texts?
2. How are moral freedom and choice associated to self-realisation depicted by the authors reflected through the protagonists of the selected texts?
3. How are the model of perfect society by Rousseau and Rawls reflected through the protagonists of the selected texts?

1.8 Significance of the Study

I have chosen to analyse the post-apocalyptic genre because my study aims to demonstrate that it is a literary genre that brings much scholarly significance surrounding the main questions on the future of humanity, human's freedom as well as utopian and dystopian societies. This study is relevant to the current discourse pertaining to the post-apocalyptic scholarship since it investigates the debating notion of freedom and choice in relation to self-realisation through Rousseau and Rawls' idea of social contract in selected post-apocalyptic fiction.

In addition, my initial research has shown that previous studies on the selected novels have only focused their attentions on the father's freedom in *The Road* by McCarthy but have yet to examine Olamina's freedom in *Parable of the Talents* by Butler, Mara's freedom in *Mara and Dann* by Lessing and Margaret's freedom in *The Pesthouse* by Crace. Also, the characters' freedom in *The Road* has been studied through Hume's notion of freedom but not through Rousseau and Rawls's notion of freedom. Consequently, this study aims to discover how the characters interact with society and make choices for improvement and perfectibility. Therefore, the study will discuss how moral freedom or autonomy, choice and self-realisation are reflected through the characters. Finally, the study will also contribute another understanding of how

Rousseau and Rawls' utopian/ideal society are reflected through the selected characters.

Another contribution of my study is an exploration of the concepts of freedom, choice and self-realisation as interconnected concepts where the selected characters' autonomy is restricted. Such autonomy describes a kind of elusive freedom and choice in the dystopian society of the novels. In addition, this study focusses on the thematic issues of change, human perfectibility and *amour propre* or *amour de soi* in the dystopian society. It also makes an attempt to shed more light on these issues through an interrelated conceptual framework of freedom, choice and self-realisation in the quest for a model of perfectibility by selected theorists.

So far, my initial research reveals that scholarship on the selected texts still lack analysis with regards to the concepts of freedom, choice and self-realisation. The four selected post-apocalyptic novels share a common concern pertaining to a new conceptualisation of individual's freedom and choice, in particular, and society, in general. The significance of my study is that the writers of the selected novels present the concept of freedom, in relation to choose and self-realisation, as a capacity for human improvement and choices or perfectibility.

As I have stated earlier, I have chosen Rousseau and Rawls's idea of freedom because they are the most influential and widely used philosophers who define freedom through the social contract theory, and their theories and views are also still useful for a number of scholarships. Rousseau, for instance, has defined a social order, which is created on man's freedom and justice, and has found a way to preserve human freedom in a modern world where humans are deeply dependent on each other for fulfilment of their needs. On the other hand, Rawls, as a modern philosopher, has revised the social contract theory through a book *A Theory of Justice* (1971), where he believes that free and equal moral people have full autonomy or the moral power to choose and pursue a conception of their own good. Therefore, analysing the selected novels through Rousseauian and Rawlsian lens will be able to provide a fitting ground for examining the selected characters' sense of freedom in connection to choice and self-realisation.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to my analyses of four selected post-apocalyptic novels, namely *Parable of the Talents* by Butler, *Mara and Dann* by Lessing, *The Road* by McCarthy and *The Pesthouse* by Crace. I have chosen to analyse these novels because they focus on the main vital questions about the future of humanity, human freedom and choice as well as utopian and dystopian societies. All these fictions depict a dystopian world in which social organisations and human societies are disintegrated by natural disasters or economic crises. The societies of each novel mostly have created on totalitarianism or religious fundamentalism that restricts the choices for the characters. Through the creations of some ideal societies, the characters of these novels battle racial antagonism, gender discrimination and environment problems in the dystopian circumstances of the narratives. Generally, all the selected novels contain post-apocalyptic themes, such as disintegration of societies, totalitarian governments, non-technological future world and climate changes that affect the lives of the characters and their freedom.

With regards to my text selection, the first chosen author, Butler, has written her novels in science fiction, dystopia, and speculative fiction but I have limited her novels to only *Parable of the Talents* (1998). As a science fiction, the novel contains apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic themes, such as the destructions of local societies, totalitarian regimes that restrict the characters' lives and the ability to choose. *Parable of the Talents* (1998) is a noteworthy text to investigate the ways in which Butler portrays the main character's issues of freedom, choice and self-realisation.

This study is also limited to the novel *Mara and Dann* by Lessing which is the prequel to *The Story of General Dann and Mara's Daughter, Griot and the Snow Dog* (2005). This futuristic post-apocalyptic fiction also engages with the individual's freedom, historical choice and social relations more than natural features. For the purpose of analysis, the study is limited to the two protagonists, Mara and Dann, who have to make a lot of choices in order to survive during their journey to Northwards.

This study is also limited to the novel *The Road* by McCarthy who has written his novels in the southern Gothic, Western and post-apocalyptic genres. I have limited my text to *The Road* because the apocalyptic elements have become dominant motifs in this novel. For the purpose of exploring the social contract perspective, this text is important for analysis to explore how McCarthy reflects the concepts of freedom and choice associated to self-realisation through the protagonists, namely the unnamed father and the son.

Finally, the study is also limited to the text *The Pesthouse* by Crace who has written novels in historical and realistic genres. I have limited my final text to *The Pesthouse* because the novel is a science fiction which contains dystopian/utopian and apocalyptic themes in addition to containing descriptions of the American landscape. With regards to exploring the social contract theory, this text will be useful to specifically investigate the way in which Crace reflects the above-mentioned concepts through the protagonists.

With regards to the conceptual frameworks, this study is limited to the theory of social contract by Rousseau and Rawls whose ideas on freedom and human rights have been referred to over the years. For self-realisation, the study is especially limited to the view of Marx, while Rawls' definition is applied as well. As this study also examines the way the selected characters make a choice or act, and interact with others and society, it focuses on exploring the conception of freedom, choice and self-realisation so as to examine whether the characters have developed or attained perfectibility and enhancement. Therefore, to explore these concepts, I use the notion of Rousseau's moral freedom and moral choice, Rawls's moral autonomy or freedom and moral choice for the concept of freedom and choice, as well as Marx's self-externalisation and self-actualisation for the self-realisation concept.

1.10 Definition of Terms

1.10.1 Post-apocalyptic fiction

The post-apocalyptic thought is rather new in literature; “a theory where the human race is not wiped out completely but a new generation (or just a few survivors) is born from the ashes of an apocalypse” (Can, 2). The post-apocalyptic fiction is considered as a sub-genre of science fiction, which originated in the 19th century. Post-apocalyptic fictions create an imaginary space that make characters live together and make a new civilised world.

1.10.2 Freedom

The concept of freedom, in this study, is defined as the power to act upon one’s free will. However, Rousseau distinguishes two specific types of freedom, natural freedom and moral freedom. He believes that an individual’s intention is to participate in civil society in order to achieve full humanity and moral freedom or autonomy. Moral freedom is defined as “obedience to the law one has prescribed to oneself” (Rousseau, Major Writing 427). This means that an individual can act according to law or self-imposed law. Rawls, in contrast, values the political freedom of individuals and morally assume that they value their personal freedom as well. He argues that individuals are not only able to act independently of their natural desires and needs but, also, they have “the capacity to form, to revise and to pursue a conception of good” (Rawls, Political Liberalism 72). In other words, each free individual has the full autonomy to make choices and to take responsibility for their ends.

1.10.3 Choice

Choice is another key concept of this study, which is connected to the concept of freedom. For this study, I use Rousseau and Rawls’ concept of individual choice, which involves decision-making. For Rawls, people have equal rights to choose their own good and, consequently, they are responsible for their own choices, and that free individuals have the ability “to control and revise their wants and desires, ...as circumstance requires” (Rawls, Political Liberalism 280). Accordingly, free autonomous people are involved in choosing or supporting some principal aspects of the self and social institutions should respect this role of agent responsibility in society.

In Rousseau’s view, freedom of choice and morality is central to his argument against tyrannical government. He argues that although human being is “always floating between his inclinations and his duties”, he has the capacity to make choices and, therefore, the ability to act against instinct and inclination (Rousseau, Emile, 40). He considers the capacity for choice as one of the features that distinguishes human beings from animals and makes truly moral action possible. As seen, Rousseau regards moral choices, which make moral.

1.10.4 Self-realisation

Self-realisation is another concept of this study, which is connected to the concept of freedom and choice. Self-realisation is defined by Marx as a value itself and becomes the fundamental goal of humanity, which instills life with meaning. For Marx, an individual can achieve self-realisation through creative activities that lead to the development of human power and potential capacity. Human beings are always engaged in productive activities in the span of their lives and produce even when they are free from physical needs and only truly produce in freedom (Marx, Manuscripts, 276). As a matter of fact, the individual is gifted not only with certain natural talents and capacities, but also with a desire to express and develop his or her talents and capacities through self-realisation activities.

1.10.5 Perfectibility

Perfectibility was initially developed by Rousseau and is defined as a faculty that can be improved through freedom and autonomy in humans. Rousseau defines human beings as “historical” and social beings who have the capacity to change and improve with the aids of environment what he calls perfectibility or self-determination (Rousseau, 2012). Humans are distinguished from other animals with which they share the primitive world by two characteristics: perfectibility and freedom. These two characteristics give human beings the potential to attain self-consciousness, rationality and morality.

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