



Exploring archetypes in post-apocalyptic Fiction: *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson

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Abstract

This paper deals with the exploration and justification of archetypes in post-apocalyptic Fiction *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson. The novel is fully composed of different types of archetypes. The archetypes are symbols, primordial image, character or pattern of circumstances that recurs through out literature. The World portrayed in the novel composed of many archetypes is also justified in the movie adopted from this novel in 2007. This post- apocalyptic Fiction comes under the vampire literature which has most influence in the modern world. This paper focuses on the archetypal components mainly placed in both the movie and the novel. Even the Protagonist in the novel is justified as one of the main archetypes in the movie. The Protagonist surviving lonely without a flipping mind actualizes The Self. The Self-Similar to Self- Actualization, the Self represents a unified personality, attainable through a process called individuation. The apocalyptic world and the vampire literature in the novel is also an inspiration for other sci-fi novels. The archetypal portrayal of the apocalyptic world is revealing the futuristic world ravaged by a pandemic. The manifestation of memories ultimately is known as archetypes it deals with the personas that have universal meaning across time. It is ultimately represented across the novel. The world with a apocalyptic time changes a man drastically. The destructive qualities take the end part. The paper postulates the justification of the new archetypes and exploration of these things in accordance with the movie based on the sci-fi post-apocalyptic world novel.

Keywords: post apocalypse, self-actualization, pandemic, vampires, new world.

Introduction

Richard Burton Matheson (February 20, 1926 – June 23, 2013) was an American author and screenwriter, primarily in the fantasy, horror, and science fiction genres. He is best known as the author of *I am Legend*, a 1954 science fiction novel that has been adapted for the screen three times. Matheson himself was co-writer of the first film version, *The last man on earth*, which was released in 1964. The other two adaptations were *The Omega man*, and *I am Legend* with Will Smith. Matheson was born in Allendale, New Jersey to Norwegian immigrants Bertolf and Fanny Matheson. They divorced when he was eight, and he was raised in Brooklyn, New York, by his mother. His early writing influences were the film *Dracula* (1931), novels by Kenneth Roberts, and a poem which he read in the newspaper Brooklyn Eagle, where he published his first short story at age eight. Stephen king has listed Matheson as a creative influence and his novels *Cell* and *Elevation* are dedicated to Matheson, along with filmmaker George A. Romero. Romero frequently acknowledged Matheson as an inspiration and listed the shambling vampire creatures that appear in *The Last Man on Earth*, the first film version of *I Am Legend*, as the inspiration for the zombie "ghouls" he envisioned in *Night of the Living Dead*.

I Am Legend is a 1954 post-apocalyptic novel by American writer Richard Matheson that was influential in the modern development of Zombie and Vampire literature and in popularizing the concept of a worldwide apocalypse due to disease.

The Last Man on Earth

Implicitly set on Cimarron Street in 1976 Los Angeles after an apocalyptic war that ravishes the land with weekly dust storms, the novel details the life of Robert Neville in the months and eventually years after the outbreak of a pandemic that has killed the rest of the human population and turned infected survivors into “vampires”. The vampires conform remarkably to their stereotypes in fiction and folklore: they are blood-sucking, pale-skinned, and nocturnal, though otherwise indistinguishable from normal humans. Neville, possibly the sole survivor of the pandemic, barricades himself indoors nightly as swarms of vampires violently surround his house. He is further protected by the traditional vampire repellents of garlic, mirrors, and crucifixes. During the day, the vampires are inactive, allowing Neville to drive around stabbing them with wooden stakes since they seem impervious to his guns' bullets, which causes them to instantly liquefy, and scavenging for supplies. Occasional flashback reveals the horrors of how the disease claimed the lives of his wife and daughter (Web).

Suffering from extreme isolation, depression, and alcoholism, Neville determines there must be some scientific reasons behind the vampires' origins, behaviors, and oddly specific aversions, so he gradually researches at his local library, discovering that the root of the disease is probably a *Bacillus* strain of bacteria capable of infecting both living and deceased (“undead”) hosts. His experiments with microscopes also reveal that the bacteria are deadly sensitive to garlic and sunlight. After he painstakingly attempts to win the trust of a stray sickly dog that dies after only a week, Neville, heartbroken, commits himself even more vigorously to his studies. Soon he experiments directly on incapacitated vampires, which leads to a new theory that vampires are affected by mirrors and crosses because of “hysterical blindness”, in which the infected now delusionally react as they believe they should when confronted with these items.

Neville additionally discovers that exposing vampires to direct sunlight or inflicting wide oxygen-exposing wounds causes the bacteria to switch from being anaerobic symbionts to aerobic parasites, rapidly consuming their hosts when exposed to air and thus giving them the appearance of instantly liquefying. However, he discovers the bacteria also produce resilient “body glue” that instantaneously seals blunt or narrow wounds, explaining how the vampires are bulletproof. Lastly, he deduces now that there are in fact two differently-reacting types of vampires: conscious ones who are living with a worsening infection and undead ones who have died but been partly reanimated by the bacteria (Web).

After three years, Neville suddenly sees a terrified woman named Ruth in broad daylight. The two cautiously gain each other's trust and even share a romantic embrace. Neville explains some of his findings, including his theory that he developed immunity against the infection after being bitten by an infected vampire bat years ago. He prepares to test Ruth to determine if she is infected or immune, vowing to treat her if she is infected, but she knocks him unconscious. When Neville wakes, he discovers a note from her confessing that she is indeed a vampire herself. Her note suggests that only the undead vampires are pathologically violent but not those, like her, who were alive at the time of infection and who still survive due to chance mutations. These living-infected have slowly overcome their disease and are gradually developing a new society and new medications. Ruth admits she was sent to spy on him by her comrades and that he was responsible for the deaths of many of her fellow vampires, including her husband. Still, Ruth reiterates her romantic feelings for Neville and urges him to flee the city to avoid capture. Neville ignores Ruth's warning, assuming he will be treated fairly by the new society of living-infected. However, his mind is changed when he watches a group of them annihilate the undead vampires outside his home with fiendish glee. In a panic, Neville opens fire on them but is in turn shot and subdued. Imprisoned and dying, he is visited by Ruth, who informs him that she is a senior member of the new society but, unlike the others who perceive him as a murderer, she does not resent him. She acknowledges the public need for Neville's execution but, out of mercy, gives him a packet of fast-acting suicide pills. Neville accepts his fate and asks Ruth not to let this society become too heartless (Web).

Neville goes to his prison window and sees the infected staring back at him with the same hatred and fear that he once felt for them. He realizes that he, a remnant of old humanity, is now a legend to the new race born of the infection. He acknowledges that their desire to kill him, after he has killed so many of their loved ones, is not

something he can condemn. As the pills take effect, he is amused by the thought that he will become their new superstition and legend, just as vampires once were to humans.

Archetypical portrayal

The justification provides the idea that the symbols hold universal meaning have emerged from the archetypes, the Shadow, the repressed psyche, representing chaos, weakness and evil. The Anima is the feminine image in a man's psyche. The Persona is often indicated by a mask, this is how characters present themselves to the world. The story also explains the typical characters, what were once normal and functioning human beings have become insanely demonic. They still seem to possess human qualities, such as cunning, as demonstrated by the traps constructed to catch the hero Dr. Robert Neville, and they still have a basic human form and evidence of ways to communicate. All humans possess the ability to be shockingly evil, but most choose not to identify with this side. The Shadow is portrayed as a representation for the frightening aspect of human nature, which exists in both ourselves and others. These monsters represent our own personal demons, unleashing the potential for evil in all. The quick-minded, strong, selfless, pure of heart are the qualities of the hero. As the exploration suggests the protagonist shows great strength to face unfortunate circumstances, and continuously works for a cure for the virus despite the dangers presented to him by the plagued city. This goes beyond the simplicity of good versus evil, in that the people in question are helpless to defend against their own bodies, their own evil, and this lack of control takes over them until they are reduced into nothing but monstrosity.

Conclusion

The paper encompasses the subgenre of an apocalypse's sole survivor pathologizing the inhumanity which portrayed the afflicted victims of a nuclear fallout and the narratives of seclusion, apocalypse, and disaster which preceded it. The paper dissects and explains the archetypes comparing with the movie. the hero Nevil invokes the unnerved soldier whose recurrent nightmares of battle estrange him from the happier memories and disjoint prospects of happiness beyond gives the readers thought about life and death. The didactic way of the portrayal of the world and the characters is delightful for the readers and it makes the people to think about the uncertain life they live.

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