

Apocalypse Mainstreamed: Cultural Imaginations After September 11

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Abstract

The term *apocalypse* has been in use for a long time. Its usage in religious and literary discourses has, however, not been without certain obstacles as far as the meaning and scope are concerned. In Christianity, *apocalypse* refers to the last book of The Bible, *The Revelation or Revelation to John or Apocalypse of John*, in which Christ reveals to John the signs signifying the end of the world. While as the Hindu doctrine teaches that the human cycle called *Manvantara* is divided into four periods. These periods correspond with the Golden, Silver, Bronze and Iron Ages of the ancient western traditions. It is believed that we are now in the fourth age, the *kali-Yuga* or *Dark Age*. In Islam, the resurrection, the Day of Judgment and salvation are apocalyptic features of orthodox belief as is evident in *The Quran*. However, the traditional *apocalypse* is different from the modern one in that the modern apocalyptic imagination in contemporary literature is secular because it actually reflects the demonic aspects of the *apocalypse* world of *The Bible* in secular terms. Nineteenth century American novelists, such as, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville and Mark Twain were the first to reflect the apocalyptic imagination in its secular version in fiction, depicting Satan let loose in society. Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance* (1852), Melville's *The Confidence Man* (1887) and Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916), each dwelt upon the degeneration of human morals under the influence of demonic tendencies in individuals as a prelude to a social disaster. However the main argument of the present paper would be to show how the major American writers shifted their focus towards apocalyptic themes in their writings with the approach of the year 2000 and primarily after September 11 episode. The paper would also highlight that literature and films have featured a steady stream of apocalyptic scenarios. For instance, in a five year period after 2001 just some of the disaster films released include *The Core* (2003), *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), the remake *Poseidon* (2006), adaptations of novels such as *I, Robot* and *War of the Worlds* (2006) and tale movies including *Category 6: Day of Destruction*(2006), *Category 7, The End of the World*(2005), *Locusts: Day of Destruction*(2006), *Oil Storm*(2005), *Super Volcano*(2005), *10.5*(2005), and *10.5: Apocalypse (1)*(2006). The *Slate Magazine* in America published an article in 2009 by Josh Levin which talks about *How is America Going to End*. In short, the paper would highlight how the concept of *apocalypse* became very popular in America and how majority of the American writers developed their interest and preoccupation with apocalyptic themes the chief concerns of *apocalypse*.

Key Words: *Revelation: Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible*

Manvantara: Manuvantara or age of a Manu, the Hindu progenitor of mankind, is an astronomical period of time measurement.

INTRODUCTION:

Kali-Yuga: Kali Yuga is the last of the four stages the world goes through as part of the cycle of yugas described in the Indian scriptures.

The Quran: Literally it means "the recitation", also transliterated Qur'an, Koran, Al-Coran, Coran, Kuran, and Al-Qur'an, is the central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be the verbatim word of God

Day of Judgment: The Last Judgment, Final Judgment, Day of Judgment, Judgment Day, or The Day of the Lord or in Islam *Yawm al-Qiyāmah* or *Yawm ad-Din* is part of the eschatological world view of the Abrahamic religions

Nathaniel Hawthorne: Nathaniel Hawthorne (born Nathaniel Hawthorne; July 4, 1804 – May 19, 1864) was an American novelist and short story writer.

Herman Melville: Herman Melville (August 1, 1819 – September 28, 1891) was an American novelist, short story writer, essayist, and poet.

Mark Twain: Samuel Langhorne Clemens (November 30, 1835 – April 21, 1910), better known by his pen name Mark Twain, was an American author and humorist.

September 11: The September 11 attacks (also referred to as September 11, September 11th, or 9/11) were a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks launched by the Islamist terrorist group al-Qaeda upon the United States in New York City and the Washington, D.C. areas on September 11, 2001.

Disaster films: A disaster film is a film genre that has an impending or ongoing disaster as its subject and primary plot device.

MAIN PAPER

Richard A. Falk labels the decade of the seventies as one of despair, the 1980s as the politics of desperation, 1990s as the politics of catastrophe and the twenty-first century as an era of annihilation. There are many writers who emphasize upon the destruction of mankind through nuclear war, environmental pollution and population growth. In his book *The Doomsday Syndrome*, John Maddox expresses grave doubts about the future survival of mankind in view of man's own crimes. Science and technology are labeled as Devil's tools. Robert Alter in an article entitled "The Apocalyptic Temper" refers to the ideas of R W B Lewis regarding modern apocalyptic thought and says that the millennial gloom vanished from a vision of an apocalypse with the advent of contemporary times, "leaving only a brooding sense of the imminence of the end". Kenneth L Woodward, Angus Deming and Judith Gingold are of the opinion that apocalyptic talk has become too common. It was to be felt that the only people who cared about doomsday were fundamental preachers who paddled gloom as if they owned a piece of Apocalypse. Today, however, Americans, can hardly pick up a newspaper or magazine, tune in a talk show or to go to a movie that does not trumpet disaster. In the contemporary literature, the terms apocalypse and postmodern have been used interchangeably by many writers. Sometimes the two terms were used together as the "postmodern apocalypse". In *Postmodern Apocalypse*, Richard Dellamora writes of a pervasive sense of unease in contemporary existence. More than a decade after Dellamora's remarks, a collective dread evident in literature and film has not abated; rather, it has perhaps intensified. The real and immediate threat of a nuclear war was perhaps most prevalent in the years following 1945 and has since decreased, yet terrorist attacks throughout the world, as well as growing fears about global warming, have continued to provide impetus to the apocalyptic tradition.

More than a decade ago Don DeLillo wrote that the attacks of September 11 would change "the way we think and act, moment to moment, week to week, for unknown weeks and months to come, and steely years" (DeLillo 34). The historian Taylor Branch spoke of a possible "turning point against a generation of cynicism for all of us," and Roger Rosenblatt argued in *Time* magazine that "one good thing could come from this horror: it could spell the end of the age of irony" (Branch; Rosenblatt).

In terms of narrative scope and harrowing drama, no novel has yet to match *The Looming Tower*, Lawrence Wright's nonfiction account of the events that led to 9/11. *The Looming Tower* is a 2006 nonfiction book largely focused on the people who conspired to commit the September 11 attacks, their motives and personalities, and how they interacted. *The Looming Tower* is to a large extent focused on telling the story of the people involved, it does not describe the 9/11 plot and its execution in much detail. It focuses more on the background and the conditions that produced the people who planned and staged the attack, and information about those who were combating terror against the United States. The words "looming towers" or "lofty towers" appear in the Quran 4:78 (*Sūrat an-Nisā'*). According to Lawrence Wright, Osama bin Laden, at a wedding before the 9/11 attack, quoted the line, repeating it three times: "Wherever you are, death will find you, even if you are in lofty towers" (Wright 2006, 3). Terry McDermott's book *Perfect Soldiers* drew a portrait of the real 9/11 hijackers that was far more compelling than the crude jihadi stereotype in John Updike's novel *Terrorist* (2006).

After the terrorist attacks on New York City in 2001 and London in 2005, it is perhaps no surprise that literature and films have featured a steady stream of apocalyptic scenarios. For instance, in a five year period after 2001 just some of the disaster films released include *The Core*, *The Day after /tomorrow*, the remake *Poseidon*, and adaptations of novels such as *I, Robot* and *War of the Worlds*, and tale-movies including *Category 6: Day of Destruction*, *Category 1*, *The End of the World*, *Locusts: Day of Destruction*, *Oil Storm*, *Super Volcano*, *10.5: Apocalypse*. Since, the main aim of this paper is to argue that there has been an increase in the genre of apocalypse. The episode of September 11 shook the whole of humanity and what happened afterwards was only the natural response of people faced with death, loss and suffering.

If the world changed after 9/11, literature also changed. As the British novelist Martin Amis noted, on some level, every novel written after September 11 became a September 11 novel because it took place in a different world. He described the new climate, noting that "everything is contingent, the verities that you depend on a few weeks ago are gone- and gone, I think for our lifetimes..." Any writing after that event was shaped and informed by the event. American writers like Don de Lillo, John Updike, and

British writers like Ian McEwan faced up to terror in their own ways. De Lillo's novel *Falling Man* (2007) as the author himself put it could not ignore the event because it had been deeply ensconced in the "narcissistic heart of the West" (quoted in Mishra 2007: 4). This is because before the event the West had experienced a surge of capital markets and this had captured global consciousness. Ken Kalfus in *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2004) a work written in the aftermath of 9/11 recalls the time before the event when "dissent required a kind of neurotic, life-denying pessimism" (quoted in Mishra 2007: 4). It was a time when everyone thought that New York slums would become gentrified and free markets would establish a future of prosperity. But 9/11 changed all that.

Michael Moore, the progressive filmmaker, produced *Fahrenheit 9/11* which documented President Bush's ties with Saudi Arabia, focusing on America's search not so much for terrorists as for oil and in a way holding the American government as complicit in the attacks on the twin towers. Along with war was the need to protect democracy which in President Bush's speeches was posited as the opposite of Islamic terror, which in turn was conflated with Islam itself. The process of 'othering' Muslims was thus begun ironically in a free democracy where presumably all were equal before the law. Conspiracy theories were floated along with the growth of a public '9/11 truth Movement'. De Lillo's *Falling Man* concerns a survivor of the 9/11 attacks and the effect of that experience on his life thereafter. Keith Neudecker, a 39-year-old lawyer who works in the World Trade Centre escapes from the building, injured slightly, and walks to the apartment he has previously shared with Justin, his son, and his estranged wife, Lianne. Keith travels around the world playing professional poker and recalls one of his poker mates who died in the 9/11 attacks. In the novel Lianne sees a performance of an artist who is called *Falling Man*. He does all kinds of tricks, the best being suspending himself upside down with rope and harness in the pose of a man in the famous 9/11 photograph of Richard Drew. The novel explores the symbolic nature of terrorist violence and the way in which the media exploit that violence. It therefore throws up important question about the ethical dimension of literary engagement with the trauma of 9/11.

Updike's *Terrorist* is clearly a more frontal response to 9/11. It is about an American teenager, Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy, and his high school counsellor, Jack Levy. The novel seeks to explore the world view and motivations of religious fundamentalism, but this is in America, and the novel is at one level an indictment of the American way of life, its morality, decadence and life style. In writing this novel Updike has done his research but according to Pankaj Mishra he has visited websites of Islamic pseudo-scholarship on the Koran much as Martin Amis has on the same issue. Mishra says that in *Terrorist*, Updike appears as keen as Amis to optimize his research. Talking about terrorists is risky and Updike has had to overcome both fear and revulsion in tackling the subject. Mishra writes: "Their novelist-host has to overcome much fear and revulsion in order to take seriously murderous passions aimed at their own society. Sympathy often breaks down and hasty scholarship results in stereotypical formulations" (Mishra 2007: 4). This suggests that the trauma of 9/11 affected a major writer like Updike and compelled him to write a book which leaves one with unanswered ethical questions. In order to attack terror was it necessary to distort Islamic faith?

Ian McEwan novel *Saturday* (2005) is set against the backdrop of the London Protest march against the Iraq war. His protagonist is the forty-eight-year-old neurosurgeon Henry Perowne. He is thoroughly domesticated and has planned a series of activities on Saturday. He, like his author, won't engage with the large issues of the day and he is content to play squash, have sex with his wife and eat with his family. The narrative is in the third person omniscient. It lingers on the small pleasures of life and the British way of life. He has a happy marriage with Rosalind, his son is a Blues player and his daughter Daisy is a poet who lives in Paris. She is visiting, so is Rosalind's father, John Grammaticus, who is a drunkard and lives in a chateau in the South of France and with whom Perowne is hoping to effect a reconciliation over the weekend. Perowne is satisfied with his life and its pleasures and would like to keep it that way. He is not unaware of the Saturday March but has ambivalent feelings about Iraq. He loathes Saddam Hussein and his cruelties but is equally suspicious of American motives in going to war. *Saturday* may be read as a metaphor for the weekend when one is retiring into domesticity and awaiting the pleasures of Sunday. Perowne's day starts early. It has been a busy week and while looking out of his window he spots a Russian aeroplane, its engine on fire. For him this is an ominous start to the day and he is anxious about how this has occurred. Is it the handiwork of terrorists? Are the pilots Islamist terrorists? Is this a replay of 9/11? *Saturday* is a depiction of that attitude. In an interview McEwan said that he was, after 9/11, wanting to know more about the world because the changes the world had gone through compelled writers to go to school again. He was tired of invented characters and wanted the real thing (Mishra 2007: 4).

However, this novel does not meet that ideal, and Saturday turns out to be a weak response to a momentous event like 9/11, which is the motivation behind the Iraq war, the backdrop to this novel.

The more adequate responses to September 11, we need to turn to ethnic writers in Britain and America like Kiran Desai who seem to have understood the changes in the world and may be said to speak to all of us about a world where terror is a fact of life and 9/11 has changed things. This is the burden of her excellent post 9/11 novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2005). And Mohsin Hamid, too, is a case in point: a consideration of his work shows a vital difference in perspective between ethnic writers and their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) we see a sensitive response to a post 9/11 world. Hamid has lived in America and is a highly acclaimed writer and has the advantage of the insider-outsider perspective. He is a participant observer. A successful career in America was cut short by the events of 9/11 and Hamid has in several interviews given expression not only to his love of America but his fascination with terror and his satisfaction at seeing the twin Towers demolished. In his novel this dual perspective is brought out successfully in the character of Changez, a possible terrorist, meeting a CIA agent in Lahore. The monologue begins with the words, "Excuse me Sir but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you. Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America. (Hamid 2007: 1).

The monologue gives us the minutiae of the daily existence of Changez, the rise and fall of a man from Princeton, his employment in a prestigious firm, his love affair with the American Erica, and the mixed feelings of revulsion, hate and attraction he feels after the events of 9/11 unfold.

I turned on the television and saw what at first I took to be a film. But as I continued to watch, I realized that it was not fiction but news. I stared as one –and then another– of the twin towers of New York's World Trade Centre collapsed. And then I smiled. Yes, despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased (Hamid 2007: 72).

Unlike Updike and de Lillo Hamid has the advantage of making the 9/11 event the central moment of his novel because it alters Changez's life irrevocably, while in the others it is a reaction to the event and the aftermath of the attacks. The narrative is cleverly deployed because we are never sure from Changez's statements whether he is a terrorist or not and we are left in suspense about what will happen next. The radicalization of Changez is a possibility and Erica's hysteria and disintegration are convincingly portrayed as the natural fallout of 9/11. The personal becomes the political and the metaphoric force behind the individual character –each one becoming a symbol of the significance of 9/11– makes this novel a gripping and authentic presentation of the meaning of a trauma. It is a challenge to the West and it is an ethical challenge in its insider-outsider response and its ambivalence about the event.

The terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 had a profound impact on the body politic of America. The attacks produced a wide-ranging and diverse response that situated 9/11 as an exceptional event in modern-day US history. In this respect, Noam Chomsky commented on how the attacks provided a startlingly new development in contemporary US politics, as 9/11 represented the first attack on American soil since the war of 1812. Jean Baudrillard reinforced Chomsky's sentiments by calling the destruction of the Twin Towers as "an absolute event, the 'mother' of events" (*The Spirit of Terrorism* 2002) while others simply talked about 9/11 as a "defining moment" (Buzan and Waever 2003) that changed forever the political, social and psychological landscapes of America. While much reaction to the event promoted the danger of stressing unique and encompassing developments for America in this "new world" it found itself in, there is no doubt that the events of that day significantly impacted the American socio-political imagination. The ensuing war on terror, the geopolitical situation in the Middle East, issues surrounding immigration and ideological discourses focusing on American imperialism and foreign policy were all shaped in large part by the traumatic and wide-reaching outcome of 9/11. The impact of 9/11 also had a profound effect on the American popular imagination and its manifestation in mass culture. Although a caveat must be put in place of the danger in stressing an overarching link between the events of 9/11 and its influence on cultural production. Many of these representations have tapped into or fed off initial responses in the aftermath of the attacks that straightaway framed the destruction in an apocalyptic, end-of-the-world-type language with newspapers using headlines such as "Is this the end of the world?", "Doomsday America" and simply "Apocalypse." While it would be erroneous to suggest that 9/11 instigated a distinct and separate cycle of apocalyptic texts that did not have antecedents, there has, nevertheless, been a significant increase in apocalyptic imagery and themes post-9/11 across a variety of popular media. The growing dissemination of the apocalypse after 9/11 can be seen in the renewed interest in television documentaries on the end of the world such as *An Inconvenient*

Truth (2006), *Life After People* (2008), *Seven Signs of the Apocalypse* and *The Nostradamus Effect* (both 2009); literature with Cormac McCarthy's Pulitzer prize winning novel, *The Road* (2006), the post-apocalyptic anthology *Wastelands: Stories of the Apocalypse* (2008) and the resurgence of comics that have covered a variety of post-apocalyptic scenarios such as *Y: The Last Man* (2002-2008), *DMZ* (2005-) and *Crossed* (2008-2010).

However, the most popular medium for conveying the apocalypse has been cinema. This is especially pertinent post-9/11 where eyewitness accounts on the day directly connected the events to cinematic referents by saying that the destruction of the Twin Towers seemed "just like a movie." In drawing upon cinema as a means of interpreting the attacks, public testimony situated Hollywood representations of the apocalypse as a primary and accessible site with regards to how people made sense of and responded to the events of 9/11. Indeed, there have been a large number of apocalyptic films that have directly or indirectly sustained this connection. The narratives of these post-9/11 apocalyptic movies have conspicuously combined current issues along the contours of war, terrorism, disease and environmental catastrophe with the more commercial imperatives of spectacle and apocalyptic disaster. From *The Day After Tomorrow's* (Emmerich, 2004) sustained treatment of the disastrous fallout of global warming, the explicit connections to 9/11 represented in Spielberg's big budget remake of *War of the Worlds* (Spielberg, 2005), through *Cloverfield* (Reeves, 2008), which effectively collapsed notions of good versus evil in a unstable and unsure world post-9/11, to the recent updating of the biblical story of the ark in 2012 (Emmerich, 2009), post-9/11 sci-fi has consistently provided an extravagant audio-visual display combined with a detailed socio-cultural commentary that has tapped into contemporary macro and micro fears and anxieties.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have shaped American apocalyptic horror cinema as shown through imagery, characters, and thematic focus of the genre. A category of film that bases its existence upon end time scenarios and eschatological fears, apocalyptic horror has long dealt with any given culture's anxieties as it confronts its demise. Such cultural demise has become strikingly apparent in the days, months, and years following the terrorist attacks. As Charles Derry asserts in his reissue of *Dark Dreams 2.0*, "we've been punished psychologically [...] one irrevocable horror is that the images from that day are trapped inside us, a permanent part of who we now are. And then later...more images of horror: in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Abu Ghraib, in London, in Madrid" (345).

This is not to say that the cinematic studies have failed to develop the link between 9/11 and American film. Scholars such as Kyle Bishop have devoted much time and energy to studying the link between 9/11 and the relatively recent resurgence of the zombie film. In his essay "Dead Man Still Walking: Explaining the Zombie Renaissance," Bishop investigates the "marked rise in all kinds of zombie narratives over the past ten years," and posits that the 9/11 terror attacks have "caused the largest wave of paranoia for Americans since the McCarthy era" (17). Likewise, Christopher Sharrett's article on what has been pejoratively labeled as "torture porn" provides an excellent perspective on how the War on Terror has helped fuel an American taste for severe physical mutilation within this new realm of horror. Pertinently *Wrong Turn 1* was released in 2003 and *Wrong Turn 7* in 2017. Before analyzing post-9/11 apocalyptic horror, one must review the cinematic tastes of American audiences immediately following the attacks. Some argued that subsequent to the tragedy, horror would face a slow but sure decline. Shortly after Dempsey's article, *Entertainment Weekly's* Jeff Gordinier hinted that the attacks would usher in a new era which would witness the "end of irony" (Gordinier), proposing that even comedies would decline in popularity.

Lynn Spigel, in her article "Entertainment Wars: Television Culture after 9/11," contends that "while industry leaders were eager to censor trauma-inducing images of any kind, video outlets reported that, when left to their own discretion, consumers were eagerly purchasing terrorist flicks like *The Siege* and *The Towering Inferno*" (236). Additionally, Charles Derry proposes that "[u]ntil the 9/11, 2001, terrorist attack on America by al-Qaeda reinvigorated the subgenre, apocalyptic horror was being dominated by...a variety of low budget films, not especially notable" (235), implying that the subgenre has experienced a tremendous resurgence following 9/11.

The extensive list of apocalyptic horror films following 2001 proves this sentiment readily true. 2002 saw the release of M. Night Shyamalan's *Signs* (which began shooting, eerily enough, on September 12, 2001), Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later*, and Paul Anderson's *Resident Evil*, only to be followed by 2003's *The Core* and 2004's environmental thriller *The Day After Tomorrow*. The subgenre has only grown in the years

since. A popular apocalyptic horror website has listed more than 20 films (including the likes of *Cloverfield*, *I Am Legend*, and *Knowing*) that have proven successful in the U.S. box office since 2007 (Apocalypticmovies.com).

Prior to 9/11, apocalyptic horror offered a rather optimistic ending to audience members. In years past, apocalyptic horror films “suggest[ed] that mankind’s possible not---being possess[ed] a great power to call the human race into realizing its most powerful possibilities for being” (Dodson). Each of these films portrays characters acting in ways that best demonstrate humanity’s brightest and most admirable qualities – sacrifice, hope, and perseverance. In contrast, subsequent to the 9/11 terrorist attacks apocalyptic horror narratives take a drastic and dramatically pessimistic turn. *Right at Your Door* concludes with the main character being purposelessly gunned down by the authorities sworn to protect him. *Cloverfield* ends abruptly with the two remaining protagonists killed in a nuclear purging of Manhattan.

While some argue that post 9/11 films such as *Knowing* and *War of the Worlds* contain endings that provide hopeful closures as life continues, this hope only arrives after millions have been killed in the interim, and the audience has witnessed at least a partial defeat of humanity. This common thread of the end of humanity links together a wide variety of apocalyptic horror films. The variety of subgenres within apocalyptic horror proves extensive, and each subcategory caters to a particular audience that harbors its own tastes and preferences, yet shares the same deep fears concerning humankind’s ultimate fate.

A brief glance at one of the Internet’s most valuable and reliable websites dedicated to the apocalyptic horror genre, Apocalypticmovies.com, contains an extensive list of the apocalyptic subgenres: the disaster film, the zombie apocalypse, the nuclear war apocalypse, and the alien invasion films, just to name a few. Conrad Ostwalt and others have argued that pre-millennium apocalypse films were characterized by a ‘desacralization of the apocalypse’ (Ostwalt, 1998, p. xx). That is, cinematic representations of the apocalypse both jettisoned overt references to Biblical sources and shifted the cause of the destruction away from supernatural forces towards natural phenomena and/or the consequences of human action, such as giant meteors, environmental disaster or geopolitical meltdown. Moreover, within the 1990s apocalypse movies there was also a toning down of the fatalism found within the Biblical apocalypse and an emphasis on how destruction could actually be averted through the actions of a human messianic figure. For example, the Book of Revelation presents an account of the apocalypse as both supernatural in origin and essentially unavoidable for either the living, or, indeed, the dead. The 1990s apocalypse films rejected this and posited an end that was both natural and, crucially, avoidable through human agency. Indeed, a defining characteristic of the 1990s cycle was a view of cataclysm—whether that be alien invaders, super-viruses, rampaging monsters, approaching asteroids or other forms of “natural” disaster—as merely a problem that could be overcome through human courage and ingenuity allied with science and technology. Yet, within this post-millennium cycle of apocalyptic films, the events of 9/11 have had a profound effect on how apocalyptic representations have been realized, primarily through radically inverting the faith in human ability and science and technology in several ways, which has introduced an overriding sense of pessimism. At the end of a typical movie from the 1990s apocalypse cycle, the viewer could expect that, although major destruction would occur, humanity (and particularly North America) would largely be saved. In the post-9/11 movies, this can no longer be assumed. Instead, for example, in *The Day after Tomorrow*, *28 Weeks Later*, the original ending of *I am Legend*, and *Cloverfield*, destruction is not averted and there is the sense that, particularly in *I am Legend* and *28 Weeks Later*, events are likely going to become a lot worse. Indeed, the post-9/11 movies posit scenarios where science, technology and the government are, at best, powerless against the apocalyptic forces, and at worst willingly complicit with them.

Huffpost: Like a lot of other people in the haze and confusion of the 9/11 attacks, Johanah Segarich asked herself, “What kind of religion is this that could inspire people to do this?” (Religion News Service). She had studied other religions but never Islam. So she bought a copy of the Quran, wondering if her notions of Islam as a patriarchal and now seemingly violent religion, would be confirmed. When she was half way through the Quran, barely 10 weeks after 9/11, “I came to the realization,” she said, “that I had a decision to make” (Religion News Service). Finally she converts to Islam at the Islamic Society of Boston in Cambridge. The majority of post 9/11 converts are women which includes Hispanics and African Americans. According to some observers around 20,000 Americans convert to Islam annually. The most famous of them which made headlines are Yvonne Ridley, a British journalist who converted in 2003 after being held captive by Taliban, and Lauren Booth, the sister in law of the former British Minister Tony Blair.

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